

Enhancing Employee Performance: The Interplay of Transformational Leadership, Job Satisfaction, and Work Engagement

*Determination of
Employee Engagement
on Performance*

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ABSTRACT

This study is driven by the importance of enhancing the performance of civil servants in supporting the effectiveness of public services. Employee performance is influenced by several factors, including transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and work engagement. The aim of this research is to examine the effects of transformational leadership and job satisfaction on employee performance, with work engagement as a mediating variable. The study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method. The research population comprised 4,828 civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government, and a sample of 370 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Smart PLS. The results indicate that job satisfaction and transformational leadership have significant effects on both employee performance and work engagement. Furthermore, work engagement was found to have a significant influence on employee performance and serves as a mediating variable in the relationships between job satisfaction and transformational leadership on employee performance. The findings of this study confirm that enhancing job satisfaction and implementing effective transformational leadership practices can sustainably improve work engagement and civil servant performance.

Keywords: Employee Performance, Job Satisfaction, Transformational Leadership, Work Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Civil Servants (*Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN*) employees are government workers and state civil servants appointed by civil service officials based on employment contracts. In addition to carrying out other state duties, ASN workers are responsible for organizing, implementing, and supervising the implementation of general government and national development (Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Because ASN workers carry out various positions, duties, and functions, employee performance assessments are carried out in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (*Peraturan Menteri Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi Republik Indonesia/PERMEN PAN RB*) Number 6 of 2022. This regulation requires the establishment of Employee Performance Targets (*Sasaran Kinerja Pegawai/SKP*) as performance standards that must be met by employees annually. Performance appraisal officials or direct superiors analyze these SKP through annual and periodic performance assessments (Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Employees need a leader capable of creating a comfortable and productive work environment to ensure all bureaucratic processes within the organization run smoothly. This, in turn, boosts employee job satisfaction as they carry out their responsibilities. Increased employee job satisfaction will positively impact work engagement and their desire to remain with their current organization. When work engagement is established,

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employees will perform well and may even become more productive (Wang, 2023). However, based on the findings of researchers' observations, it was revealed that employees and leaders who use a transformational leadership style are not yet aligned in the field. This is because many workers are still reluctant to step out of their comfort zones to adapt to dynamic changes, such as those occurring in the current digital era. Some staff still lack the technological literacy to utilize these advancements, which ultimately leads to suboptimal performance. This follows the government's directive to adopt new technologies with the aim of reducing bureaucracy and increasing effectiveness and efficiency. Low work engagement arises from a mismatch between employees and transformational leadership styles and from a lack of organizational support, ultimately leading to employees' intention to leave their current agency and join another (Senjaya & Anindita, 2020).

Although numerous studies have examined the relationship between job satisfaction, transformational leadership, work engagement, and employee performance, there is a research gap in the literature that comprehensively integrates all these variables with work engagement as a mediating variable into a single conceptual model (Park et al., 2022; Fardiansyah et al., 2025). This research gap represents an inadequately researched knowledge gap, namely, how job engagement strengthens the relationship between job satisfaction and leadership style on employee performance in the context of local government, thus providing a strong rationale for further research. Furthermore, most previous research has been conducted in the private sector or at a more general level, so the lack of research in the context of local government, such as the Riau Islands Provincial Government, indicates an empirical gap that needs to be filled (Meiryani et al., 2022).

In terms of novelty, this study makes two key contributions. First, by using work engagement as a mediator to simultaneously examine the effects of job satisfaction and transformational leadership on employee performance, this study offers a more comprehensive approach than most previous studies, which generally examine direct effects without considering the mechanisms mediating. Second, this study focuses on ASN in local government, a rarely studied area, thus adding new empirical evidence and broadening theoretical understanding of human resource management development in the public sector. This study aims to examine the direct effects of job satisfaction and transformational leadership on employee performance and work engagement, as well as the mediating role of work engagement in improving the performance of civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction on Work Engagement

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that actively addresses the needs and goals of followers and strives to inspire them to prioritize organizational interests over personal interests. Transformational leaders consistently instill the organization's vision and mission and motivate subordinates and stakeholders to contribute optimally (Meiryani et al., 2022; Syahrani et al., 2022). From the perspective of transformational leadership theory, the application of this leadership style encourages the formation of emotional bonds between leaders and employees. The quality of transformational leadership is reflected in the magnitude of the leader's influence on followers, which is characterized by increased respect, trust, and employees' willingness to work beyond expected standards (Meswantri & Awaludin, 2018; Rostina et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is also understood as the process of mobilizing individuals and organizations to shift personal interests into shared interests through the creation of a shared vision and changes in organizational culture and values (Shao et al., 2022).

Job satisfaction is one of the most widely researched employee attitudes due to its crucial role in influencing motivation and work enthusiasm. Low levels of job satisfaction can reduce motivation and morale, ultimately impacting employee performance. Conversely, when employees perceive that their work goals and expectations have been achieved, they will feel satisfied with their work (Astuti & Amalia, 2021; Tanjung et al.,

2023). Job satisfaction is a concept used to measure an employee's level of satisfaction with their work, encompassing job characteristics as well as work conditions and environment. Job satisfaction also reflects an individual's feelings and level of affection for their work (Nguyen & Ha, 2023). In the context of modern organizations, job satisfaction is becoming an increasingly important issue for companies, employees, and society. Job satisfaction is often used as an indicator to assess a company's quality, particularly regarding morale and organizational reputation. Satisfied employees tend to be happier and more productive, leading many to pay attention to companies that provide high levels of job satisfaction (Sulistiono et al., 2020).

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on work engagement.

H2: Job satisfaction has a positive effect on work engagement.

Factors Influencing Performance

Several previous studies by Rostina et al. (2020) have shown that transformational leadership has a strong influence on work engagement levels. By encouraging positive attitudes, proactive behavior, and self-efficacy in the face of challenging visions and goals, transformational leaders can increase work engagement, a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state oriented toward achieving organizational goals (Jiatong et al., 2022). Furthermore, transformational leadership has also been shown to have a positive and significant impact on employee performance, both directly and through increased job satisfaction (Nohe & Hertel, 2017; Alamanda et al., 2022). Various empirical studies have shown that job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on work engagement. Guglielmi et al. (2016) found that increased job satisfaction significantly increased work engagement. Furthermore, according to Gomar Sinaga et al. (2018) and Riyadi (2019), job satisfaction has also been shown to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with satisfied employees tending to perform better than dissatisfied ones.

Work engagement is an important concept in organizational psychology that describes a positive affective-motivational state characterized by three main dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Absorption reflects a pleasurable state when an individual is fully immersed in their work, vigor indicates a high level of energy and readiness to exert effort, while dedication reflects strong involvement and commitment to their work (Dekel et al., 2022). Work engagement is also defined as a state of motivation and self-fulfillment characterized by high physical and mental energy, enthusiasm, commitment, and full involvement in work tasks (Meswantri & Awaludin, 2018; Zhou et al., 2023). In this state, employees optimally mobilize their emotional, physical, and cognitive resources to complete their work (Park & Kim, 2024).

H3: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on performance.

H4: Job satisfaction has a positive effect on performance.

H5: Work engagement has a positive effect on performance.

Work Engagement as a Mediating Variable

Work engagement is often understood as a psychological state in the workplace encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral strengths, reflecting the intensity and persistence with which employees invest themselves in their work (Landells & Albrecht, 2019). Numerous studies have confirmed that engagement serves as a positive indicator influencing employee performance and organizational outcomes (Jiao et al., 2022). Employees with high levels of engagement tend to be more focused, dedicated, and proactive in completing work tasks, which not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to team effectiveness and overall organizational productivity (Jiatong et al., 2022). The concept of work engagement integrates multiple dimensions of employee involvement, including vigor, dedication, and absorption, highlighting the importance of psychological investment in achieving both personal and organizational goals (Landells & Albrecht, 2019).

Previous research also indicates that motivational processes play a critical role in shaping the relationship between leadership and performance outcomes. Specifically, transformational leadership has been shown to positively influence employee performance through work engagement, where engagement acts as a mediating variable that channels the effects of supportive and inspiring leadership into tangible performance results (Landells & Albrecht, 2019; Jiatong et al., 2022). Based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, job satisfaction is considered an outcome of the motivational process, wherein adequate job resources foster positive outcomes such as performance and satisfaction by enhancing engagement. While the mediating role of engagement has been empirically supported, much of the research relies on cross-sectional designs. Nevertheless, studies indicate a moderate and consistent correlation between work engagement and job satisfaction across both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, emphasizing the stability of engagement as a predictor of positive work outcomes (Guglielmi et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2023).

H6: Work engagement mediates the effect of transformational leadership on performance.
H7: Work engagement mediates the effect of job satisfaction on performance.

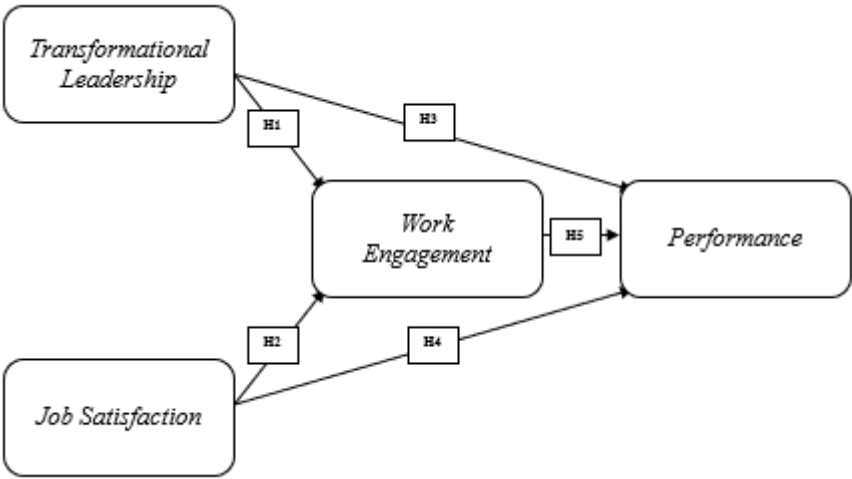


Figure 1. Research Framework

Figure 1 presents a conceptual model illustrating that transformational leadership and job satisfaction affect employee performance both directly and indirectly through work engagement as a mediating variable. It is posited that transformational leadership and job satisfaction enhance employees’ work engagement, which subsequently leads to improved performance. In addition, these two independent variables are also hypothesized to exert a direct impact on performance without the involvement of work engagement. Therefore, the model highlights the significant role of work engagement in reinforcing the relationships between leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This quantitative study seeks to examine the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The focus of the research is on government institutions within the Riau Islands Province. The study population comprises all ASN of the Riau Islands Provincial Government, totaling 4,828 individuals. The sampling method employed is probability sampling, which gives every element of the population an equal chance of being selected as part of the sample. The Slovin formula by Mohammed et al. (2022) was applied as the technique for determining the appropriate sample size.

Slovin Formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n: Number of Respondents

N: Population Size

e: Error Rate (e=5%)

Based on calculations using the Slovin formula, we obtain:

$$n = \frac{4.828}{1 + 4.828(0.05)^2} = 369.39556$$

Therefore, the minimum sample size from the Slovin Formula calculation above is 369.39556, rounded up to 370 participants. The data sources used in this study are primary and secondary data obtained from questionnaires, interviews, observations, and research data. The research model uses SEM (Structural Equation Model) analysis operated using Smart PLS Version 3. The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

The operational definitions of the variables used in this study include transformational leadership, job satisfaction, job engagement, and employee performance. Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style that directs subordinates to transcend personal interests by transforming their self-confidence and work enthusiasm, thereby enabling them to achieve performance beyond expectations. This variable is measured through four indicators, namely, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, each represented by eight statements on a Likert scale. Job satisfaction is defined as the level of employee satisfaction with their job and work environment, encompassing aspects of working conditions, relationships with coworkers and superiors, remuneration, promotion opportunities, and career development. Job satisfaction is measured through three indicators, namely job factors, promotions, and supervision, operationalized in six statements using a Likert scale.

Furthermore, the variable of job engagement is understood as an employee's emotional attachment to their work and organization, which drives motivation and the ability to make the best contribution to organizational and individual success. This variable is measured through three indicators: enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption, each represented in six statements using a Likert scale. The variable of employee performance is defined as the level of achievement of task implementation, measured based on standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed (Maria, 2019). Employee performance is measured through five indicators: quality, quantity, effectiveness, supervision, and interpersonal relationships, which are operationalized in ten statements using a Likert scale.

RESULTS

Data for this study were obtained from a sample of 370 respondents, consisting of civil servants within the Riau Islands Provincial Government. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents according to gender, age, educational attainment, and length of service. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were female (199 individuals), while male respondents numbered 171 (46%). Regarding age distribution, most respondents were between 28 and 43 years old (236 respondents, 64%), followed by those aged 44–59 years (112 respondents, 30%), and those aged 17–27 years (22 respondents, 6%). With respect to educational level, the largest proportion of respondents held a D-IV/Bachelor's degree (253 respondents, 68%), followed by those with a Master's degree (80 respondents, 22%). Respondents with a Diploma qualification totaled 21 (6%), those with a high school education numbered 12 (3%), and those with a

Doctoral degree accounted for 4 respondents (1%). Finally, based on length of service, the largest group of respondents had served for more than 15 years (126 respondents, 34%), followed by those with 11–15 years of service (111 respondents, 30%), 6–10 years of service (92 respondents, 25%), and 1–5 years of service (41 respondents, 11%).

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Data

Individual Characteristics	Category	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	171	46%
	Female	199	54%
Age	17–27	22	6%
	28–43	236	64%
	44–59	112	30%
Education	High School	12	3%
	Diploma	21	6%
	D-IV/Bachelor	253	68%
	Master	80	22%
Work Period	Doctoral	4	1%
	1–5 Years	41	11%
	6–10 Years	92	25%
	11–15 Years	111	30%
	>15 Years	126	34%

The results of the study are shown in Figure 2. All indicator items in this study have a loading factor value > 0.7, meeting the validity threshold suggested by Njaramba (2024).

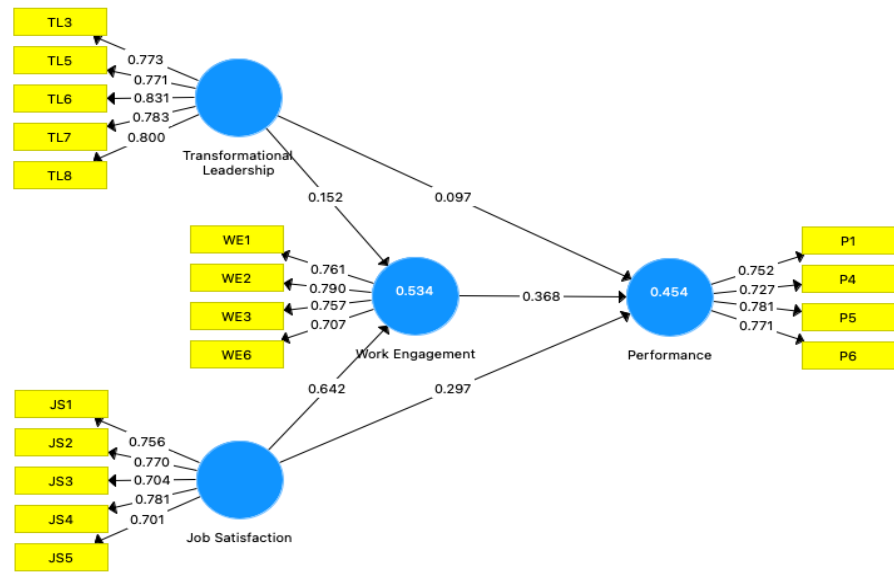


Figure 2. PLS Algorithm Test

Validity testing can be seen from the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. If the AVE value is ≥ 0.5 , a construction is considered valid (Chan et al., 2023). The test results in this study indicate that the indicator items are valid because they meet the requirements. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity Test

Variable	AVE	Results
Job Satisfaction	0.552	Valid
Employee Performance	0.575	Valid
Transformational Leadership	0.627	Valid
Work Engagement	0.569	Valid

After conducting the validity test, a reliability test was conducted by examining Cronbach's Alpha value. Data is considered reliable when the value is >0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). This is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Results
Job Satisfaction	0.797	0.860	Reliable
Employee Performance	0.753	0.844	Reliable
Transformational Leadership	0.852	0.894	Reliable
Work Engagement	0.748	0.840	Reliable

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that the model has a strong capability and contribution in explaining the variance in the dependent variable. Specifically, the R^2 value for performance is 0.449 (44.9%), and for work engagement it is 0.531 (53.1%). These results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Performance	0.454	0.449
Work Engagement	0.534	0.531

The results of the two-tailed t-test from each bootstrap analysis exceeded the critical value of 1.96, with p-values < 0.05, in line with the threshold suggested by Din et al. (2024). This indicates that the data are significantly higher than the threshold and demonstrate a high and strong level of significance. This can be seen in Table 6.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Construct	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	t-statistics	p-values
Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.530	0.051	10.509	0.000
Job Satisfaction -> Work Engagement	0.638	0.045	14.261	0.000
Transformational Leadership -> Employee Performance	0.159	0.064	2.380	0.018
Transformational Leadership -> Work Engagement	0.156	0.062	2.461	0.014
Work Engagement -> Employee Performance	0.369	0.075	4.901	0.000

Table 5 indicates that job satisfaction has a significant effect on employee performance, as demonstrated by a t-statistic of 10.509 and a p-value of 0.000. This result suggests that higher levels of job satisfaction among civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government are associated with improved performance. Additionally, job satisfaction is shown to significantly influence work engagement, with a t-statistic of 14.261 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that greater job satisfaction enhances work engagement among the civil servants.

Transformational leadership was found to have a significant effect on employee performance, as indicated by a t-statistic of 2.380 and a p-value of 0.018. This suggests that the application of transformational leadership can enhance the performance of civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government. Additionally, transformational leadership also has a significant impact on work engagement, with a t-statistic of 2.461 and a p-value of 0.014, indicating that transformational leadership can strengthen civil servants' work engagement. Moreover, work engagement significantly influences employee performance, as evidenced by a t-statistic of 4.901 and a p-value of 0.000, implying that higher levels of work engagement are associated with better performance among civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government.

The results of a one-sided t-test from each bootstrap resulted in a t-statistic exceeding 1.64, with P-values <0.05 (Hair et al., 2017). The indirect effect can be seen by comparing the t-statistic with the t-table value and the P-value at the 95% confidence level (alpha = 5%). Referring to the Smart PLS data processing results in the Specific Indirect Effects table, the indirect effect is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Indirect Effects

Construct	t-statistics	p-values
Job Satisfaction -> Work Engagement -> Employee Performance	4.525	0.000
Transformational Leadership -> Work Engagement -> Employee Performance	2.044	0.041

Work engagement has been shown to mediate the influence of job satisfaction on employee performance. Table 6 demonstrates values of 0.000 (<0.05) and 4.525 (≥ 1.64), indicating that work engagement can strengthen the influence of job satisfaction on improving the performance of civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government. Furthermore, work engagement also acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. This finding is supported by values of 0.041 (<0.05) and 2.044 (≥ 1.64), indicating that work engagement can strengthen the influence of transformational leadership in improving the performance of Civil Servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that all relationships between variables in this study were proven to be significant, both directly and indirectly. This finding confirms the important role of job satisfaction, transformational leadership, and work engagement in improving employee performance in civil servants within the Riau Islands Provincial Government. Job satisfaction is proven to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance. The high t-statistic value and p-value below the significance level indicate that the higher the level of employee job satisfaction, the better the resulting performance. Job satisfaction reflects employees' positive feelings towards their work, both in terms of tasks, work environment, and rewards received. When employees feel satisfied, they tend to show greater responsibility and strive to achieve set performance targets. This finding is in line with Riyadi (2019), Abbas and Dogan (2022), and Montiero et al. (2022) research, which states that job satisfaction is an important factor in driving improved performance of public sector employees.

Furthermore, job satisfaction also significantly influences work engagement. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs will be more cognitively, emotionally, and physically engaged in carrying out their tasks. High work engagement indicates enthusiasm, dedication, and focus at work, which ultimately has a positive impact on work effectiveness. These results support the findings of Guglielmi et al. (2016) and Pathan (2023), who emphasized that job satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping work engagement with the organization. Transformational leadership has also been shown to significantly influence employee performance. This leadership style emphasizes inspiration, motivation, and individual attention to subordinates. Leaders who are able to provide a clear vision and encourage employee development will create a work climate conducive to improved performance. These research findings align with the findings of Alamanda et al. (2022) and Yusup and Maulani (2023), who demonstrated that transformational leadership can improve performance through motivational encouragement and support for employees.

Furthermore, transformational leadership has a significant impact on work engagement. Transformational leaders are able to build a sense of belonging and employee involvement in their work and the organization. When employees feel supported and appreciated by their leaders, their work engagement levels increase. This finding is consistent with research by Jiatong et al. (2022), Hayati (2022), and Meria et al.

(2022), which states that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in increasing work engagement. Work engagement itself has been shown to have a positive impact on employee performance. Employees with high levels of work engagement tend to demonstrate more optimal performance because they work with full energy and dedication. These results reinforce the findings of Jiatong et al. (2022) and Faadhilah et al. (2025), which emphasize that work engagement is a crucial determinant in improving employee performance.

Furthermore, the results of the indirect effect test indicate that work engagement mediates the influence of job satisfaction and transformational leadership on employee performance. This means that job satisfaction and transformational leadership not only directly influence performance but also improve performance by increasing work engagement. This finding suggests that work engagement acts as an important psychological mechanism linking individual and organizational factors to employee performance, as proposed by Hair et al. (2017) and Evada Rustina et al. (2025).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that job satisfaction has a significant impact on employee performance. Job satisfaction also significantly affects work engagement, and work engagement, in turn, significantly influences employee performance. Furthermore, transformational leadership significantly affects both employee performance and work engagement among civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government. Additionally, the mediating variable of work engagement was found to mediate the effects of job satisfaction on employee performance as well as the effects of transformational leadership on employee performance. These results have practical implications, suggesting that government managers can enhance civil servants' performance by fostering higher job satisfaction and work engagement, as well as adopting transformational leadership practices.

Although this study has helped achieve its objectives, limitations still need to be considered. This study only covered civil servants working within the Riau Islands Provincial Government. Furthermore, because this study used a quantitative approach, qualitative aspects that could potentially provide deeper insights could not be comprehensively explained. Based on these limitations, future research is expected to involve a larger number of respondents and combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, or use mixed methods, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. This study also has important implications, as the results can be used practically by the Riau Islands Provincial Government to improve the effectiveness of its policies and work programs. Furthermore, this study contributes to the academic literature regarding the performance of civil servants in the Riau Islands Provincial Government.

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