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# The effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior in the hospitality industry

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#### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on all service industries, specifically hospitality, which has become increasingly competitive. Therefore, innovation and service improvement are needed to provide the best service for consumers by determining the voice behavior of their employees. This study examines the effect of transformational leadership on employee voice behavior, specifically frontline at hotels in Central Java. The mediating variables consisting of work and engagement were used to clarify the mechanism related to the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior. The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, namely by using the criteria of frontline employees who have worked for at least 1 year. Data were collected from 216 frontline employers at hotels and analyzed using the SEM PLS. The result showed that transformational leadership and work engagement can indirectly promote employee voice behavior. Furthermore, the meaning of work can promote voice behavior with a longer mechanism through work engagement.

**Keywords**: voice behavior; transformational leadership; meaning of work; work engagement; hospitality industry.

**IEL Classification: 015** 

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 outbreak is one of the thorny problems encountered by all companies worldwide. It triggered several behaviors, as well as forced organizations to make various changes to survive. One of the efforts adopted by these companies to survive was to introduce new products and services in the markets. This innovation applies creative ideas that emerge from employees, believed to be a source of competitive advantage for the organization (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Istiqomah & Wibowo, 2017; Kremer et al., 2019). An effort adopted to obtain innovative opinions increases employee voice behavior (Kremer et al., 2019).

This is a proactive attitude in the form of voicing opinions or ideas for the organization's good (Aryee et al., 2014). LePine and Van Dyne (2001) stated that voice behavior is oriented towards constructive changes by providing ideas, opinions, and suggestions that help improve the existing

situation in the workplace environment. Several studies stated that it is believed to facilitate organizational performance for better decision-making, continuous improvement, and prevent harmful consequences (Liang et al., 2012). This behavior is expected to provide appropriate input for the organization, such as the disclosure of creative ideas to solve various problems within the organization. Due to the important role of employee voice behavior, there is a need to carry out a study on the mechanism that promotes this attribute. In line with this, Chamberlin et al. (2017) stated that explaining psychological mechanisms in speech behavior was inadequate.

One of the mechanisms used to explain the phenomenon of employee voice behavior in organizations is the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). It states that this attribute is motivated by an initially obtained or reciprocal process, where a person tends to repay the good or bad deeds (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Gouldner, 1960). Niehoff and Moorman (1993) stated that concerning the social exchange theory, employees' work results and extra efforts are strongly affected by the exchange relationship with the organization. Another variable that often affects this behavior is the supervisory attitude related to their leadership style (Chen et al., 2018). This plays an important role in motivating and improving individual and team achievements, which ultimately affects organizational performance (Khalili, 2017). Dutton (2014) also stated that top management has directly initiated employee voice behavior. Usually, this is triggered by observing their leader, which is an important antecedent in terms of promoting them to voice their thoughts and opinions about organizational problems.

Transformational leadership is frequently investigated to analyze its impact on employee behavior. This is studied by using a different approach because it involves the followers' abilities to use meaningful means to achieve organizational goals (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2016). Transformational leadership is known to effectively affect its subordinates' behavior. It has 4 main characteristics: intellectual stimulation, charisma or ideal effect, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration (Bass et al., 1993; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). It motivates employees to be active and participate in decision-making, prompting them to apply new and different ideas in dealing with problems encountered in the organization (Istiqomah et al., 2020; Rasheed & Shahzad, 2021). Abdullah et al. (2021) stated that one of the main drivers that trigger these employees to speak up is a signal from leaders, which promotes expressing of themselves. This shows that the superiors' role is an important antecedent in voice behavior. Furthermore, several previous studies further reported that it is affected and promoted by transformational leadership (Afsar et al., 2019; Duan et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019).

A similar study stated that the psychological mechanisms that link these variables are still questioned and only a few have been carried out on the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior (Chen et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aims to clarify the mechanism of the impact of transformational leadership on voice behavior using 2 mediating variables.

The mediating variable employed is work engagement. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) stated that it is perceived as a positive, satisfying, work-related thought characterized by passion, dedication, and absorption. Those attached to their jobs are usually energetic and enthusiastic about executing their duties. Recently, work engagement has become a popular variable because it is perceived as an important predictor of employee behavior, team, and organizational performance (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Its relationship with transformational leadership creates an organizational climate that highly supports work engagement (Avolio & Bass, 1995). This variable gives employees attention as well as provides clearer expectations, thereby boosting work engagement and psychological feelings energetically manifested in terms of executing their duties. Increased responsibilities related to their subsequent job function cause them to voice out their opinions for the organization (Cheng et al., 2014). However, some studies stated that the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement does not yet have a clear mechanism (Ghadi et al., 2013). Bakker & Albrecht (2018) stated that the relationship between these variables tends to have different intensities under certain conditions and is affected by the meaning of work perceived by employees. Therefore, this study tries to link

transformational leadership mechanisms to multiple mediations where the mediating variable clarifies other media attributes. It is expected that this further clarifies the impact on employee voice behavior.

The meaning of the work variable is believed to clarify the effect of transformational leadership on several outcomes (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2016). Work is an important part of a person's life because every individual spends two-thirds of their day executing assigned responsibilities (Chen et al., 2018). Besides, it is not only related to the material things gained rather, but work is also perceived as an important aspect of life. Its meaning is believed to be an important mediator to determine employees' attitudes and behavior in an organization and their ability to exhibit better performances than those who do not receive this support (Jung & Yoon, 2016; Rosso et al., 2010). Leaders' motivation emphasizes the meaningful importance of employees' job functions, which causes them to voluntarily contribute to the organization by giving their opinions or ideas for its improvement.

This study was carried out in the hospitality industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this sector experienced a significant impact, and staying afloat requires many innovations in terms of offerings, marketing, and services. Therefore, employee voice behavior provides creative ideas as an alternative solution adopted by companies to survive during this difficult period. The samples were acquired from frontline employees in hotels and restaurants situated in Solo and Semarang. These employees were selected because they occupy a privileged position in terms of obtaining first-hand market information and uncovering basic customer needs (Coelho et al., 2011). It is important to ascertain how they contribute to this sector through voice behavior and convey information about the customers' basic needs (Afsar et al., 2019).

Liang et al. (2017) stated that several studies proved that transformational leadership plays a dual mediating role with respect to its effect on voice behavior. This study attempted to integrate the relevant variables to ensure a clearer relationship mechanism, namely proposing the meaning of work and engagement attributes. It also discloses the psychological mechanism related to voice behavior in the hospice industry by employing a social exchange theoretical approach, where a leader proves the meaningful work executed in the organization, thereby boosting employee engagement and promoting positive behaviors. This also aims to explain how transformational leadership affects their ideas and opinions for the good of this industry by using work and engagement variables.

# HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

#### Transformational leadership and employee voice behavior

Transformational leadership is popular and consists of 4 main dimensions, namely ideal effect, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Bass, 1990; Bass et al., 1993). The ideal effect reflects that leaders are perceived as role models, and their followers imitate them. The transformational ones have high moral standards and values, as well as adhere to the existing code of ethics. In addition, they tend to be admired, respected, and trusted (Wang et al., 2019). Inspirational motivation refers to motivating and inspiring followers beyond the stipulated expectations (Bass, 1990). Intellectual stimulation includes the efforts made by transformational leaders to stimulate and promote their followers to analyze and solve new problems from different perspectives (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Meanwhile, concerning individual considerations, a transformational leader acts as a mentor by providing attention, advice, and input for each follower (Bass & Riggio 2006). They also provide learning opportunities and a supportive environment for self-development, including assigning certain projects based on their followers' interests (Whittington et al., 2017). Several studies proved its theoretical and empirical impact on performance (Lai et al., 2020; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2016), Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (Buil et al., 2019; Istiqomah & Riani, 2021; Khalili, 2017; Lee et al., 2018), creativity (Istiqomah et al., 2020; Shafi et al., 2020), innovative

behavior (Pradhan & Jena, 2019; Rafique et al., 2022), etc. However, there is little evidence related to the effectiveness of transformational leadership on voice behavior (Hu et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019)

A transformational leader changes the followers' values, promotes self-confidence and respect, communicates clear mission statements, and gives individual consideration to these people, as well as integrates their goals in line with the organization's vision, thereby ensuring they behave beyond expectations (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Pradhan and Pradhan (2016) stated that this form of leadership integrates followers' commitment with set goals by linking employee self-identity with the organization's. This leads to forming a new identity that triggers employees to be highly committed to this leadership type and the company.

Transformational leadership is believed to positively affect employees' proactive behavior. One of the prosocial behaviors that companies need in this increasingly competitive era is employee voice behavior. Voice behavior is one of the constructive attributes expected to improve decision-making within the organization by listening to employees who are in direct contact with customers. In addition, it is believed to enhance the quality of the products and services rendered by the company and increase organizational effectiveness through inputs and solutions to various problems and potential threats (Afsar et al., 2019; Aryee et al., 2014). Asides from these great benefits, employees involved are usually at risk. This tends to occur in circumstances where certain information is disclosed against other parties in the company, forces beyond the control of the individual or organization, and weak support. Therefore, people tend to speak up or provide input for the firm when they feel safe (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

The adoption of an intellectual stimulation approach, inspirational motivation, idealized effect, and individual considerations causes followers to work beyond expectations. Liu et al. (2010) reported that a transformational leader promotes voice behavior with an intellectual approach that stimulates employees to analyze problems from different perspectives and is given many leeways to speak up and challenge the status quo. Morrison et al. (2011) stated that they are comfortably allowed to offer their opinions assuming they feel that the environment is safe and poses no risk. A transformational leader who challenges the status quo and new perspectives ensures the environment is safe for the followers to voice new views that are different from the old perspectives.

Transformational leadership also promotes employees to provide constructive suggestions for the organization (Wang et al., 2019). This drive is realized by being a good listener, personally interacting with employees, as well as providing space and security to express themselves (Svendsen et al., 2018). Additionally, through inspirational motivation, transformational leaders help their followers understand the organization's collective vision and goals, thereby leading to more intense and interactive communication between these employees (Afsar et al., 2019). Leaders are also inspired to fight for shared meanings and goals, which triggers group members to communicate with each other and offer suggestions for achieving the vision. This is in line with Duan et al. (2017) that the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior is explained from a Pygmalion perspective with respect to leaders' expectations and employees' perceptions. Meanwhile, this leadership form tends to pay attention to employees' needs and development through ideal and individual considerations. According to social exchange behavior, employees who are supported and promoted provide feedback by voicing their thoughts rather than their fears and worries. Based on this explanation, the hypothesis was proposed as follows

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on voice behavior

#### Transformational leadership and work engagement

According to (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), work engagement is described as a positive, satisfying, work-related state of mind characterized by passion, dedication, and absorption. Vigor represents high energy and a state of mental endurance while executing assigned job functions. Dedication refers to a

sense of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge, while absorption means absolute concentration and engrossment, as well as difficulty disengaging from work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Several studies have been carried out on work engagement in the past few decades because it has positively affected both employees and businesses (Soares & Mosquera, 2019). Besides, most research reported that it has a positive effect on performance (Alessandri et al., 2018; Lai et al., 2020), productivity (Hanaysha, 2016), employee performance (Cesário & Cesário, 2017), helping behavior (Lai et al., 2020), Job Satisfaction, and OCB (Chhetri, 2017). Work engagement is affected by 2 main factors, namely job and personal resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Job resources are the physical, social, and organizational aspects of work, such as support from superiors, and co-workers, autonomy, learning opportunities, monitoring feedback, etc. Meanwhile, individual resources refer to self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience, and optimism (Soares & Mosquera, 2019). Abdullah et al. (2021) stated that someone with high work engagement is usually equipped with the resourceful skills needed to function effectively and possess the potential to create theirs over time.

Work engagement is proposed as a motivational approach, where transformational leaders are relevant variables that promote it to improve employee performance and other exceptional behaviors (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). The effect of transformational leadership and work engagement was explained using the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964). SET is one of the most frequently adopted conceptual paradigms used to understand employee behavior in the workplace (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theory illustrates that these interdependent transactions appear to be developed based on the premise of subjective cost-benefit analysis and comparison of alternatives (Ghadi et al., 2013). This is also the basis for the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement. Zhu et al. (2019) stated that when employees feel that they are getting attention and support from their leader, they tend to be more motivated and give good feedback by putting in their best. Lai et al. (2020) stated that transformational leadership pays personal attention to followers, tries to understand their needs, and provides emotional support in the workplace, increasing feelings of security and ultimately enabling them to express themselves in the workplace.

Furthermore, a transformational leader with inspirational motivation provides personal resources, such as respect and consideration to the followers, creating a supportive and conducive workplace atmosphere and environment, thereby enabling employees to repay positively, such as throught work engagement. This attribute promotes an intellectual approach where employees solve problems from a new perspective, thereby creating an organizational climate that triggers work engagement (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Ghadi et al., 2013). Transformational leadership with individual considerations also increases the followers' psychological sense of security, thereby boosting their willingness to engage in the workplace (Lai et al., 2020).

Monje Amor et al. (2020) explained the effect of this attribute on work engagement by employing the job guidance resource model. This was used to prove that the working conditions are divided into 2 main parts, namely job demands and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands refer to work's social and organizational aspects that require sustained physical and mental effort, including physiological and psychological costs. It refers to certain characteristics that help achieve set goals, reduce attributes such as job demands, and psychological costs associated with the assigned task, and stimulate personal and organizational growth (Demerouti et al., 2001). These promote the creation of work engagement where supervisors and social support, feedback, coaching, voice, opportunities for learning, development, and various tasks are perceived as job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Based on this explanation, the following hypothesis was proposed as follows:

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on work engagement

#### Transformational leadership, meaning of work, and work engagement

Several studies stated that the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement is unclear, therefore, it needs to be further explored (Ghadi et al., 2013). Meaning of Work was predicted to mediate transformational leadership with work engagement, where employees who perceive that their work is meaningful to the organization tend to get involved. Meaning of work is one of the variables that has received attention in the past decades. Meaning of work is considered an important variable because humans spend virtually 2/3 of their time working, therefore, it is concerned as a relevant aspect of life (Istiqomah et al., 2020). Employees will tend to give good performance if they feel that their work is valued, felt important, and useful for the organization.

Leaders are one of the most important contextual factors that aid in developing certain meaningful behaviors in the workplace (Pradhan & Jena, 2019; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2016). They ensure that the vision, mission, and set goals are clearly expressed to their followers, thereby creating a culture that reflects the organization's strategic priorities (Ghadi et al., 2013; Whittington et al., 2017). This brings about a cascading process in which all its members permeate the goals and values of the organization. Interestingly, this procedure causes employees to understand how their job functions contribute to achieving organizational goals. Transformational leadership with inspirational motivation communicates a vision that describes an attractive future and translates organizational strategies to more meaningfully, creating excitement, and passion, and unleashing latent potential to achieve organizational as well as personal goals (Shafi et al., 2020). The organization's vision and strategy are in accordance with the subordinates' values, and this leads to the perception that their job functions are purposeful, relevant, and meaningful to the company (Ghadi et al., 2013).

Based on employees' perspectives, transformational leadership with an integrated set of behaviors such as building trust and credibility is realized through consistency and organizational values. This includes conveying a vision that appeals to followers, promoting them to be a better part of themselves, fostering mutual love, and concern for co-workers, and providing support as well as exhibiting the importance of individual contributions to the organization, creating a meaningful work sense which in turn provides a strong emotional bond. This is indicated by employees' involvement in the company. Conversely, assuming they feel that they put in enough effort, which the organization does not recognize, reduces their intrinsic motivation and, in turn, affects their work engagement. The following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: Meaning of work mediates the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement

# Transformational leadership, meaning of work, and voice behavior

One of the outcomes that effectively contribute to the company is voice behavior. However, it is difficult, complex, and tends to negatively impact the individual who speaks (Chen et al., 2018), indicating that employees usually pay attention to contextual situations where they feel safe before expressing themselves. A secure and comfortable atmosphere makes them willing to offer their opinions on the company's development (Morrison, 2011). On the other hand, in a closed environment with a highly powerful culture and hierarchical arrangement, they tend to rethink and be careful in giving their opinions. This is because they feel unsecured and worried that expressing themselves poses a risk to their work or career and is perceived as challenging the status quo as well as tends to damage interpersonal relationships in their environment (Chamberlin et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2018; Morrison, 2011).

One of the main contextual factors that affect the work environment is leadership (Wang et al., 2019). The transformational type promotes employees to solve problems in new ways, seek opportunities in the face of difficulties and risks, and challenge the status quo (Ilyas et al., 2021). This approach ultimately causes employees to willingly engage in voice behavior and give their opinions for the organization's improvement (Chen et al., 2018). Ghadi et al. (2013) stated that transformational

leadership motivates employees by communicating the company's vision and strategy and the important and meaningful work roles of subordinates to achieve set goals. This boosts the meaning of work sense and further causes employees to give their opinions for the good of the organization through voice behavior. Pradhan and Jena (2019) stated that aligning the meaning of work with organizational goals motivates employees to perform exceedingly and get involved in extra roles and exhibit innovative work behavior. Furthermore, those supported and appreciated by their superiors feel that they add value to the company and voice their opinions. Based on this explanation, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H4: Meaning of work mediates the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior

### Transformational leadership, work engagement, and voice behavior

LePine & Van Dyne (1998) stated that voice behavior is related to enhancing employees' work situations by offering their ideas, opinions, and suggestions for organizational improvement. Ng & Feldman (2012) defined this variable as giving creative ideas, directives, opinions, and thoughts, including persuading employees to accept and implement these constructive suggestions. Meanwhile, Van Dyne, Ang & Botero (2003) stated that it is similar to employees' verbal expression concerning ideas, information, and opinions to help improve the company. Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) stated that voice behavior is a challenging, although constructive expression of concerns or ideas related to work problems. Based on these definitions, Morrison (2011) concluded that this variable has 3 main components. First, it is verbal communication conveyed by the sender to the recipient. Second, it is a discretionary behavior, and third, this attitude is affected by various factors. These 3 attributes involve delivering constructive ideas intended to bring about improvement, and positive changes in the company, rather than venting or complaining about negative factors. Due to the importance of voice behavior in industries, Aryee et al. (2014) stated a need to trigger it to maintain sustainable growth and development.

The theory of transformational leadership states that leaders greatly affect their followers. They are able to exert an impact that changes their followers' self-interest into a collective one that is useful to the company. Besides, this is realized by altering employees' needs, values, and preferences (Lai et al., 2020). However, several studies that analyzed the effect of transformational leadership on speaking behavior were considered unclear, indicating another investigation is needed to properly explain this mechanism (Chen et al., 2018; Ghadi et al., 2013). One mechanism that is employed to clarify the effect of transformational leadership on speaking behavior involves mediating variables, namely, work engagement. This variable requires more attention in explaining the impact of this leadership form on employee prosocial behavior (Cheng et al., 2014; Lai et al., 2020). Employees are more likely to engage in vocal behavior if they have physical, emotional and psychological resources connected to their work. This is also in line with the perspective of the Job Demands-Resources model presented by (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008) which states that a transformational leader can increase employee engagement by facilitating employee job resources. Besieux et al., (2018) stated that a transformational leader can increase employee engagement in several ways, including: providing constructive feedback; stimulating employee professional development; developing clear and precise communication about roles, expectations and motivating employees; and show appreciation to subordinates. Furthermore, when employees feel bound, they will tend to retaliate by taking prosocial actions such as voice behavior to improve organizational performance.

Enwereuzor et al. (2016) found that in the context of a hospital, transformational leaders can be likened to a nurse leader who emphasizes the importance of providing quality services to patients not only as a personal goal but contributing to the hospital's collective goals. This indicates that transformational leaders engage followers to commit to collective goals by articulating meaningful goals, providing support and a comfortable workplace and providing resources so as to increase employee

engagement (Lai et al., 2020). When employees feel that they have a feeling that there is support needed in their work, getting them from their leaders will cause employees to be willing to invest their physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in carrying out their work roles more deeply and tend to engage in proactive, one of which is employee voice behavior such as voicing improvements for organizations, services and so on (Chen et al., 2018; Lai et al., 2020). Based on this explanation, the hypothesis was proposed as follows:

H5: Work engagement mediates the effects of transformational leadership on voice behavior

The framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.

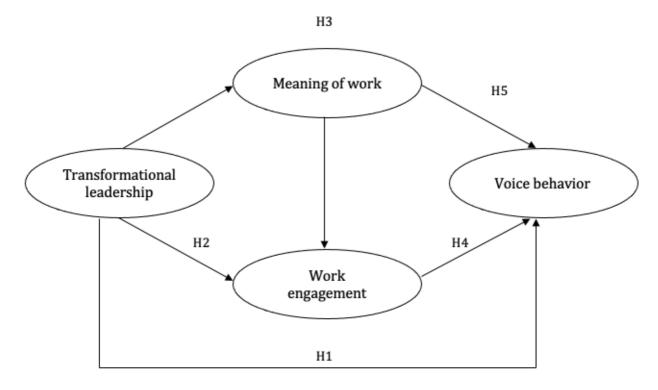


Figure 1 Conseptual Framework

#### **METHOD**

The participants used in this study are hotel employees who are in direct contact with consumers or frontline, including the marketing department, room service, Food, and Beverage section. This sample was selected because they receive direct input from consumers, which is further used to improve and develop hotel services. It is interesting to know the attributes that cause these frontline employees to willingly give their opinions which are perceived as an extension of the consumers' voice. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic altered the services rendered to consumers, hence, to survive and compete during high industrial contraction, hotels need more inputs. Fortunately, the frontline employees' voice behavior becomes relevant in the organization.

The sampling method in this study uses non-probability sampling, where the probability of selecting population elements is unknown (Cooper & Schindler, 2017). The non-probability sampling method used in this study is a purposive sampling technique, which uses the judgment of researchers in selecting cases with specific goals (Neuman, 2014). Purposive sampling is a sampling method that is limited to certain types of people who can provide the desired information, or meet several criteria determined by the researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017). In this study, the type of sample used was

employees with a minimum service period of 1 year because employees with a minimum service period of 1 year would be able to feel the meaning of work they were doing

Questionnaires were distributed to frontline employees at star hotels in Solo and Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. This was given to those permitted to distribute it to core employees who willingly shared it among their co-workers according to the stipulated criteria. These questionnaires were distributed online by the HRD department and appointed employees who met the predetermined criteria. Furthermore, 216 of 246 questionnaires with responses were filled out and used.

The responses were measured using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Transformational leadership measured by Carless, Wearing, and Mann (2000), amounted to 7 items. Typical examples of the questions used include "My supervisor communicates a clear and positive vision of the future," "My supervisor fosters trust," team involvement, and cooperation among members. Meaning of work is measured by 3 question items designed by Spreitzer (1995). These include "The work I do is very important to me" and "My job activities are personally meaningful to me." Job involvement was measured by the Utrecht Work Involvement Scale formulated by Schaufeli et al. (2006), which consisted of 9 items. These include "At work, I feel full of energy," "My job inspires me," "When I am working, I forget everything else around me." Meanwhile, speaking behavior was measured by six items from LePine and Van Dyne (1998). These include "I develop and make recommendations to my leaders on issues that affect my work" and "I talk to my leader about ideas for new projects or changes to workplace procedures."

Before testing the hypothesis, the validity and reliability of question items were initially evaluated. Field (2013) stated that validity is interpreted as measuring activities. The measurements carried out in this study are convergent and discriminant validities. Taherdoost (2016) stated that convergent validity examines the extent to which the theoretical constructs used are interrelated. Meanwhile, discriminant validity is used to measure the extent to which a variable is distinguished from others. Immediately, the instrument has been declared valid, and reliability testing is performed. According to (Heale & Twycross, 2015), this test is concerned with the consistency of a measure. Reliability is used to ascertain whether the instrument has approximately the same response each time the test is performed. This analysis is carried out using SEM, namely SmartPLS 3, by observing the Cronbach's alpha. Sekaran dan Bougie (2017) stated that it is perceived as a reliability coefficient that refers to how well an item positively correlates with the measured ones, where the value obtained using Cronbach's alpha is divided into 3 categories, namely good 0.80 to 100, acceptable 0.60 to 0.79, and poor < 0.6. Afterward, the instruments are declared valid and reliable, and it is continued with hypothesis testing performed with a structural equation model using a partial least squares (PLS) approach and SmartPLS 3.0 software. Sholihin dan Ratmono (2021) stated that one of its advantages is allowing simultaneous testing with many independent and dependent variables.

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Results**

216 frontline hotel employees were involved in this study. The respondents consist of 85 female (39%) and 131 male (61%), whose characteristics are shown in Table 1. The majority are Senior High or Vocational Schools, totaling 83 employees (38%), then 65 (30%) have Diploma certificates, 46 (21%) have a Bachelor's Degree, and only 2 (1%) attended Junior High School. However, 20 (10%) respondents failed to state their educational background and for the length of work, and it was discovered that 85 people (39%) who had the most job tenure was in the group >1-3 years, followed by 44 (20%) in the group >3-5 years, 30 (14%) in the category < 1 year, 25 (12%) in > 5 years, while 32 others (15%) failed to answer this question.

Table 1
Respondents Demographics

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	133	61
	Female	85	39
Education	Junior High School	2	1
	Senior High School	83	38
	Diploma	65	30
	Graduate	46	21
	No Answer	20	10
Job tenure	< 1 year	30	14
	> 1 - 3 years	85	39
	>3 - 5 years	44	20
	> 5 years	25	12
	No answer	32	15

Source: Processed data (2021)

Convergent validity test results are shown in Table 2. Based on this analysis, it was discovered that there were 3instruments Work Engagement question items, which had an outer loading value that is less than 0.7, therefore, these tools were dropped. Further evaluation was carried out, and the results showed that all the instruments had an outer loading value greater than 0.7. All variables also have composite reliability (CR) value and average variance extract (AVE) that exceeds the cut-off limits of 0.7 and 0.5, therefore all instruments used are validly convergent.

Table 2
Measurement model result

Transformational Leadership		0.057	
		0.957	0.761
TL1	0.837		
TL2	0.888		
TL3	0.902		
TL4	0.884		
TL5	0.849		
TL6	0.859		
TL7	0.886		
Meaning of Work		0.962	0.893
MOW1	0.948		
MOW2	0.942		
MOW3	0.945		
Work Engagement		0.925	0.674
WE1	0.827		
WE2	0.847		
WE4	0.866		
WE5	0.861		
WE7	0.787		
WE9	0.731		
Voice Behavior		0.912	0.635
VB1	0.720		
VB2	0.837		

	Construct and indicator	Outer Loadings	CR	AVE
VB3		0.775		
VB4		0.845		
VB5		0.805		
VB6		0.789		

Source: Processed data (2021)

The discriminant validity test was carried out using the Fornell and Larcker criteria indicators and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) method. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), this variable is measured by comparing the correlation between the 2 constructs, and it is realized by determining the root value of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each variable diagonally. Table 3 shows a larger loading factor than the other indicators. This is proven by the test carried out using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) method developed by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015). HTMT is used to estimate the correlation factor where its values give more consistent results. Table 4 shows the test results have an indicator value of <0.9, meaning that the variables used are conceptually different. This indicates that the instrument has fulfilled the convergent and discriminant validities.

Table 3
Fornell and Larcker's Criterion

	MOW	TL	VB	WE
MOW	0.945			
TL	0.507	0.872		
VB	0.398	0.395	0.796	
WE	0.691	0.676	0.491	0.821

Source: processed data (2021)

Table 4
Heterotrait- Monotrait Method Ratio

	MOW	TL	VB	WE	
MOW					
TL	0.535				
VB	0.415	0.408			
WE	0.747	0.728	0.523		

Source: processed data (2021)

In addition to testing the validity and reliability, it is also necessary to measure the suitability of the model by calculating the value of GGoodness of Fit)/GoF (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). GoF value is calculated using the root formula of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) multiplied by R Square. From the calculation results, it is found that a GoF value of 0.53 is included in the large GoF size category. The greater the GoF value, the more appropriate it is in describing the research sample. In addition, it can also be seen with the value of Q2 predictive relevance which is used to measure the structural model in knowing how well the observed values are produced by the model as well as parameter estimates. The value of Q2 is calculated using the formula Q2 =1-(1-R12) (1-R22).....(1-Rp2). From the calculation results obtained a value of 0.46. It can be said that the model has predictive relevance. Based on the measurement of Q2, a value of 0.46 is obtained, the value of Q2 is said to be good if it is closer to 1. So, it can be concluded that the model in this study is good or fit. and the underlying latent variables, indicating that the proposed model has a level of conformity that is already fit.

All instruments were declared valid and reliable and the hypothesis was tested simultaneously using a structural equation model with the help of Smart PLS 3 analysis software. The direct results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Direct Test Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
TL -> VB	0.108	0.113	0.083	1.305	0.192
TL -> WE	0.438	0.443	0.050	8.755	0.000
TL -> MOW	0.507	0.513	0.051	9.910	0.000
MOW -> WE	0.469	0.465	0.049	9.524	0.000
MOW -> VB	0.105	0.108	0.081	1.303	0.204
WE -> VB	0.345	0.349	0.103	3.343	0.001

Source: processed data (2021)

Table 5 shows that the Transformational Leadership in Voice Behavior has an Original Sample (0) value of 0.108 with a t-value of 1.305 and a p-value of 0.192. Based on these results, it was concluded that Transformational leadership has an insignificant effect on voice behavior. This is not in line with the proposed hypothesis, therefore, H1 is rejected. The test results also show that Transformational Leadership in Work Engagement has an Original Sample (0) value of 0.438 with a t-value of 8.755 and a p-value of 0.000. In accordance with these results, it was concluded that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work engagement. This is in line with the proposed hypothesis, therefore, H2 is accepted. In addition to the hypothesized results, the direct effect between these variables was also shown. Table 5 shows that Transformational Leadership on the meaning of Work has an Original Sample (0) value of 0.507 with a t-value of 9.910 and a p-value of 0.000. This study proves that the Meaning of Work on Work Engagement has an Original Sample (0) value of 0.469 with a t-value of 9.581 and a p-value of 0.000. Based on these results, it was concluded that Meaning of Work has a positive and significant effect on Work Engagement. The test results also show that the Meaning of Work on Voice Behavior has an Original Sample (0) value of 0.105 with a t-value of 1.299 and a p-value of 0.195. It was concluded that the Meaning of Work does not affect Voice Behavior. Meanwhile, the Work Engagement test results on Voice Behavior show that the Original Sample (0) value is 0.345 with a tvalue of 3.384 and a p-value of 0.001. It was concluded that Work Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Voice Behavior. The results of the Bootstrapping calculation can be seen in Figure 2

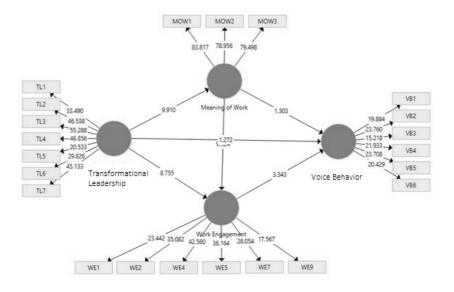


Figure 2 Bootstrapping Result

The mediation test results are shown in Table 6. The simultaneous use of SEM PLS showed that the meaning of work mediates the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement. This is indicated by the Original Sample (O) and statistical values of 0.238 and 6.792 with a p-value of 0.000. These results align with the proposed hypothesis that the meaning of work mediates the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement, therefore, H3 is accepted. Table 6 also shows that Meaning of Work does not mediate the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior. It is indicated by the Original Sample (0) and statistical values of 0.053 and 1.248 with a p-value of 0.213. These results are not in line with the proposed hypothesis, therefore, H4 is rejected. The results of simultaneous testing using SEM PLS showed that work engagement mediates the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior. This is indicated by the Original Sample (0) and statistical values of 0.151 and 3.293 with a p-value of 0.001. These are consistent with the proposed hypothesis that work engagement mediates the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior, therefore, H5 is accepted. In addition to testing the previously mentioned hypotheses, the results in Table 6 also show that work engagement mediates the effect of meaning of work on speech behavior. Thi is proven by the Original Sample (0) and statistical values of 0.162 and 3.305 with a p-value of 0.001. Moreover, other results show that transformational leadership affects speech behavior through the meaning of work and work engagement. This is proven by the Original Sample (0) and statistical values of 0.082 and 3.098 with a p-value of 0.002.

Table 6
Results of Specific Indirect Effects

		-			
	Original	Sample	Standard	T Statistics	P Values
	Sample (0)	Mean (M)	Deviation	( O/STDEV )	
			(STDEV)		
TL -> MOW -> VB	0.053	0.055	0.043	1.248	0.213
MOW -> WE -> VB	0.162	0.160	0.049	3.305	0.001
TL -> MOW -> WE -> VB	0.082	0.081	0.026	3.098	0.002
TL -> WE -> VB	0.151	0.149	0.046	3.293	0.001
TL -> MOW -> WE	0.238	0.239	0.035	6.792	0.000

Source: processed data (2021)

#### **Discussion**

Based on the results of data processing, some information about how voice behavior occurs in the hospitality industry was obtained. This emphasizes that it is difficult for employees, therefore, how this process occurs is an important matter that needs to be resolved. First, transformational leadership has an indirect effect on voice behavior. This is in line with several previous studies, such as Liang et al. (2017) and Svendsen et al. (2018), that transformational leadership promoted voice behavior. Moreover, it is possible because this variable alone is not enough to promote employees to lend their voices or give opinions beneficial to the organization. This involves more effort, including leaders' openness to stimulate participatory supervisory behavior into more explicit signals that promote employees to express themselves promotively (Svendsen et al., 2018). Kark et al., (2003) argue that this is also possible because some employees may be intimidated by a very charismatic leader so that they have a great dependence on the leader, thus causing employees to not want to give their opinions or express their opinions to the organization. It could be that the opinion made by the employee occurs if the employee is asked directly to give an opinion or participate if he is asked to, but it is not the employee's own desire to always give their opinion at all times. Meanwhile, Liang et al (2012) stated that one of the possible reasons why transformational leaders fail to encourage employees to speak up, especially forbidden voice behavior is the consequences that employees may suffer for their actions such as; perceived as a trouble maker, possible loss of position in the organization and negative job evaluation.

Second, it was also discovered that transformational leadership affects work engagement. This is in line with several previous studies, such as Eze (2016) and Lai et al. (2020). This finding showed that it increases followers' engagement in their work. A transformational leader promotes and motivates employees to provide feedback by putting in their best. This is based on leaders' attention and emotional support in the workplace, the opportunity to responsibly solve existent problems, and create a comfortable and fun working atmosphere that incites their followers to be more involved in their work. Furthermore, the third finding also proved that transformational leadership affects subordinates' behavior through employee job engagement (Lai et al., 2020). This result also strengthens the explanation with SET, namely if employees will give the same reward for the behavior they feel. This also applies to transformational leadership with dimensions such as inspirational motivation, intellectual approach and individual considerations that will provide motivation, attention and support to employees so that they will give good rewards to the organization, including one with work engagement.

Third, the study also found that transformational leadership plays a major role in encouraging voice behavior through the mediating effect of work engagement. These results proved that to promote followers to speak out. Leaders have to ensure that they are engaged in their work by articulately involving individual visions into the organization's collective goals, rendering support, a conducive workplace, and providing resources. All these attributes increase employee engagement, and they eventually feel involved and no longer hesitate to voice their opinions for the good of the organization. In addition, an employee who has physical, emotional and psychological resources connected to their work will tend to voice their opinions for the organization. In the context of a hotel, an employee who has physical, emotional and psychological resources will tend to be able to voice opinions regarding service improvement, service innovation, problem solving, which is especially common in the COVID-19 pandemic era.

Fourth, this finding showed that meaning of work mediates the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement, and it is in line with Ghadi et al. (2013). These results indicate that the meaningfulness of employees' work has a positive impact on getting them involved in their work. These results confirm that transformational leadership with various behavioral approaches that build trust and credibility in the eyes of employees, such as giving attention and support to followers, fostering mutual love, conveying an attractive vision in the eyes of followers that they are an important part of

the organization has been proven to increase the sense of belonging to the organization. meaning for employees which in turn will increase employee engagement in the organization. Ghadi et al. (2013) also stated that a leader needs to better understand the meaning of work from employees' perceptions, such as designing jobs that are tailored to social-emotional resources, to boost their self-esteem subsequently boosts employee engagement.

Fifth, this study also discovered that the meaning of work did not mediate the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior. This result is not in line with previous studies that the meaning of work mediates the effect of transformational leadership, thereby affecting their ability to express themselves regarding practices that bring about positive changes to the group or organization (Chen et al., 2018). The finding explains the outcome that this variable affects voice behavior through a longer mechanism, namely the meaning of work, work engagement, and voice behavior. It indicates the important role of a leader in promoting employees through intrinsic motivation where it is proven that their work is meaningful to the organization and can increase employee engagement. This further promotes employees to voice their opinions and thoughts for the organization's good. These results show that when a transformational leader ensures that the work is meaningful to employees, this is not enough to promote voice behavior. More effort is needed to trigger their involvement in work, and as a result, they volunteer to give opinions and input to the organization.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior, using the meaning of work and work involvement as mediating variables. Based on the results obtained, several conclusions were drawn. First, this attribute does not directly affect voice behavior, and this is in line with several previous studies (Liang et al., 2017; Svendsen et al., 2018). These results strengthen that mediating variables are needed to clarify the transformational leadership mechanism in inciting employees to lend their voices or give useful opinions. It was discovered that work engagement is an effective mediator that promotes voice behavior. It was also found that the meaning of work does not mediate the effect of transformational leadership on voice behavior. A longer mechanism is needed to promote this variable, namely the meaning of work and work engagement. This finding suggests that a transformational leader promotes employees' involvement either directly or through a mechanism to ensure meaningful work sense and promote voice behavior. Efforts made include paying attention and turning their followers' personal goals into collective ones. Furthermore, these leaders provide a safe work environment and support the creation of situations where employees devote their energies to accomplish the tasks assigned to them as well as provide resources and opportunities for them to be more involved in their work. This causes them to be more motivated to participate and get deeply involved in their work. In addition, they do not hesitate to give their opinion about improving the organization.

Same as many other behavioral investigation, this study has several limitations, including first, the data collection was carried out at a time (cross-sectional) due to limited permits, therefore, there is possible bias in the concluding aspect. Second, the questionnaires were only distributed at Solo and Semarang, Central Java hotels. This was because access to questionnaires was limited and was only reached in these 2 cities, therefore, generalizations need to be carefully performed. Third, this only uses self-assessment in measuring, namely self-reports from employees, therefore bias in data collection tends to occur. It was suggested that further studies are expected to use methods that reduce bias, such as a longitudinal approach. Data expansion also needs to be accomplished, in the hospitality and other sectors such as hospitals or banks, to get more evidence. Furthermore, two-way measurements are able to give better results.

#### **Author Contribution:**

Suryandari Istiqomah is the writer who initiated the idea of this research, created the research model to write the article. The author also checks the research questionnaire that will be used for distributing questionnaires through surveys. Researchers also process, interpret data, and write research conclusions.

Sarwoto contributed to assisting in data collection and statistical testing.

Wahyu Trinarningsih contributed in assisting data collection, collecting research-related articles and providing additional discussion on research articles.

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#### **Conflict of interest**

The author guarantees that the data collection process is carried out truthfully, and has obtained approval from the party filling out the questionnaire to fill out the questionnaire sincerely and without coercion. The author also guarantees that the data used is actual data without making unauthorized changes.

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