

## WHEN EMPLOYEES HAVE A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER, AND THERE ARE ALOTS OF JOB DEMANDS, DOES THE EMPLOYEE'S WORK ENGAGEMENT INCREASE?

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aimed to understand the role of transformational leadership in moderating the relationship between cognitive demand and hassle on work engagement among employees in a company. Transformational leadership refers to the behavior of a leader who can inspire, provide guidance, motivate, and encourage followers to achieve maximum results. Cognitive demand is a working condition that requires individuals to focus their thoughts on their tasks. Hassle refers to the conditions experienced by individuals when working, involving job demands that are complex and unexpected challenges in completing tasks. Work engagement is a positive work condition that provides well-being in the workplace and is characterized by dedication, vigor, and absorption. This study used a quantitative method with a non-experimental design and was conducted with 258 participants who were private sector employees in Indonesia. Three questionnaires were used for data collection and were processed using SPSS version 26.00. The measurement tools used in this study included the Job Demand-Resources Questionnaire (2014), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), and the Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI). The research found that transformational leadership moderates the relationship between cognitive demand and work engagement. This means that transformational leadership can influence the extent to which cognitive job demands affect employees' levels of work engagement. However, the study did not find that transformational leadership moderates the relationship between hassle and work engagement. This suggests that in the case of hassle, the role of transformational leadership in mitigating the negative impact of complex job demands may not be as strong. The findings of this research can have practical implications for leadership development in the workplace and job demand management to enhance employee work engagement. Additionally, this study can serve as a foundation for further research in this field.*

**Keywords:** Job demand, hassle, cognitive demand, work engagement, transformational leadership

### 1. PREFACE

According to Bakker (2014), job demands refer to the conditions of work that require full concentration, precision, emotional involvement, dealing with difficulties, time pressure, and conflicting aspects. Bakker and Demerouti (2014) define job demands as processes that deplete energy, consume energy resources, and can lead to job strain and health complaints. According to Cavanaugh et al. (1990; as cited in Breevaart & Bakker, 2018), job demands can be classified into two types: challenges and hindrances. Challenges are seen as demands that have the potential to contribute to learning and achievement, while hindrances are obstacles that hinder growth and goal attainment. Both types essentially involve work demands that consume energy.

In previous research (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018), it was found that job demands can predict work engagement, which is a positive state related to work and characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The role of job demands in predicting work engagement depends on their type. Positive job demands (challenges), such as cognitive demand and workload, were found to increase work engagement. Conversely, negative job demands (hindrance), such as role conflict and family work conflict, were associated with decreased work engagement.

Furthermore, in predicting work engagement, job demands (cognitive demand and role conflict) are moderated by transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a leadership model that describes how leaders become role models in behavior, motivate, inspire, encourage creativity in their followers, and pay attention to their followers. Transformational leadership embodies qualities that can inspire followers to exceed expected performance, ultimately impacting their satisfaction and commitment to the group and organization (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership acts as a moderator between job demand and work engagement, indicating that transformational leadership is related to work engagement. This is supported by a study conducted by Ardianti et al. (2020), where transformational leadership's influence on job engagement is represented by a  $\beta$  value of 0.468 with a significance level of  $p \leq 0.05$ . This suggests that transformational leadership plays a significant role in job engagement. In other words, the more employees perceive the influence of transformational leaders, the more engaged they become in their work.

In the study by Breevaart and Bakker (2018), it was found that employees with high transformational leadership experienced higher work engagement as cognitive demand increased. However, employees with low transformational leadership and higher cognitive demand did not necessarily experience higher work engagement. Regarding job demand (role conflict), employees with low transformational leadership experienced lower work engagement as role conflict increased, while employees with high transformational leadership and higher role conflict did not necessarily experience lower work engagement.

The research conducted by Breevaart and Bakker (2018) provided insights into the role of hindrance (role conflict) but did not explore the role of other hindrance demands. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2014), hindrance demands encompass more than just role conflict; they also include hassle, which refers to complications in work. Bakker (2014) stated that hassle is a condition experienced by individuals when they face unexpected complications and other non-essential work demands while completing tasks. Previous research by Bolger and Zuckerman (1995) suggested that hassle can have negative effects on health due to individual stress reactivity, which pertains to how individuals physically and emotionally react to stressful events. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of hindrance demand (hassle) in predicting work engagement. Additionally, it will examine the moderating effect of transformational leadership on hindrance demand (hassle). To evaluate the role of hindrance demand (hassle) in predicting work engagement, the study will also include cognitive demand as a challenge demand.

In the course of their work as employees, every individual faces job demands when performing their duties. These job demands can have either positive (challenges) or negative (hindrance) effects on employees. Positive job demands result in work engagement, while negative job demands can lead to fatigue and burnout. Negative job demands can be minimized to prevent work-related fatigue by having job resources and personal resources. This concept is supported by Schaufeli and Bakker's theory (2004), which suggests that high job demands and a lack of human resources can lead to high work-related fatigue (burnout) and reduce work engagement. The JD-R Model plays a role in work engagement and work-related fatigue (burnout). In this context, the JD-R Theory explains how employees' energy and enthusiasm for their work, as well as their high concentration on their tasks (engagement), are influenced by their work environment. Specifically, JD-R distinguishes between two categories of job characteristics: job resources and job demands. Job resources are aspects of work that stimulate personal growth and

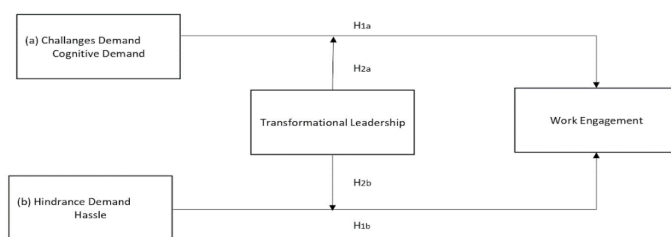
achievement and initiate the motivation process. Job demands, on the other hand, are proposed to initiate the process of energy depletion, consuming energy resources, which can lead to job strain and health complaints (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Besides job resources and job demands, JD-R theory also proposes two interaction effects. The first interaction effect is known as the boosting effect, where job resources can enhance employee work engagement when job demands are high (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). The second interaction effect in JD-R is the buffering effect, which is a negative effect that can hinder work performance. This effect suggests that job resources help replenish lost energy resources when meeting job demands and provide employees with tools to cope with work-related stress.

While working, employees aim to perform well and comfortably, despite the inevitable job demands. Employees need strategies to cope with high job demands and avoid work-related stress. Based on the above exposition, this study can be represented as follows:

Based on the background provided above, the hypotheses proposed for the study are as follows:

- a)  $H_{1a}$ : Cognitive demand has a positive relationship with work engagement.
- b)  $H_{1b}$ : Hassle demand has a negative relationship with work engagement.
- c)  $H_{2a}$ : Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between challenges demand (cognitive demand) and work engagement. The relationship between cognitive demand and work engagement differs when transformational leadership is high compared to when it is low.
- d)  $H_{2b}$ : Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between hindrance demand (hassle) and work engagement. The relationship between hindrance demand (hassle) and work engagement differs when transformational leadership is high compared to when it is low.

**Figure 1**  
*Research Hypothesis Diagram*



## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative method with a non-experimental design. The measured variables in this study are job demand as the independent variable, referring to the job demands experienced by employees in their work, which can influence the company's goals in achieving success. Furthermore, the transformational leadership variable is used as a moderator.

There are 258 participants in this study, comprising 138 females (53.5%). Participants hold various job positions, ranging from staff or officer, supervisor, department head or manager, to division head or general manager. In terms of education, 169 have a bachelor's degree (66%). Among the participants, 148 are married (57.4%). The majority of participants, 189 participants (73.3%), have permanent employment status. In terms of job levels, 149 participants (57.8%) are staff, 64 participants (24.8%) are supervisors/assistant managers.

The study utilized the Job Demands – Resources Questionnaire developed by Bakker in 2014. This questionnaire comprises 40 items, with 23 items measuring job demands and 17 measuring job resources. However, this research focused solely on job demands, which demonstrated a reliability with an alpha Cronbach of 0.912 across the 23 items. The job demand in this study consists of various dimensions related to work, including emotional demand with 6 items, hassle with 5 items, role conflict with 4 items, work pressure with 4 items, and complex thinking required for the job (cognitive demand) with 4 items. For this study, two dimensions of job demand, namely cognitive demand and hassle, are being utilized. Here are examples of items related to cognitive demand: "How often does your job require continuous attention?" and hassle: "How often do you have a lot of difficulties in completing projects/tasks?" The reliability test results for cognitive demand in the study yielded an Cronbach's alpha value of 0.60. Meanwhile, the reliability test results for hassle in the study yielded an Cronbach's alpha value of 0.85.

Work engagement was assessed using the 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker in 2003. The UWES is available in 21 languages and offers different versions, including the original 17-item version, a simplified 9-item version, and a version for students. Work engagement in this study exhibited a reliability with an alpha Cronbach of 0.927 across the 17 items. The UWES (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale) items in this study are measured on a 6-point frequency scale ranging from 1 "never" to 6 "always." This 17-item UWES scale measures three dimensions of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor consists of 6 items, with a sample item being: "I feel enthusiastic when I am working." Dedication includes 5 items, with a sample positive item: "I am proud of the work that I do." Absorption comprises 6 items, with a sample item: "I am so engrossed in my work that I lose track of time. The reliability test results for Work Engagement, using the 17-item version in this study, yielded an alpha Cronbach value of 0.927. This indicates a high level of internal consistency and reliability for the Work Engagement measurement in your research.

Transformational leadership was measured using the Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI), including six leadership behaviors, namely articulating vision, providing appropriate models, fostering acceptance of group goals, setting high performance expectations, offering individualized support, and providing intellectual stimulation. Additionally, one behavior related to transactional leadership, namely contingent reward, was assessed. The TLI was developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). Sample items from the transformational leadership dimensions are as follows: (a) articulating vision: "Always seeking opportunities for organizational development."; (b) providing appropriate model: "Sets a good example for me to follow."; (c) fostering acceptance of group goals: "Develops a sense of camaraderie and enthusiasm among team members."; (d) high performance expectation: "Consistently demands the best performance from team members."; (e) individualized support: "Treats me according to my needs in the workplace." (f) intellectual stimulation: "Challenges me to solve old problems/challenges with new ideas.". In the study, transformational leadership exhibited high reliability with an Cronbach's alpha value of 0.966 across its 28 items.

The research was conducted in an online setting, where the questionnaire was prepared. The data collection process involved informed consent, collecting participants' personal information, and administering the main questionnaire using an online form. This online questionnaire was distributed to employees in the service company, aiming to gather insights into leadership behavior in their divisions, the level of work engagement among the employees themselves, and the perceived job demands.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Normality tests were conducted on the four research variables using the One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. If the p-value (significance value) is greater than 0.05, the data is considered to be normally distributed. Here are the results for each variable: Cognitive Demand: The p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means that the data is not normally distributed. Hassle: The p-value is 0.014, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the data is not normally distributed. Transformational Leadership: The p-value is 0.091, which is greater than 0.05. This suggests that the data is normally distributed. Work Engagement: The p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means that the data is not normally distributed. Several of the variables have non-normally distributed data. Therefore, Spearman Correlation method data analysis were used to perform correlation.

**Table 1**

*The Relationship between the Research Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Cognitive Demand	4.00	0.574	1			
Hassle	3.21	0.956	-0.298**	1		
Transformational Leadership	5.14	1.137	0.105	-0.137*	1	
Work Engagement	4.63	0.848	0.166**	-0.168**	0.510**	1

Next, for hypothesis 1a, we examine the relationship between the job demand dimension (cognitive demand) and work engagement. Based on the Spearman Correlation test between cognitive demand and work engagement showed a relationship,  $r_s = 0.166$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Thus, the Hypothesis 1a is supported.

Moving on to hypothesis 1b, we investigate the correlation between the job demand dimension (hassle) and work engagement. Based on the Spearman Correlation test between hassle and work engagement showing a relationship,  $r_s = -0.168$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Thus, the Hypothesis 1b is supported. For testing Hypothesis 2a, transformational leadership was categorized as high and low. Since the data in this study are non-parametric, the researcher used the Spearman Correlation test. The results of the Spearman Correlation test between cognitive demand and work engagement showed no significant relationship in the group of individuals with high transformational leadership,  $r_s = 0.00$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . However, cognitive demand and work engagement had a positive relationship in the group of individuals with low transformational leadership,  $r_s = 0.207$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . In other words, in the group of individuals with a tendency toward low transformational leadership, the higher the cognitive demand, the higher the work engagement. Thus, transformational leadership acts as a moderator in the relationship between job demand (cognitive demand dimension) and work engagement.

Regarding hypothesis 2b, transformational leadership was categorized as high and low. The regression test results showed no relationship between hassle and work engagement, in the group of individuals with high transformational leadership,  $r_s = -0.046$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Similarly, in the group of individuals with a tendency toward low transformational leadership, job demand (hassle dimension) did not correlate with work engagement,  $r_s = -0.167$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . In other words, both the high transformational leadership group and the low transformational leadership group, higher job demand (hassle) did not necessarily result in lower work engagement. Transformational leadership did not moderate the relationship between hassle and work engagement.

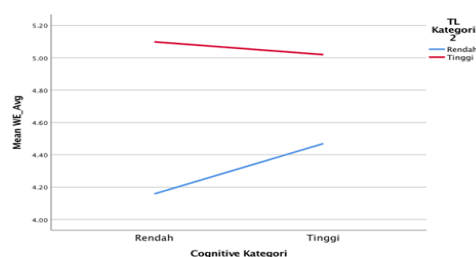
**Table 2**

*Results of the Correlation Cognitive Demand (Challenge Demand), Hassle (Hindrane Demand), and Work Engagement in Low and High Tranformational Leadership*

Job Demand	Work Engagement			
	Transformational Leadership			
	Low		High	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Cognitive Demand	0.207*	0.030	0.000	0.996
Hassle	-0.167 <sup>+</sup>	0.082	-0.046	0.623

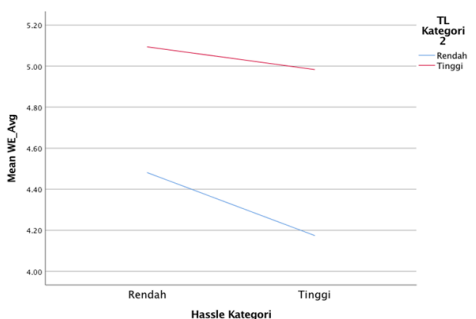
**Figure 2**

*The Role of Transformational Leadership as a Moderator between Cognitive Demand and Work*



**Figure 3**

*The Role of Transformational Leadership is not as a Moderator between Hassle and Work Engagement*



#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of Hypothesis 1a in the study indicate that cognitive demand has a positive relationship with work engagement. This is consistent with previous research (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018) that show a positive relationship between cognitive demand and work engagement. This can be interpreted as the higher the cognitive demand individuals face, the more they show work engagement. Employees who are challenged and required to think conceptually are more likely to be engaged in their work, especially if the tasks align with their abilities and interests.

The results of Hypothesis 1b show that hassle has a significant negative relationship with work engagement. This means that individuals facing high levels of hassle have lower work engagement. In other words, employees experiencing a high level of additional tasks and interruptions outside of their main responsibilities are less likely to be engaged in their work.

Regarding Hypothesis 2a, the study demonstrates that transformational leadership moderates the relationship between cognitive demand and work engagement, supported by Breevaart and Bakker's (2018) research. However, the moderation effect differs based on the level of transformational leadership. Breevaart and Bakker (2018) stated that individuals with high transformational leadership and high cognitive demand exhibit higher work engagement. In this study, when individuals experience low transformational leadership and high cognitive demand, work engagement increases significantly. This implies that low transformational leadership combined with high cognitive demand enhances work engagement. However, in situations where individuals experience high transformational leadership and high cognitive demand, the impact on work engagement is uncertain. Transformational leadership has a stronger influence on work engagement compared to cognitive demand. If transformational leadership is low, cognitive demand significantly affects work engagement. However, if transformational leadership is high, the impact of cognitive demand on work engagement is minor due to the strong influence of transformational leadership.

Regarding Hypothesis 2b, when transformational leadership is categorized as high or low, the regression analysis shows no significant relationship between hassle and work engagement in both groups. In other words, regardless of the level of transformational leadership, an increase in hassle (job demand) does not necessarily decrease work engagement. Transformational leadership does not moderate the relationship between hassle and work engagement. However, even though transformational leadership does not directly moderate the relationship between hassle and work engagement, it plays a role. When transformational leadership is low and employees face high levels of hassle, there is a decrease in work engagement. Conversely, if transformational leadership is high and employees face hassle, there is a reduction in their attachment to the work. So, an increase in transformational leadership, although not reaching the level of work engagement, does reduce disengagement among employees.

Based on the research findings regarding the role of cognitive demand and hassle on work engagement, with transformational leadership as a moderator among employees in private companies, the conclusions to the research hypotheses are as follows: Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 2a are accepted, while hypothesis 2b is rejected. There is a correlation between cognitive demand and work engagement, as well as between hassle and work engagement. In hypothesis two, transformational leadership (high/low) moderates the relationship between cognitive demand and work engagement. In the third hypothesis, transformational leadership (high/low) does not moderate the relationship between hassle and work engagement. The variables in this study are expected to be applicable and useful in other contexts, as there is still a scarcity of research that delves into the detailed job demands perceived by employees and their impact on work engagement in the workplace. It can be explained that transformational leadership does not necessarily moderate the overall relationship between job demand and work engagement among employees in private companies. The results of this research indicate that transformational leadership moderates some aspects of job demand and work engagement. Not all dimensions of job demand can be moderated by transformational leadership when categorized as high or low. Therefore, some hypotheses are accepted, and some are rejected.

### **Acknowledgement**

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