

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment: Exploring Work Motivation as the Mediator in private universities, Timor-Leste

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ABSTRACT

Commitment is the most important determinant of private universities in achieving their goals. Higher education plays an important role in preparing adequate human resources in various sectors. The aim of this study was to investigate the mediating role of entrepreneurial motivation between transformational leadership and organizational commitment in a private university setting. We recently visited universities in Timor-Leste. Source Demographics KIESP-TL has 305 permanent faculty members in private universities. This is a randomized experiment with a sample size of 173 teachers, with a margin of error of 5%. Method: Data was collected through questionnaire. The data analysis was divided into descriptive and theoretical analysis; The former, analyzed with SPSS; while later using SMART-PLS 4.1. The results show a positive but significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. However, transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on performance motivation. Work motivation is an effective mediator between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. The results contribute to prior empirical research and may serve as a basis for subsequent research. Furthermore, it can provide valuable insights for private universities to focus on organizational commitment by increasing transformational leadership and performance motivation.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, work motivation, organizational commitment.

1. Introduction

Commitment to the organization can be demonstrated through attachment, loyalty and dedication and paying close attention to the performance and sustainability of the organization. Organizational commitment is significantly influenced by transformational leadership. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership involves leaders who inspire and motivate followers to prioritize organizational goals above their personal interests. Researchers who have proven the relationship between these two variables: Malik et al. (2017) and M Waris et al. (2018) found that transformational leadership increases employee commitment through inspiration and support, while Altheeb (2020) and Arman et al. (2018) confirmed the positive impact of transformational leadership strategies on commitment.

Additionally, transformational leadership affects work motivation, which further influences organizational commitment. Hasibuan (2007) emphasized the role of motivation in enhancing performance and commitment. Saad & Abbas (2019) noted that transformational leadership boosts work motivation, creating a more engaged workforce. Lu and Li (2021) and Menges et al. (2017) also found that transformational leadership motivational strategies significantly enhance work motivation. The link between work motivation and organizational commitment is well-documented. Clar (2003), Faupel and Süß (2018) and Qëndrim Bytyqi (2020)

show that higher work motivation leads to stronger organizational commitment. Alsaqqaf (2023) emphasizes that motivated employees are essential for organizational success.

This study aims to explore how transformational leadership influences organizational commitment through work motivation, providing insights for effective leadership and motivational practices. Conducted across private universities in Timor-Leste, the research involves 173 permanent lecturers from private institutions, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of these relationships. The target population consists of 305 permanent lecturers from private higher education institutions affiliated with KIESP-TL, with a sample of 173 lecturers obtained with a margin of error of 5%.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

2.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that focuses on motivating and encouraging followers to reach their highest potential and bring about greater change. Burns (1978) examined the relationship between leadership and employees and established the role of transformational leadership in changing a stirred in. Bolden et al. (2003) discussed the importance of leadership

in planning and implementation. Bolden et al. (2003) discussed the importance of leadership in planning and implementation. Bass (1999) emphasized the impact of transformational leadership in private universities, noting their impact on staff motivation and performance. Senjaya & Anindita (2020) added that the purpose of transformational leadership is to foster personal growth, improve the well-being of others, and contribute to organizations and society.

Transformational leaders are often categorized by the following characteristics: charismatic, intellectual stimulation, individualism, motivation, and example (Burns, 1978), and idealized influence (Robbins & Judge, 2008). Leaders are also seen as change agents, risk takers, trustworthy, lifelong values based, resilient to complexity, ambiguity and whatnot uncertainty, and visionary (Luthans in Safaria, 2004).

Transformational leadership principles focus on achieving extraordinary results and motivating followers. These key principles are vision, persuasive communication, intellectual stimulation, individualism, role modeling, empowerment, high expectations, and a supportive environment. Transformational leaders have many strengths that provide an effective leadership style in organizational settings, such as inspiration and engagement, innovation and creativity, professional development, strong relationships, high performance, flexibility, commitment a for vision, ethical leadership, overemphasis on change, risk of burnout , resistance to change, potential for bias, reliance on charismatic leadership, operational challenges, ethically risk, pressure on employees are characteristics of transformational leadership according to Robbins & Judge (2008): intentional influence, motivational pressure, intellectual stimulation, and personal motivation

2.2. Work Motivation

Work motivation is crucial for enhancing employee performance and organizational success, driven by internal and external forces that promote enthusiasm and persistence toward goals. According to Robbins (2009), it involves the willingness to exert effort toward organizational goals, conditioned by satisfying individual needs. Mathis and Jackson (2006) highlight motivation as key for performance and satisfaction, while Hasibuan (2007) emphasizes intensity, direction, and persistence in achieving goals.

One of the prominent theories in understanding work motivation is Vroom's Expectancy Theory. It is built on the concepts of valence, instrumentality, and expectancy to explain motivation. Motivation also comes from work satisfaction feedback (Potter & Lawler). Challenges need to be resolved to accommodate diversity in employees' skills, physical abilities, relationships between jobs and individuals, task ambiguity, and terms and conditions of

tasks. Several factors influence work motivation. Baldoni, cited in Wibowo (2014), identifies energizing, encouraging, and exhorting as key elements. Edwin B. Flippo, cited in Hasibuan (2007), aligns motivation with the possibility of rewards, consistent with reinforcement theory. Suryawan cited at Martoyo (2007) notes that a motivated workforce exhibits high morale, leading to increased productivity and a positive work environment. Wibowo (2011) adds that motivation is influenced by organizational culture, leadership style, and job nature. Mangkunegara (2017) stresses the role of intrinsic rewards (personal growth) and extrinsic rewards (salary, benefits). Robert Kreitner and Angelo Kinicki (2001) emphasize goal-setting, suggesting clear goals enhance motivation by providing direction. Robert Heller (1998) highlights constructive feedback's role in maintaining motivation. Greenberg and Baron (2003) explore social and cognitive aspects, indicating that interactions and cognitive processes, such as self-efficacy, impact motivation.

2.3. Organizational Commitment

Commitment is a situation or circumstance that shows the quality of devotion to a goal, activity or relationship with one another. It involves a sense of responsibility, dedication, and a promise to keep promises or carry out duties or obligations. Commitment often requires effort, persistence, and the willingness to uphold promises or fulfill obligations even when it becomes challenging. Staff dedication involves accepting the objectives and values of the organization, aligning with the employer, and wanting to stay (Lamidi, 2009). It also includes the emotional connection, involvement, and expectations towards their employer (Gibson et al., 2008). Additionally, sentiments and attitudes towards all aspects, including their obligations within the organization, play a crucial role (Riggio et al., 2001).

Government staff commitment is a natural relationship between an organization and an individual who has a strong willingness to be a member, benefiting the organization. This includes an active relationship between employees and the employer, where staff willingly support the organization's achievements (Davis et al., 2006). Organizational commitment is defined as the level of staff involvement with the organization (Kim et al., 2019). It reflects a strong linkage between team members and the employer, where their obligation contributes to achieving the organization's outcomes (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Employee dedication is multidimensional. According to Luthans (2006, p. 249), it includes three indicators: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

The Government considers the strategic importance of universities in providing quality education for youth in Timor-Leste, aiming to contribute to the development of economic, social, and cultural sectors. This has led to the

stabilization of university professors' career schemes through specific legislation.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

3.1 Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Transformational leadership and organizational commitment are two very important and interrelated dimensions that can significantly affect organizational performance. The concept of transformational leadership according to Bass (1999), and the definition of organizational commitment according to Robbins & Judge (2008), play a very important role in shaping organizational dynamics. Transformational leadership is a leadership style that inspires and motivates followers to achieve better business outcomes by enhancing informal and expert development. Bass (1999) identified 4 key links in transformational leadership: intentional influence, motivational pressures, psychological motivation, and personal reflection. Organizational commitment is the psychological attachment and loyalty that an employee feels towards his or her organization. Transformational leadership acts as the definition of loyalty and passion, helping employees to avoid exceptional goals (Robbins & Judge, 2008). These factors can affect organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is generally divided into 3 categories: affective commitment, ongoing commitment, and formal commitment. Emotional commitment is emotional attachment, identification, and commitment to an organization. Meanwhile, the promise of continuity raises awareness of the costs of leaving the organization. Values commitment, meanwhile, feels the need to stay within the organization.

There are many researchers who are interested in testing the relationship between these two variables, including Malik et al. (2017) found that transformational leadership significantly enhances employees' commitment by fostering a supportive and motivating work environment, Waris et al. (2018) confirmed that transformational leaders, through their vision and inspirational motivation, significantly boost employees' loyalty and commitment to the organization, Wang Jiatong et al. (2022) provided evidence that transformational leadership leads to higher organizational commitment by promoting innovation and intellectual stimulation among employees and Sahin G. M. demonstrated that transformational leadership practices, particularly individualized consideration, positively influence employees' affective and normative commitment.

These studies have proven that transformational leadership is a strong influence on organizational commitment. By embodying ideal influences, providing inspirational motivation, increasing intellectual stimulation, and offering individualized consideration,

transformational leaders can significantly increase employees' engagement, loyalty, and sense of obligation to their organizations.

H1: Transformational leadership (TL) has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (OC) in private universities

3.2. Transformational Leadership and Work Motivation

While leadership plays an integral part in any organization, motivating employees often requires inspiring shared purpose. Transformational leaders excel at cultivating vision which builds trust and confidence within their team. By establishing cooperative values, such leaders can transform motivation itself. Consequently, varying one's approach to fit circumstances and individuals alike positively shapes workplace drive. Together, visionary guidance and an empathic understanding of each person's role within the group strengthens collective effort towards common goals. Motivation motivates, directs and sustains the behavior of individuals and plays a motivational role for their leaders, to influence how motivated employees are in the organization. Transformational leadership is a stout in effort and passion to achieve outcomes (Hasibuan, 2007). Strong motivation can improve employee performance, contentment and dedication to the organization. When employees are motivated, they are more inclined to make contributions towards objectives. Studies indicate that transformational leadership has an impact, on work motivation. Many research papers have shown how transformational leadership can boost employee motivation as seen in studies, by Altheeb (2020) and Arman et al.

H2: Transformational leadership (TL) has a positive and significant influence on work motivation (WM) in private universities.

3.3. Work Motivation and Organizational Commitment

Work motivation on the other hand is the psychological push that the employee has in order to approach the work environment with enthusiasm and energy. Such studies propose that motivation causes commitment among employees to their respective organisations. Motivated employees are more committed towards the goals in the job responsibilities and are always willing to satisfy the organizational goals and objectives.

The link between work motivation and organizational commitment is apparent when it comes to organizational processes. Robbin found that work motivation has significant positive relation with organizational commitment as mentioned by the authors Robbins (2009) and Robbins and Judge (2008). To some extent data can be accumulated to support this hypothesis.

The examinations by the Qëndrim Bytyqi et al. (2016), Ajie et al. (2015), Farooqi et al. (2020) and Salleh M. S. et al. (2016) correspond to this reality. Both perplexity and work motivation have a profound impact on our commitments as researchers. While studies have shown a clear link between motivation and dedication to organizational goals, the nature of this relationship remains complex. At times, highly motivated staffers channeled their drive into ambitious long-term projects, extending well beyond basic duties. Indeed, the research clearly underscores that work motivation markedly enhances organizational commitment at private institutions of higher learning. As the findings revealed, those with elevated levels of inspiration derived from their roles consistently expressed deeper loyalty to their employers. Alternatively, those academics displaying diminished enthusiasm for their duties commonly betrayed wavering fidelity to their universities. While intrinsic and extrinsic factors equally drive one's determination in any workplace, the data leaves little ambiguity that inspiration profoundly predicts allegiance within the confines of privately-operated colleges and faculties.

H3: Work motivation has a significant and positive influence on organizational commitment in private universities.

3.4. Transformational Leadership, Work Motivation and Organizational Commitment

In the view of transformational leaders, if the employees use ideal influence, inspirational stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual regard the employees can have motivation at the workplace. And that then leads to higher organizational commitment levels that in turn equates with the heightened motivation.

A second moderator is therefore work motivation, as it emphasises the nature of the connection between transformational leadership and organisational commitment. The only role that work motivation plays is acting as a moderator between the impact of the transformational leadership and organizational commitment. This is because when people are motivated they are willing to work and also come with all they have to contribute in making the particular organisation excellent. Salleh et al. (2016), Agarwal (2018), Daniar et al. (2021) and Ajie (2015) have also supported the above assertion by confirming that work motivation has a positive and significant relationship with organizational commitment among employees. Similarly, the information stated above is supported by Syahchari et al. (2019) through arguing that employees with high level of motivation are understood to have high level of organizational commitment. Another research hypothesis supporting this argument is the study that looks at the mediating role of work motivation, and the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. To assess the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables, in a study by Sattar et al. (2019), the authors showed that work motivation acted as a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. These results imply that self-organizational motivation partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and commitment.

H4: Transformational Leadership (TL) has a positive and significant influence on organizational commitment (OC) through work motivation (WM) as a mediating variable in private universities.

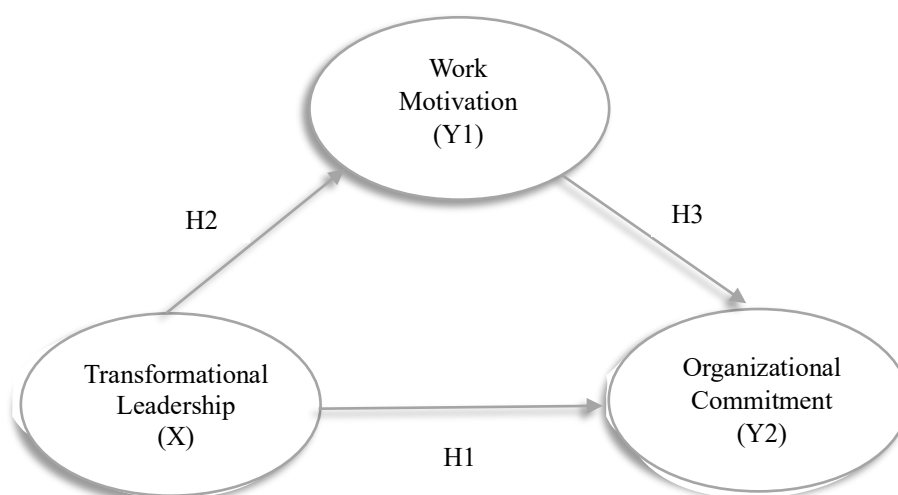


Figure 1. Research Model

4. Research Methods

The present study was conducted at the universities of Instituto Superior Cristal, Universidade de Dili, and Dili Institute of Technology, covering the period from August 2023 to September 2023. The sample size was 173, determined to represent the population (Sugiyono, 2015) using the Slovin formula. Data collection was performed using a study questionnaire with five-point Likert scales, providing options for respondents' answers. The scale ranged from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 5 (indicating strong agreement).

The reliability, validity, and hypotheses were tested using SEM-PLS 4.1. SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) is a method used to address weaknesses in the regression method. Regression itself is a method mainly used in quantitative research (Hussein, 2015). The statistical software mentioned in this context is extensively employed for small sample sizes, often consisting of up to 30 participants. It is particularly useful for analyzing formative and reflective indicators, conducting multivariate analysis, assessing data normality, and performing collinearity tests (Hair et al., 2014).

Therefore, the current research employed inferential analysis with the use of Partial Least Squares SEM-PLS using SmartPLS 4.1 program involves two stages: namely the outer model and the inner model. The first step (outer model) is to evaluate the appropriateness of the indicators for each construct well out as the reliability. These are convergent validity and discriminant validity to establish the validity of the model besides reliability whereby the following statistics are used; composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's

alpha. To assess the usefulness of the inner model the following parameter including R-Square (R^2) and Q-Square Predictive Relevance (Q^2) (Hair et al., 2014).

Discriminant validity is established by applying Fornell and Larcker's criterion and HTMT ratio to ascertain that each construct is theoretically dissimilar in some manner from the other constructs. With the help of path coefficient, T-values and P-values the hypothesis test was carried out. The impact also entails direct and indirect consequences and to calculate these an application called bootstrapping calculation based on Hair et al. (2014) were used. The boot strap method will give correct estimates of the direct and indirect impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Reliability and Validity

Inferential analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the SmartPLS 4.1 program. The analysis involved two stages: the outer model and the inner model. The outer model stage was carried out to check the reliability and convenience of the indicators for every single latent variable to determine the validity of the destined model. Concerning the measurement model, the quality of the measures was assessed by composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) and Cronbach's alpha (CA). Table I also presents that the average of all items' CR and CA values exceeded the threshold point of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017; Muhson, 2022).

Table I. Reliability and Validity using SMART-PLS 4.1

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
OC	0.837	0.842	0.877	0.507
TL	0.933	0.941	0.941	0.502
WM	0.924	0.928	0.933	0.504

The convergent validity test measures the relationship between a construct and its indicators. To assess convergent validity, we examine the loading factor values of each indicator. Ideally, if the loading factor values are > 0.7 , the indicator is considered valid for measuring the construct. In empirical research, values > 0.5 are still accepted, and some

experts accept values close to 0.4. These values reflect the extent to which the construct can explain the variations in the indicators (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). An indicator is valid, if the AVE is above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014).

Analyzing the results presented in Figure 2 shows that the loading factor values of all items

exceeded the cutoff value of 0.7, and the AVE values, as shown in Table I, exceeded the cutoff value of 0.5. Therefore, all items are valid for use in this model based on the convergent validity test.

The result of convergent validity test, it can be seen all of the items can be used in this model. When

determining the discriminant validity between the constructs, examination of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion will be conducted. Using this approach, the level of communality in a construct should be higher than any other construct to which the indicators used are related.

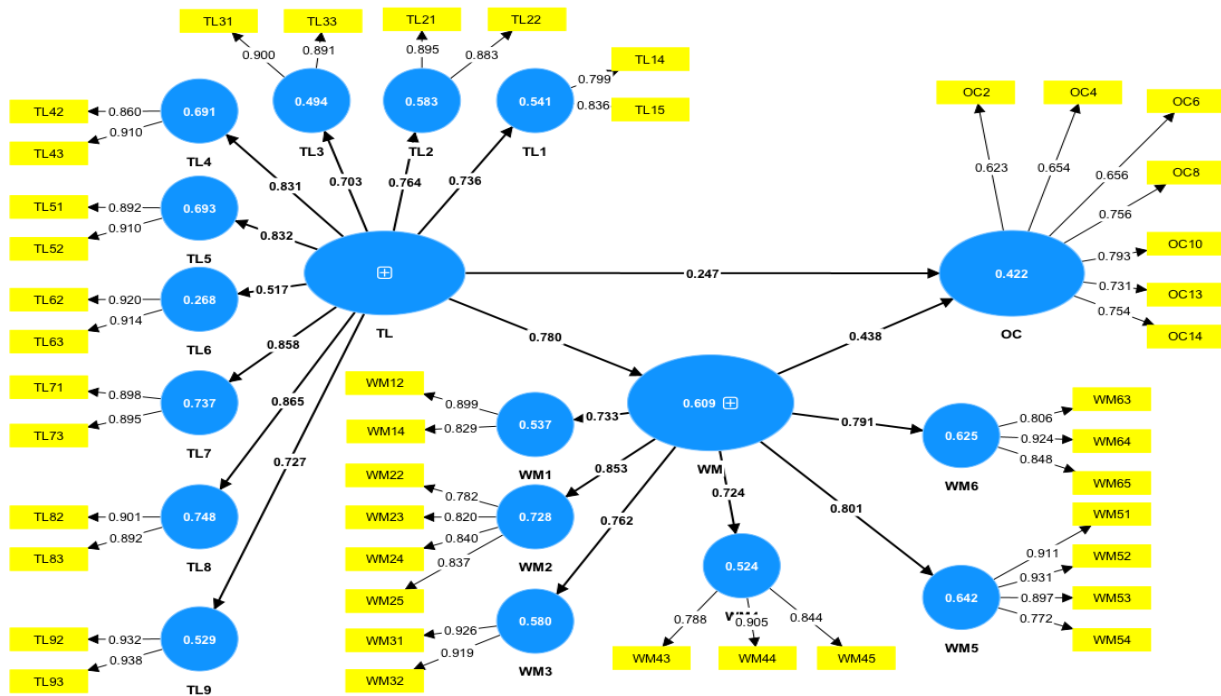


Figure 2. Path Coefficient

Table II. Discriminant validity Test based on Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	OC	TL	TL1	TL2	TL3	TL4	TL5	TL6	TL7	TL8	TL9
OC	0.712										
TL	0.589	0.663									
TL1	0.578	0.736	0.818								
TL2	0.500	0.764	0.639	0.889							
TL3	0.481	0.703	0.581	0.606	0.896						
TL4	0.398	0.831	0.478	0.554	0.412	0.885					
TL5	0.441	0.832	0.547	0.575	0.426	0.727	0.901				
TL6	0.238	0.517	0.234	0.260	0.378	0.533	0.318	0.917			
TL7	0.516	0.858	0.597	0.685	0.481	0.705	0.754	0.360	0.897		
TL8	0.438	0.865	0.535	0.571	0.508	0.723	0.781	0.342	0.786	0.897	
TL9	0.324	0.727	0.440	0.405	0.466	0.579	0.548	0.293	0.553	0.646	0.935

In order to evaluate this particular criterion, it is necessary for the average variance extracted (AVE)

of each construct to surpass the highest squared correlation with any other construct (Hair et al., 2014).

In Table II, the constructs represented by black numbers show a larger mean variance value extracted (AVE) than the highest squared correlation with any other construct, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014). Consequently, all constructs met the validity criterion established by Fornell-Larcker's criterion.

Evaluation of discriminant validity was performed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT)

method (Henseler et al., 2016). All items were rated against a threshold criterion of 0.86, ensuring that they fall below the cutoff point. Findings presented in Table III show that all items had HTMT values below the threshold of 0.86. This demonstrated that the model under consideration exhibits discriminant validity, according to HTMT criteria.

Table III. Discriminant validity Test based on Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

	OC	TL1	TL2	TL3	TL4	TL5	TL6	TL7	TL8	TL9
TL	0.673									
TL1	0.883									
TL2	0.631	0.887								
TL3	0.599	0.874	0.811							
TL4	0.506	0.773	0.749	0.556						
TL5	0.547	0.877	0.764	0.559	0.886					
TL6	0.294	0.356	0.337	0.486	0.705	0.403				
TL7	0.646	0.890	0.918	0.636	0.872	0.877	0.461			
TL8	0.545	0.862	0.766	0.672	0.875	0.861	0.435	0.870		
TL9	0.379	0.669	0.507	0.579	0.724	0.673	0.353	0.687	0.803	

5.2 Hypothesis Test

The findings for the first hypothesis did not show significant results, with P greater than 0.05. However, the results for hypothesis 2, 3 and hypothesis 4 were significant, with P value < 0.05. The first, second, and third hypotheses examine the direct relationship between transformational leadership, work motivation, and organizational commitment. The first hypothesis indicates that transformational leadership does not significantly affect organizational commitment, as the P-value is above 0.05 (0.074). The

second and third hypotheses, however, are significant ($P < 0.05$). This means that transformational leadership affects motivation, and this motivation then affects organizational commitment, as shown by T- statistics of 19.699 and 3.485, respectively, with corresponding P-values of 0.000. The implications of these results further complicate our understanding of how various factors interact to influence organizational commitment. It should be noted that although these findings are statistically reliable, additional verification is highly recommended

Table IV. The Effects of Relationship between Variables

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
TL -> OC	0.247	0.246	0.139	1.785	0.074
TL -> WM	0.780	0.784	0.040	19.699	0.000
WM -> OC	0.438	0.445	0.126	3.485	0.000
TL -> WM -> OC	0.342	0.350	0.104	3.275	0.001

6. Discussion

The study found that transformational leadership significantly affects employees' commitment to their organization, with work motivation playing a key role in this relationship. The research's findings, which show a P-value of 0.001, confirm this influence because this value is below 0.05. This study is the first time such a relationship has been explored in Timor-Leste. Additionally, the research indicates that transformational leadership does not directly impact teachers' commitment to their organization. Instead, it is the work motivation that mediates this relationship. This finding adds new insights to the understanding of leadership effects in the context of Timor-Leste.

This research finding is contrary to the research findings of Parisman Ihwan (2020), which shows that motivation does not influence transformational leadership on organizational commitment. It is also supported by the research of Hooria Sattar, Hafiz Muhammad Shahrukh, Ayesha Mansha Virk, and Mattiullah Butt (2019), which indicates that motivation significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment.

Work motivation is a mediator that links the influence of transformational leadership to organizational commitment. Transformational leaders can create a motivating work environment, provide encouragement to achieve common goals, and strengthen individuals' feelings of adherence to a common vision (Silitonga et al., 2020). Through this process, employees feel happy, a sense of belonging, and responsibility for the organization, which increases the level of organizational commitment. Work motivation mediates this relationship by transforming the encouragement and orientation of the transformational leader into individuals' desire and determination to contribute maximally to the organization, ultimately strengthening their commitment to the place where they work.

7. Conclusions and Implications

The study was conducted at three private universities in Timor-Leste: ISC, UNDIL and DIT are some of the Universities and institutions offering higher learning in the Country. The result indicated that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment of lecturers in the private universities. It was however not this effect and hence was not considered to be of any immense importance. This means that though enhancing the leadership style can

enhance the level of transformational leadership hence have positive impacts, the leadership style is not very influential in this study. Other findings of the study include; the study also established that TL has a positive and significant relationship with WM. From this it deduces that positive leadership styles of motivation encourage the lecturers.

The earlier studies conducted revealed that the work motivation has a positive and significant relationship with the organizational commitment. According to the interpretation of the research, it is established that the degree of motivation has a positive correlation with the level of commitment with the organization, with reference to the lecturer. In contrast, the interaction of work motivation has mediated and strengthened the positive and significant correlation between the transformational leadership and organizational commitment. This led to the conclusion that motivation is central in enhancing the impact of transformational leadership on lecturer's commitment on the institution.

The theoretical implications of these findings can expand understanding of transformational leadership theory by showing that its influence on organizational commitment is more effective through work motivation. This shows the importance of considering mediator variables in the study of leadership and organizational commitment. Practically, it has implications for leadership development. Private universities should focus on developing transformational leadership training programs that not only improve leadership styles but also encourage lecturers' work motivation. This training can include techniques to increase inspiration, support, and recognition, which can increase lecturer work motivation. Apart from leadership development, motivation strategies need to be considered. To increase organizational commitment, it is important to implement strategies that can increase lecturers' work motivation. This can involve rewards, recognition, professional development opportunities, and a supportive work environment (Baldoni in Wibowo, 2014).

8. Limitation and Future Research

The study has filled the literature gap and contributed a lot of knowledge regarding transformational leadership, work motivation, and organizational commitment but the following are the limitations that need to be taken into consideration. Although the sample size comes to as much as 173, it is still large enough to allow for analysis but not large enough to allow for wide generalization of the results

of the study. Future works should attempt to recruit larger and more diverse sample to confirm these findings in other organizations. A major drawback with this research is that it covers only the private universities thus reducing the external validity. Taking the findings into other industries may establish whether or not similar influences exist in other

organizational contexts. Future studies might look for other mediating variables including compensation, job satisfaction and other factors in order to have even more comprehensive view on factors, that influence the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment.

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