

The Mediating Effect of Work Engagement Between Work Motivation, Transformational Leadership, and Teacher Performance

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between work motivation, transformational leadership, and teacher performance. In addition, the mediating influence of work engagement was also investigated. The data were collected from 318 teachers in the Catholic's secondary high school in the Dili municipality, Timor-Leste. The proposed model and hypotheses were evaluated using licensed SMART partial least squares (PLS) 4.0. The result shows that transformational leadership and teacher performance were significantly related. Likewise, work engagement and teacher performance are also significantly related. Meanwhile, work motivation and teacher performance were shown nonsignificant related. The results showed that work engagement mediated the relationship between work motivation and teacher performances. The results of this study will contribute to managers implementing human resource management practices and motivating employees to improve services.

Keywords: Work motivation, transformational leadership, mediating effect, work engagement, teacher performance, secondary school teacher, Catholics schools, quantitative research.

1. Introduction

Education is the main foundation in forming participatory citizens. Through education, it is hoped that positive changes will occur in individuals that support the development of humans and society as a whole (Erdogan et al., 2024). One of the main objectives of education is the development of human resources, namely the process of improving skills, competencies, knowledge, and attitudes needed to contribute effectively in the national and organizational environment (Ofosuhene, 2022). Thus, education becomes a crucial instrument in human resource development. Human resources themselves play a vital role in the world of work. Thus, education becomes an important tool in human resource development. Human resources themselves play an essential role in the world of work (Lestari, Broto, & Prayoga, 2022). In the context of human resource development, work performance is a very important factor because it determines the success of an organization (Herminingsih, 2025).

In education, teacher performance assumes an essential key in changing student behavior in a positive direction through the learning process (Kholifah et al., 2024). Therefore, teacher performance determines achievement of national education targets and the total quality of education. However, teacher performance is influenced by several factors, both internal and external to the individual, like motivation, transformational leadership and work engagement (Norawati et al., 2024). Motivation at work is one of the fundamental factors that influence the productivity and success of an organization (Rachmawati et al., 2024). Motivation acts as the main driver for members of the organization to carry out their duties and responsibilities (Jufrizen & Sitorus, 2021), and is the reason someone takes certain actions (Lantara, 2019). Several studies have shown that work motivation has a positive and significant influence on employee performance (Subhi Nur Fuadi & Trias

Setiawati, 2019; Kholifah et al., 2024). However, there are also research results that show that motivation does not always have a direct effect on employee performance. For example, Hassan et al., (2020), Farisi et al., (2021), Diana et al., (2022), and Lindawati Sirait et al., (2022) found that motivation has no significant effect and sometimes even has a negative impact on performance. Inconsistency of the results of this study prompted researchers to explore the relationship between motivation and other factors, one of them is work engagement. Work motivation and work engagement have long been recognized as important factors in the workplace (Collie & Martin, 2024). Several studies have shown that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on work engagement (Manalo, 2020; Diana et al., 2022).

beyond motivation, transformational leadership also is an important factor in improving performance. Transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they planned, and often even more than they imagined. Such leaders set more challenging expectations and usually achieve higher performance. Transformational leaders pay attention to the self-esteem of each follower to involve followers in genuine commitment and involvement in the effort being undertaken (Avolio & Bass, 2002:1). Transformational leaders help their followers grow and develop as leaders by responding to each follower's needs, empowering them, and aligning the goals and objectives of each follower, the leader, the group, and the organization as a whole. A growing body of evidence suggests that transformational leadership can motivate followers to exceed expected performance and result in high levels of follower satisfaction and commitment to the group and organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006:3; Al-aamri & Ponniah, 2024). Based on the research results, it shows that the principal's transformational leadership influences teacher performance in schools, both at elementary, middle, and high school levels

(Firmansyah et al., 2022; Talib et al., 2019); transformational leadership has a positive direct effect on teacher autonomy (wanf et al., (2024); transformational leadership and employee performance are significantly (Llorens et al., 2018; Kou et al., 2024). However, there are also studies that find that the effect of transformational leadership on performance is not significant (Prabowo et al., 2018; Lai et al., 2020). Interestingly, transformational leadership has been shown to have a positive effect on work engagement (Lai et al., 2020; Isabel Buila & Eva Martínez, 2020; Monje Amor et al., 2020). Work engagement itself has been shown to improve performance, provide energy, cognitive flexibility, and a willingness to face challenges (Özbezek & Ege, 2022; Batool & Nawaz, 2021). Furthermore, work engagement also acts as a mediator between motivation and performance (Diana et al., 2022; Siswanto et al., 2021; Almawali et al., 2021).

From the literature review, there appears to be inconsistency in research results related to the direct influence of motivation and transformational leadership on teacher performance, as well as the lack of research that specifically tests the role of work engagement as a mediator in the teacher population, especially in secondary schools. Based on this research gap, this study aims to exam the relationship of transformational leadership, work motivation, and work engagement on teacher performance. In addition, this study also wants to determine the influence of transformational leadership and work motivation on work engagement, as well as test the mediating effect of work engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Work Performance

Performance is considered a function and service that focus an employee's loyalty to the organization, aimed at performing effectively according to the objectives set by the organization (Alsafadi and Altahtat, 2021. (Lestari et al., 2022) also confirmed that job performance is the outcome of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out his assigned responsibilities. Therefore, look at the teacher's performance, it is the path taken to develop school activities to become better, so that the predetermined educational objectives can be achieved more effectively through the implementation of teaching activities in accordance with the planned targets and goals (Mohamad Rizman Pido, 2023). This teacher performance is guided by an orientation aimed at bringing about positive changes in students' behavior through the learning process (Kholifah et al., 2024).

There are several dimensions indicated in work performance. Among these dimensions are task performance and citizenship performance, (Ramawickrama et al., 2017). Task performance occurs when employees perform actions that transform raw materials into goods and services such as declarative knowledge which refers to the necessary information needed to perform specific tasks, and procedural knowledge and skills which are the capacities needed to carry

out specific tasks (Demir *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, employees must understand 'what to do and how to do it' when executing assigned work or tasks. Besides these two indicators, another important factor is intelligible communication (Akudo, 2022). Intelligible communication is understood as a transactional exchange involving meaning in language (Urban, 1919); clear, strong, and comprehensive communication.

Citizenship performance contributes to the organization by helping to build a positive organizational environment. It includes three main types of citizenship behaviors: organizational citizenship behavior, interpersonal citizenship behavior (Scott and Judge, 2009), and conscientiousness (Sultana, 2020). In these behaviors, employees protect organizational property, arrive early for work, and adhere to informal rules that help maintain order. Citizenship behavior also involves dedicating time to listen to colleagues' problems, sharing information with coworkers, and helping those who are new or not yet integrated (Ramawickrama et al., 2017). Sultana (2020) further explains that work conscientiousness is a commitment to a detailed-oriented mindset and a preference for producing quality work over quantity.

2.2. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, first introduced by Burns (1978) and extended by Bass (1985), and has long been considered a critical approach to driving organizational change and fostering innovation (Shahid, 2024). It is a leadership style that inspires their subordinates to transcend their own interests for the benefit of the organization and achieve exceptional results (Al-aamri and Ponniah, 2024; Kou, Wang and Jiang, 2024).

Based on studies by Bass (1985), identify four dimensions of transformational leadership. These dimension are Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and, Individualized Consideration (Indradewa and Santiajie, 2024). ealized influence refers to leaders who show followers values such as trust, trust, power, and ethical or moral orientation (Awaale, 2024). Inspirational Motivation describes leaders articulating a vision that inspires and motivates subordinates to achieve the goal they want to reach (Antonakis et al., 2002). Intellectual Stimulation refers to leaders who challenge their follower the status quo and encourage them to think independently and explore new solutions (Antonakis & House, 2002). Finally, Individualized Consideration which means that leaders become mentors that provide emotional support and individual attention to each follower (Antonakis & House, 2002).

Work Motivation

Work motivation is a very important factor in achieving organizational objectives (Yusup and Maulani, 2023). This motivation theory is based on Herzberg's theory, which discusses intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Jaffar, Sciences and Bahawalpur, 2024). Generally, the word "motivation" originates from the term "motive," which has different meanings such as desire, need, will, and impulse from an individual (Badura *et al.*, 2020). Motivation is a process that stimulates individuals to take actions in order to achieve their goals (Lestari, Broto and

Prayoga, 2022). (Jufrizen and Sitorus, 2021) also explain that motivation acts as a driving force that makes organizational members willing and ready to perform activities related to their responsibilities and fulfill their obligations. Thus, it can be said that teacher motivation acts as a force and energy that directs and drives behavior towards achieving goals related to quality in their performance.

There are certain dimensions as motivational factors to achieve objectives, enhance, and develop work performance as a dependent variable. These dimensions are rewards and the work environment (Aldabbas *et al.*, 2023). Rewards are forms of benefits given when employees perform functions that meet their responsibilities (Abu Hassan Asaari *et al.*, 2019). Reward can make employ assume creativity and According to (Dwibedi, 2020), monetary rewards become a motivating factor in the work environment, where salary and good benefits act as monetary motivators. These rewards, whether material (such as money) or social, serve as a scale to measure intrinsic motivation (Manganelli *et al.*, 2018). Thus, salary, recognition, and bonuses are important for enhancing employee motivation. With the presence of a reward, an individual can produce a different level of performance based on desired outcomes (Aldabbas *et al.*, 2023).

In addition to rewards, another dimension is the work environment. According to (Aris Setiyani *et al.*, 2019), a comfortable workplace allows employees to work well, thus increasing their productivity and they feel "at home," reducing the likelihood of them leaving for another company. (Dwibedi, 2020) emphasizes that a good work environment becomes a strong motivating factor.

The work environment is divided into three aspects: operational procedures, interpersonal relationships, and compensation (Manganelli *et al.*, 2018). Regarding the work environment, Kopelman and his friend in 1990 describe that the work environment affects employee productivity and performance (Diamantidis and Chatzoglou, 2019).

Work Engagement

Engagement is an important factor that has received considerable attention from organizations and many researchers (Manalo, 2020). Engagement is the desire or willingness a person feels, with enthusiasm or spirit, to dedicate themselves and also immerse in the work they do (Hong, Rohaida and Zainal, 2024).

According to the theory proposed by Schaufeli in 2002, work engagement is identified as a mediator between resources and work performance, functioning as an activator of satisfaction with professional activities (Sharma, Kaur and Mittal, 2024). (Riyanto, Endri and Herlisha, 2021) described that engagement is considered as a form of commitment, morale, and participation of employees who remain within the organization. Thus, engagement can be defined as dedication, commitment, and involvement in work to achieve good results.

Work engagement consists of three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Visco and Sen, 2001; Wilmar B. Schaufeli, Isabel M. Martinez, Alexandra Marques Pinto, 2002; Bakker *et al.*, 2003; Llorens, Klingner and Nalbandian, 2018; Isabel Buila, Eva Martínez, 2019; Manalo, 2020). Vigor refers to a high level of energy and resilience, a desire to cultivate

effort, not to feel tired, and to persist in the face of difficulties. (Sharma, Kaur and Mittal, 2024). Dedication is characterized marked by a sense of importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Sharma, Kaur and Mittal, 2024). Absorption refers to being completely immersed in a job filled with a sense of accomplishment that makes it difficult to leave the job. (Naqshbandi *et al.*, 2024). Absorption is characterized by being completely concentrated and deeply engrossed in one's work (Sharma, Kaur and Mittal, 2024). Thus, work engagement can be defined as a positive and satisfying state of mind, and all work is done with enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption (Leung and Lam, 2025).

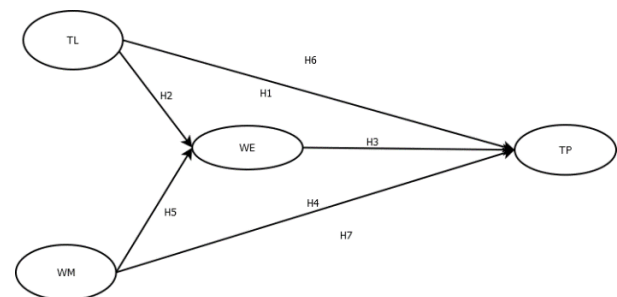


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

In this article, it is taken based on Herzberg's motivation theory (Jaffar, Sciences and Bahawalpur, 2024) and the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Utami and Zakkiy, 2020). From the theory of Motivation, it can guide and improve teacher involvement and performance in work, and the LMX theory is based on the idea that a leader has an individual relationship with each of his followers, it can influence them in ways that lead to transformation in actions taken to achieve shared goals (Al-aamri and Ponniah, 2024).

Referring to the theoretical framework shown in the figure above, the hypotheses that can be drawn are that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance "TP" (H1) and work engagement "WE" (H2). Another hypothesis is that work engagement has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance "TP" (H3). From the motivational aspect, transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance (H4) and work engagement (WE). Besides this, work engagement positively and significantly mediate transformational leadership TL (h6) and work motivation WM (H7).

2.3. Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance and Work Engagement

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that inspires subordinates to go beyond their own interests for the common good and the organization (Al-aamri and Ponniah, 2024). While, the work Engagement is the desire or willingness a person feels, with enthusiasm or spirit, to dedicate themselves and also immerse in the work they do (Hong, Rohaida and

Zainal, 2024) and Performance is an indicator of the efficiency and productivity of an individual or organization, and of long-term success. It serves as a measurement to observe the achievement of desired outcomes (Hong, Rohaida and Zainal, 2024)

Research has proven a relationship between transformational leadership and job performance and work engagement. Transformational leadership has a strong positive influence on employee performance (Top *et al.*, 2020). According to (Adolph, 2025), transformational leadership also has a positive effect on work engagement. Previously in the study of (Isabel Buila *et al.*, 2020) found that transformational leadership has a direct positive and significant effect on work performance and work engagement. Whereas, on the other hand, another author (Lai *et al.*, 2020) confirm that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work engagement but is not significant on work performance. Before this, there has been author (Prabowo *et al.*, 2018) in their study found that transformational leadership does not have a significant effect on work performance. And in the study of (Al-aamri and Ponniah, 2024) confirmed that there is no significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Thus, based on this review, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance.

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive influence on engagement.

2.4. Work Engagement on Teacher Performance

Work engagement is an employee's positive and affective-motivational mental condition related to work characterized by three dimensions: Vigor, dedication and absorption (Naqshbandi *et al.*, 2024). Teacher performance is oriented toward changing student behavior positively through the learning process (Kholifah *et al.*, 2024). Teacher performance is the path taken to develop school activities to become better, so that the predetermined educational objectives can be achieved more effectively through the implementation of teaching activities in accordance with the planned targets and goals (Mohamad Rizman Pido, 2023). Work engagement and performance are two things that have a strong positive correlation. Teachers who are highly engaged, will usually demonstrate very high levels of dedication, outcomes and job satisfaction (Fei and Tien, 2024).

The results of the study (Hermawan, Thamrin and Susilo, 2020) show that work engagement has a positive influence on employee performance and (Lai *et al.*, 2020) affirmed that employee engagement has a direct effect on work performance. (Batool & Nawaz, 2021) also confirmed that work engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. And based on the study of (Ispion *et al.*, 2024) released its research results that work engagement has a positive and significant effect on job performance. The hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H3: Work engagement has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance.

2.5. Motivation on Teacher Performance and work engagement

Work motivation is one of the important elements in achieving organizational goals (Yusup and Maulani, 2023). It is the process that stimulates individuals to take actions in order to achieve their goals (Lestari, Broto and Prayoga, 2022). Referring to the relationship between motivation and performance, researchers (Lestari *et al.*, 2022) state that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Previously research has discovered that work performance is influenced by motivation (Almawali *et al.*, 2021). According to study of (Norawati *et al.*, 2024), work motivation has a significant effect on teacher performance. Looking at the impact of academics' motivation on their performance, in the study by (Al-aamri and Ponniah, 2024) revealed its results that there is a significant effect. And also as (Herminingsih, 2025) found in his research that motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

However, some researchers argue that motivation does not have a direct effect on employee performance. According to (Lindawati Sirait *et al.*, 2022), work motivation has a negative effect on performance. Confirm (Diana *et al.*, 2022) in its study that work motivation does not have a direct influence on employee performance. On the other hand, according to (Diana *et al.*, 2022) motivation has a significant positive effect in relation to work engagement. Work motivation and work engagement have long been identified as an important things for workplace and the same is true for teachers (Collie and Martin, 2024). In the study of (Ayep *et al.*, 2024) about the extrinsic work motivation on the employee performance detected the significant direct effect. Previously research found that work motivation was positively correlated on work engagement (Muchtadin and Emmelya Sundry, 2023). Based on the review that has been explained above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H4: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.

H5: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on work motivation

2.6. Work Engagement Mediate Transformational Leadership and work motivation on Teacher Performance

Work engagement plays a role as a mediator between transformational leadership, work motivation and teacher performance. According to (Lai *et al.*, 2020), work engagement positively and significantly links transformational leadership and performance. Confirm (Faqih and Ekowati, 2024) in their research that Work Engagement is able to contribute as a mediating variable between Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance.

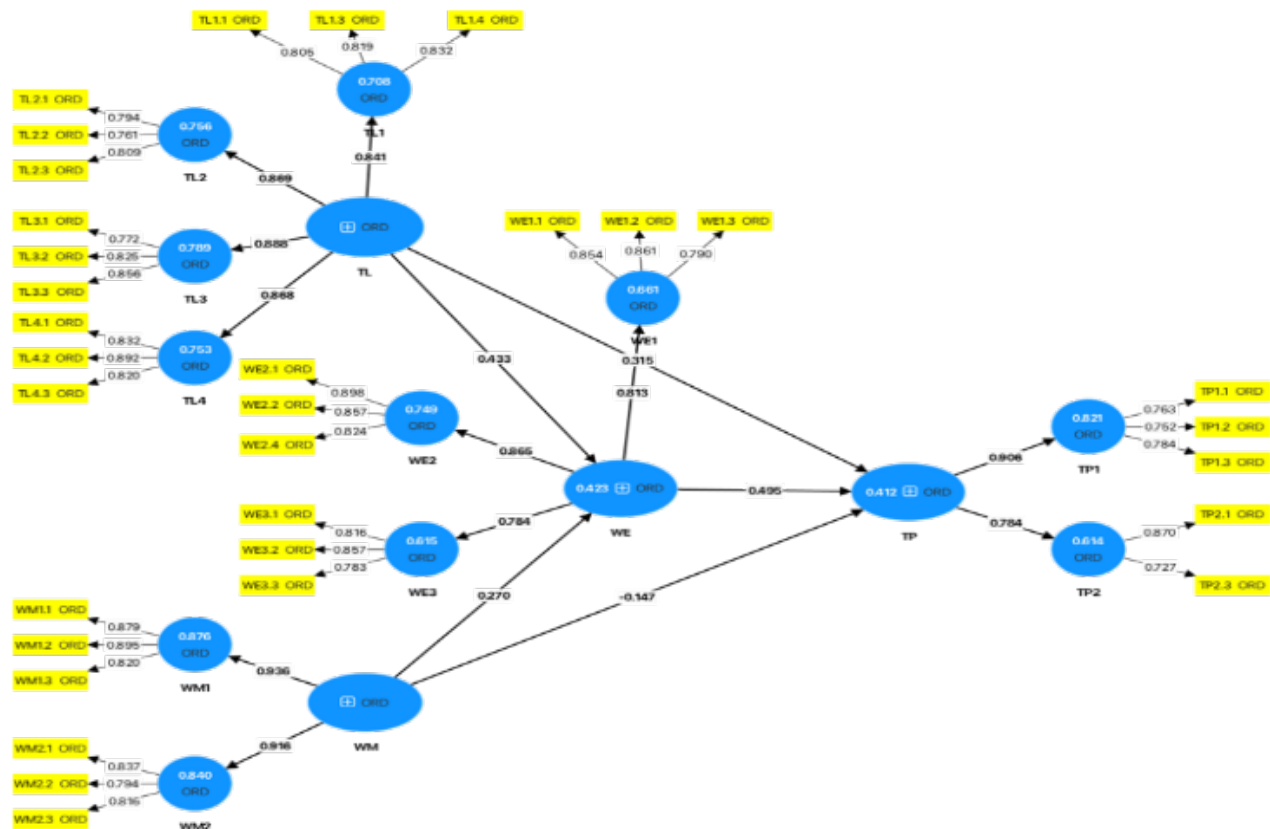


Figure 2. Results of the SMART-PLS Algorithm

The study of (Almawali et al., 2021), engagement acts as a component that connects employee motivation to work performance and has a direct effect through employee involvement between motivational factors and performance. (Diana et al., 2022) confirm in their study that there is a positive and significant result in the relationship where engagement acts as a mediator between motivation and performance. And the research of (Wider, 2024) found that in the relationship between employee motivation and performance, work engagement functions as a mediating effect. Based on the literature review that has been explained above, the following hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H6: Work engagement positively and significantly mediates transformational leadership and teacher performance.

H7: Work engagement positively and significantly mediates work motivation and teacher performance.

3. Research Methodology

This research was conducted on teachers who were teaching at Catholic High school in Dili Municipality, Timor-Leste. The total number of teachers teaching at the school is 316 people as the population in this study. Therefore, the total

population is only 316 people; all of them are taken as samples in this study. The data was collected from respondents using a questionnaire.

Data measurement was carried out using a Likert scale, respondents were asked to choose an answer ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The transformational leadership scale was adopted from Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015), the work motivation scale was adopted from (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020), the work engagement scale was adopted from (Buil, Martínez and Matute, 2019), and the teacher performance scale was adapted from (Anwar et al., 2021). This study uses the SMART-PLS 4.0 analysis tool of (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015) to predict the relationship between transformational leadership, work motivation, work engagement, and teacher performance.

4. Result Convergent validity

Convergent validity is one of the criteria used to determine the validity of a latent variable indicator. An indicator of a variable is considered valid when its external loading coefficient is at least 0.7 with a statistical value greater than 1.96. Therefore, the external loading coefficient indicates the indicator's contribution to its latent variable. Based on the

results of data analysis, it can be seen that the indicator with a minimum external loading value of 0.7 is as shown in the following figure.

Table 1. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
TL	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,5
TP	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,5
WE	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,5
WM	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,6

Based on the results obtained as shown in the table above, the minimum value for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7; for Composite Reliability is 0.8; and for the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) is 0.5. Thus, these results indicate that the dimensions in this study have good internal consistency and are suitable for use in testing internal models.

Evaluation for the internal model using SMART-PLS 4.0. Generally applying the parameters of the coefficient of determination (R-squared), cross-validation redundancy (Q-squared), path coefficient, and effect size (Hair *et al.*, 2014) which are interpreted with the following values: 0.75 (good model), 0.5 (moderate model), and 0.25 (weak model),

Table 2. Path Coefficient Test

Construct	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
TL -> TP	0,315	0,315	0,083	3,785	0,000
TL -> WE	0,433	0,431	0,075	5,781	0,000
WE -> TP	0,495	0,493	0,103	4,804	0,000
WM->TP	-0,147	-0,147	0,076	1,932	0,053
WM-> E	0,270	0,271	0,069	3,917	0,000
TL -> WE -> TP	0,214	0,213	0,060	3,578	0,000
WM -> WE -> TP	0,134	0,135	0,048	2,785	0,005

The table is based on a hypothesis test that shows a relationship between transformational leadership, performance, and engagement, where engagement acts as a mediating variable in transformational leadership with positive and significant teacher performance. However, the direct effect of work motivation on teacher performance is negative.

5. Discussion

The test results show that of the seven existing hypotheses, most of them are supported. Only the fourth hypothesis (4), which relates to the direct influence of work motivation on teacher performance, is not supported. The hypothesis indicates a positive significance, but after testing, it showed negative and non-significant results.

interpreted with the following values: 0.75 (good model), 0.5 (moderate model), and 0.25 (weak model).

The data generated in the table R-Squared below shows that the value for the work engagement variable is 0.42. This indicates that 42% of the variance is influenced by transformational leadership and work motivation, while 58% is influenced by other factors. For teacher performance, the R-squared value is 0.41, which means that 41% of the variance is influenced by transformational leadership, work motivation, and work engagement, while 59% is influenced by other factors. These results indicate that the R-squared value is in the moderate category.

Table 3. R-Square

Construct	R-square	R-square adjusted
WE	0.423	0.41
TP	0.412	0.406

Based on the test results, it is proven that this research model is good and therefore the integration of transformational leadership variables, work motivation, work engagement, and teacher performance falls into the good model category, thus allowing for continuation of hypothesis testing.

5.1. The effect of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance and work engagement

Statistical analysis reveals a positive and statistically significant effect between transformational leadership, teacher performance and work engagement. Thus, this relationship indicates that principals with strong transformational leadership will positively impact teacher performance (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019). This is because transformational leadership has the ability to transform an organization through its vision for the future, clearly articulating that vision, and empowering workers to take responsibility for achieving it (Isabel Buila & Eva Martínez, 2020). Previous research has identified that leaders typically exhibit four distinct behaviors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Al-aamri and Ponniah, 2024).

Through these dimensions and indicators, transformational leadership engages its followers to achieve significant results (Alqatawenh, 2018; Top et al., 2020).

With the transformational leadership, they demonstrate a willingness to listen and accept direction from the principal regarding the school's future goals and fully commit themselves to their work, considering it meaningful and therefore becoming deeply committed to their duties. In this context, the fact that most of the teachers are married emerges as an important supporting factor, as this group falls into a maturity stage with greater responsibility, having already gained experience in managing children, spouses, and household life. This signifies that they have reached a stage where they are able to manage education within the family setting (Margarida Sommer Ribeiro Marques, 2017). Therefore, they find it easier to accept and carry out responsibilities according to direction, demonstrating a sense of dedication at work, as family becomes their first and primary form of education (John Paul II, 1993).

In the findings of this study, based on the statistical analysis that has been presented, it is clearly shown that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance and work engagement. Based on the estimated coefficient of the direct impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance and work achievement, the p-value obtained is smaller than the standard statistical significance threshold. This result provides clear evidence that effective transformational leadership in Catholic's Secondary Schools in Dili Municipality has a strong positive and significant impact. This result provides clear evidence to justify and support the first and the second hypothesis (H1 & H2). It's mean that H1 and H2 are acceptable

The findings of this study are consistent with the results of previous studies such as research from (Andriani, Kesumawati and Kristiawan, 2018; Llorens, Klingner and Nalbandian, 2018; Buil, Martínez and Matute, 2019; Monje Amor, Abeal Vázquez and Fafña, 2020; Top et al., 2020) which indicates that transformational leadership has a very positive and significant influence on teacher performance. This result also compatible with the recent research of (Adolph, 2025) that reveal the transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work engagement. These results provide concrete evidence that principals in Catholic secondary schools in Dili, with their transformational leadership spirit, have a positive and significant influence on the performance and effectiveness of their teachers as educators and on work engagement (Top et al., 2020; Adolph, 2025).

5.2. The effect of Work Engagement on Teacher Performance

The results of statistical analysis of the data show a moderate and statistically significant relationship between work engagement and teacher performance. Teachers feel passionate and enthusiastic about their work. Based on the relationship revealed through data analysis, there is a direct relationship between teacher job engagement and performance. There is a very strong positive correlation between teacher job engagement and performance (Fei and Tien, 2024).

The path coefficient estimation shows that the T-statistic value is higher than the standard threshold and the p-value is smaller than the standard threshold of statistical significance. This indicates a very high level of confidence and is evidence that the direct impact of work engagement on teacher performance is positive and significant. Therefore, when work engagement is high, performance tends to increase. The findings of this test confirm the third hypothesis (H3) regarding the direct relationship between work engagement and teacher performance. The results of this study are also in accordance with previous studies such as (Hermawan et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2020; Almawali et al., 2021; Ispion et al., 2024) which state that work engagement and employee performance have a positive and significant effect. It's mean that when the higher engagement in the Catholic's secondary school in Dili Municipality, the performance to the teacher will be higher. It's mean that H3 is accepted

5.3. The effect of Motivation on Teacher Performance and work engagement

Work motivation has long been noted as an important driver of positive employee responses to their work. (Jaffar et al., 2024). Previously, there were several studies that provided different views regarding the direct influence of motivation on performance and work engagement. Theoretically, motivation serves as an impetus, a driving force that compels individuals to perform activities well (Jufrizen & Sitorus, 2021), encouragement, and a reason that drives individuals toward achieving goals (Lantara, 2019).

From previous calculations based on predictions, it was initially suspected that work motivation had a direct influence on teacher performance. This is consistent with previous research that found that motivation can have a positive and significant influence on teacher performance, as explained by (Lestari et al., 2022; Al-aamri and Ponniah, 2024; Norawati et al., 2024; Herminingsih, 2025). However, after testing, the results turned out differently.

The descriptive statistical analysis results show a statistically insignificant relationship between work motivation and teacher performance. This test indicates that the direct effect of motivation on teacher performance is not positive, or in other words, negative. The path coefficient estimate shows a negative value, with the T-statistic exceeding the standard threshold, and the probability value (p-value) greater than the standard limit of statistical significance. This indicates that the fourth hypothesis (H4) was rejected. Work motivation does not have a significant direct influence on teacher performance. Motivation did not prove to be a primary or principal factor.

Most teachers of Catholic's Secondary School carried out their responsibilities well, motivated primarily by their Catholic faith, especially because the Catholic secondary schools were founded and supported by the Church (Cookson & Stirk, 2019). Furthermore, most school directors were priests and nuns. Thus, following the directors' views, teachers were motivated to educate as an expression of their responsibility as believers. This is in line with the Church document from the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* no. 31 (Beltrán de Heredia,

1966). Additionally, priests and nuns teaching in these schools consider it a duty rather than being driven by external motivational factors typically contemplated in motivation theories.

These results are supported by previous research such as that conducted by (Hassan *et al.*, 2020) where the research was conducted at a private university in Karachi, Pakistan, the results showed that motivation did not have a significant influence on performance. (Diana *et al.*, 2022) in their study at CV KAM Indonesia also found the same results that work motivation does not have a direct influence on employee performance. the same thing was expressed by (Lindawati Sirait *et al.*, 2022) at Taruna Andalan School in Kerinci under the Cinta Kasih.

Thus, it can be concluded that the work motivation variable in Catholic high schools in Dili Municipality is not significant on teacher performance. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis was rejected. These results indicate that providing work motivation does not always result in improved performance. Good motivation does not necessarily result in optimal performance, and poor work motivation does not necessarily result in poor performance.

On the other hand, work motivation has a positive and significant influence on work engagement. The test results revealed that work motivation has a direct and significant influence on work engagement. The estimated path coefficient indicates that work motivation has a direct influence on engagement, and the T-statistic value exceeds the standard threshold. The probability value (p-value) is smaller than the standard threshold for statistical significance. This test serves to confirm the fifth hypothesis about the relationship between work motivation and engagement.

From the results of this study, it is very much in line with previous research such as (Aris Setiyani *et al.*, 2019; Manalo, 2020; Engidaw, 2021; Diana *et al.*, 2-22;) that state that the work motivation has a positive and significant on work engagement. Work motivation is positively correlated with work engagement (Muchtadin and Emmelya Sundary, 2023). Thus, these results demonstrate that work motivation has a positive and significant direct effect on work engagement. Therefore, strong work motivation among teachers in Catholic secondary schools in Dili Municipality has a positive and significant effect on their work engagement. Therefore, it can be concluded that the direct effect of work motivation on teacher performance is not positive and significant, but it is positive and significant on work engagement. This means that H4 is rejected, but H5 is accepted.

5.4. Work Engagement mediate transformational leadership and work motivation on Teacher Performance

Work engagement is an important mediating factor between transformational leadership and teacher performance (Buil, Martínez and Matute, 2019) and work motivation and teacher performance (Diana *et al.*, 2022). After explaining the results of the direct influence of one variable on another and its indicators, work engagement emerged as a mediator between transformational leadership and work motivation on teacher performance.

The research results revealed that work engagement as a mediator between transformational leadership and work motivation on teacher performance is positive and significant. The estimated path coefficient and the T-statistic both exceed the standard threshold, and the p-value is smaller than the standard statistical significance limit. This indicates that work engagement has a positive and significant effect as a mediator between transformational leadership and work motivation on teacher performance.

The sixth and seventh hypotheses proposed that job engagement links transformational leadership and work motivation to teacher performance. The pilot test results provided evidence confirming the sixth hypothesis (H6) and the seventh hypothesis (H7). These findings are consistent with previous studies, such as those by which found that engagement serves as a positive and significant mediator linking transformational leadership to performance (Buil *et al.*, 2019). Similar confirmation comes from the study by (Lai *et al.*, 2020), which states that work engagement positively and significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and work performance. Furthermore, in terms of teacher motivation and performance, work engagement is an important factor that positively and significantly links work motivation to teacher performance (Diana *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the test results, the direct effect of work motivation on teacher performance was negative. Work motivation did not have a significant direct effect on teacher performance. This indicates the need for alternative approaches to improve teacher performance related to motivation. Therefore, to enhance performance, it is necessary to create a new environment that connects with this motivation. In this case, work engagement serves as a pathway or alternative that can be used to connect work motivation with teacher performance. Engagement, in this context, becomes a useful mediator between work motivation and teacher performance (Diana, Sulistyaningsih and Hung, 2022). And the results show that the influence of work engagement positively and significantly mediates work motivation on teacher performance. This result is supported by previous research such as that conducted by (Almawali, Adha Hafit and Hassan, 2021; Siswanto Siswanto, Zahrotul Maulidiyah, 2021; Diana, Sulistyaningsih and Hung, 2022). Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that hypotheses Six (H6) and Seven (H7) are accepted.

Teachers in Catholic secondary schools in Dili feel highly engaged, filled with commitment and attachment, particularly towards individuals such as principals and school administrators, most of whom are priests and nuns. Inspired by the spirit of transformational leadership embodied by these leaders, the teachers carried out their duties effectively, producing very positive and significant results. This study can also conclude that increasing transformational leadership, which is strongly correlated with increased teacher engagement and commitment, will positively and significantly influence teacher performance in Catholic secondary schools in Dili Municipality. Therefore, this study suggests that improving teacher work motivation—strongly correlated with increased active engagement and commitment—will positively and significantly

impact teacher performance in Catholic secondary schools in the Dili Municipality.

6. Limitations

In this study, researchers examined how transformational leadership and work motivation affect teacher performance in Catholic high schools in the Dili Municipality, using work engagement as a mediating factor. The results of the study indicate that these variables have a positive and significant correlation.

However, since this study only focused on Catholic general secondary schools in Dili municipality, it is difficult to generalize the findings to other educational levels such as primary, basic, or higher education, and also to other types of schools such as public or non-Catholic private secondary schools.

Furthermore, in this study, work engagement became a mediating variable between transformational leadership and motivation in relation to teacher performance in Catholic secondary schools in Dili, and was conducted only once. Therefore, continuous research is needed to frequently gather data and reach more reliable conclusions regarding the relationship of variables within this model.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

7.1. Conclusion

Based on the research findings presented in the discussion can be concluded that transformational leadership and work engagement have a very positive and significant effect on teacher performance in Catholic general secondary schools in Dili municipality. However, work motivation does not show a positive and significant influence on performance but only on work engagement.

Given that the results for the direct relationship between work motivation and teacher performance are negative, work engagement becomes a viable pathway or alternative for linking motivation to teacher performance. Thus, Work engagement plays an important mediating role between transformational leadership and motivation in relation to teacher performance, with highly positive and significant results.

7.2. Recommendations

This study analyzes work engagement as a mediator effect in relation between transformational leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance, where transformational leadership and motivation act as independent variables and teacher performance as the dependent variable. In the future, new research can be explored with other mediation models such as organizational commitment or job satisfaction, which can interact with engagement to influence teacher performance.

This study was conducted solely in Catholic secondary schools in Dili Municipality, making it hard to generalize to all teachers. Future studies could apply the same model but test it in primary or higher education contexts. This study was

conducted in Dili, the nation's capital, where needs and economic demands are higher. Therefore, opinions from respondents here may differ from those in rural areas due to differences in population characteristics, culture, and situations.

Principals and administrators need to cultivate and reinforce the spirit of transformational leadership (Isabel Buila, Eva Martínez, 2020). Beyond transformational leadership, school leaders must pay close attention to appropriately recognizing and appreciating teachers' performance through rewards and work environment—particularly in terms of compensation and acknowledgment. These are essential motivational factors that, when practiced well, can enhance performance (Tumi, Hasan and Khalid, 2022). In today's world, where life is difficult and everything is measured by money, leaders in economically limited schools must seek to engage teachers through a spirit of charity and raise their spiritual awareness as religious individuals.

Work engagement has emerged as an alternative strategy for improving teacher performance. work engagement is identified as a positive, persistent, and motivating state of satisfaction (Christina Maslach, Wilmar B. Schaufeli, 2001), characterized by dedication, absorption, and vigor. This is critically important for enhancing work performance.

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