

Work Motivation as a Mediator of Employee Well-Being, Leadership, and Staff Performance

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the effects of employee well-being and transformational leadership on educational staff performance and investigates the mediating role of work motivation in private universities.

Research Method: A quantitative explanatory approach was employed. Data were collected through questionnaires from 75 educational staff members at private universities specializing in economics in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0.

Results and Discussion: The results show that employee well-being and transformational leadership positively and significantly influence work motivation. Transformational leadership and work motivation significantly affect educational staff performance, whereas employee well-being has no direct effect on performance. Furthermore, work motivation significantly mediates the relationships between employee well-being and performance, as well as transformational leadership and performance. These findings indicate that motivation is a key mechanism linking leadership and employee well-being to improved performance outcomes.

Implications: University management should strengthen transformational leadership practices and promote employee well-being to enhance work motivation and staff performance.

Originality: This study provides evidence of the mediating role of work motivation in explaining how employee well-being and transformational leadership influence educational staff performance in Indonesian private universities.

Keywords: employee well-being; transformational leadership; work motivation; staff performance; private universities.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are expected to produce competent human resources and contribute to societal development through the implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education, encompassing education, research, and community service. Achieving these objectives requires not only high-quality academic staff but also effective educational support personnel who facilitate academic administration, student services, and institutional operations. Educational staff constitute an essential component of university governance because they ensure the continuity and efficiency of academic processes, ranging from administrative support to the management of academic information systems. As higher education



institutions face increasing demands for service quality, accountability, and operational excellence, the performance of educational staff has become a critical determinant of institutional effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction.

Despite their strategic importance, many higher education institutions continue to encounter challenges related to the performance of educational staff. Delays in administrative services, ineffective coordination among organizational units, and limited proactive behavior in service improvement remain common concerns. Such issues may adversely affect service quality, reduce student satisfaction, and hinder institutional competitiveness. Consequently, understanding the factors that contribute to the performance of educational staff has become increasingly important for both researchers and university administrators seeking to enhance organizational effectiveness.

The human resource management literature suggests that employee performance is influenced by a combination of individual and organizational factors. Among these, employee well-being has received considerable attention as a determinant of positive work outcomes. Employee well-being reflects employees' physical, psychological, and social welfare within the workplace and is associated with greater engagement, lower stress, and improved job performance (Mohamad & Abiddin, 2024; Zheng *et al.*, 2015). Employees who experience higher levels of well-being are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes, sustained energy, and greater commitment toward organizational goals. Accordingly, employee well-being has been increasingly recognized as a strategic organizational resource that contributes to enhanced employee effectiveness and productivity.

Another important factor influencing employee performance is transformational leadership. Transformational leaders motivate followers by articulating a compelling vision, fostering intellectual stimulation, and providing individualized support. Through these behaviors, transformational leadership encourages employees to exceed formal job requirements and contribute more effectively to organizational objectives. Previous studies have consistently reported positive associations between transformational leadership and employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Muis & Isyanto, 2022). Within higher education settings, transformational leadership may be particularly important because educational staff often operate in dynamic environments that require adaptability, collaboration, and service-oriented behavior.

In addition to employee well-being and transformational leadership, work motivation represents a critical psychological mechanism underlying employee performance. Work motivation influences the intensity, direction, and persistence of employees' efforts toward achieving organizational goals (Robbins *et al.*, 2017). Motivated employees tend to exhibit higher levels of commitment, initiative, and productivity, which ultimately contribute to superior performance. Furthermore, motivation may serve as an explanatory mechanism through which organizational and leadership-related factors translate into behavioral and performance outcomes. Consequently, examining work motivation as an intervening variable provides a deeper understanding of how organizational conditions shape employee performance.

Although extensive research has examined the relationships among employee well-being, transformational leadership, work motivation, and employee performance, several important gaps remain. First, existing studies predominantly focus on the direct effect of employee well-being on performance, providing limited insight into the motivational processes through which well-being influences employee behavior (Firman *et al.*, 2026; Kosasih *et al.*, 2024). Second, while transformational leadership has frequently been linked to employee performance, previous research has primarily emphasized mediating mechanisms such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Halim,



2026; Rahmat & Bagio, 2025), leaving the mediating role of work motivation insufficiently explored. Third, empirical evidence is largely derived from business and industrial contexts, including manufacturing and service organizations (Khusnia & Sopiah, 2022; Lee *et al.*, 2023; Wen *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, the applicability of these findings to higher education institutions remains uncertain, given the distinctive organizational structures, service orientation, and stakeholder expectations characterizing educational environments.

Addressing these gaps, this study develops and tests an integrated framework that examines the effects of employee well-being and transformational leadership on the performance of educational staff through the mediating role of work motivation. By focusing on educational staff in private higher education institutions, this research extends the existing literature in three important ways. First, it advances understanding of the psychological mechanisms linking employee well-being to performance by incorporating work motivation as a mediating construct. Second, it enriches transformational leadership research by clarifying how leadership behaviors influence employee performance through motivational pathways. Third, it provides empirical evidence from the higher education sector, a context that remains underrepresented in the human resource management literature. Therefore, the findings are expected to contribute to theoretical developments in organizational behavior and human resource management while offering practical insights for university leaders seeking to improve the effectiveness and quality of educational services

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides literature review and hypothesis development. Section 3 presents research methodology. Section 4 provides empirical result and discussion. Section 5 presents conclusion.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Self-Determination Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory

This study draws upon Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Transformational Leadership Theory to explain how employee well-being and transformational leadership influence educational staff performance through work motivation. These complementary theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how organizational conditions and leadership behaviors shape employees' motivational states and subsequent work outcomes. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), posits that human motivation is driven by the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to individuals' perception of having control over their work activities, competence reflects their belief in their ability to perform tasks effectively, and relatedness represents the experience of meaningful social connections within the workplace. According to SDT, employees are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation when these psychological needs are satisfied. In contrast, unmet psychological needs may diminish motivation, engagement, and performance. Consequently, SDT suggests that organizational environments that promote employee well-being can foster stronger motivational resources and facilitate higher levels of job performance.

Within the context of higher education institutions, employee well-being may serve as an important antecedent of motivation because it reflects the extent to which employees experience psychological safety, social support, and opportunities for professional growth. Educational staff who perceive a supportive work environment are more likely to feel competent, connected, and empowered

in performing their responsibilities. These positive psychological experiences enhance intrinsic motivation, which subsequently encourages greater effort, persistence, and effectiveness in carrying out academic and administrative duties. Therefore, SDT provides a theoretical explanation for the relationships among employee well-being, work motivation, and employee performance. In addition to individual psychological conditions, leadership behaviors play a critical role in shaping employee motivation and performance. Transformational Leadership Theory, proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), explains how leaders inspire followers to exceed expected performance levels by influencing their values, attitudes, and aspirations. Transformational leadership is characterized by four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these dimensions, leaders act as role models, communicate a compelling vision, encourage innovative thinking, and provide personalized support for employee development.

Transformational leaders create conditions that strengthen employees' psychological resources and motivational states. By providing encouragement, recognizing employee contributions, and supporting professional growth, transformational leaders help employees develop confidence and a stronger sense of purpose in their work. These leadership behaviors not only foster commitment and engagement but also encourage employees to exert greater effort toward achieving organizational goals. As a result, transformational leadership is expected to enhance both work motivation and employee performance. Importantly, SDT and Transformational Leadership Theory offer complementary explanations of employee behavior. While SDT explains how the fulfillment of psychological needs generates intrinsic motivation, Transformational Leadership Theory explains how leaders create organizational conditions that facilitate the satisfaction of those needs. In this regard, transformational leaders can strengthen employees' feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby fostering higher levels of motivation. Consequently, employee well-being and transformational leadership can be viewed as critical antecedents of work motivation, which ultimately contributes to improved performance among educational staff. Integrating these two theoretical perspectives enables a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which organizational and leadership factors influence employee performance in higher education institutions.

2.2 Employee Well-Being

Employee well-being represents employees' overall evaluation of their quality of working life, encompassing physical, psychological, and social dimensions of workplace experiences (Din *et al.*, 2025). The concept extends beyond the absence of illness or stress and reflects employees' perceptions of psychological safety, supportive interpersonal relationships, work-life balance, and opportunities for personal growth. In contemporary organizations, employee well-being has increasingly been recognized as a strategic organizational resource because it influences employees' attitudes, behaviors, and work outcomes. Employees who experience higher levels of well-being are more likely to demonstrate positive emotions, stronger organizational attachment, and greater resilience in coping with work-related challenges.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), employee well-being plays an important role in fostering work motivation. SDT argues that individuals are intrinsically motivated when their fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Employees who experience psychological well-being are more likely to perceive their work environment as supportive of these needs, thereby enhancing their willingness to invest effort and



persist in accomplishing work-related goals. In contrast, employees experiencing low levels of well-being may suffer from emotional exhaustion, reduced enthusiasm, and diminished motivation. Therefore, employee well-being can be viewed as an important psychological resource that stimulates employees' motivational states.

Empirical studies provide support for this theoretical argument. Rasmussen *et al.*, (2024) found that employee well-being positively contributes to work motivation and job satisfaction, while Donaldson *et al.*, (2024) demonstrated that employees with higher levels of workplace well-being exhibit stronger engagement and intrinsic motivation. These findings suggest that well-being encourages employees to devote greater cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources to their work. Within higher education institutions, educational staff who experience supportive working conditions and positive psychological experiences are likely to demonstrate stronger motivation in delivering academic and administrative services. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Employee well-being positively influences the work motivation of educational staff.*

In addition to its influence on motivation, employee well-being may directly affect employee performance. Employees who experience positive psychological states generally possess higher levels of energy, concentration, and work engagement, enabling them to perform tasks more effectively and efficiently. SDT suggests that the fulfillment of psychological needs not only enhances motivation but also promotes optimal functioning and performance. When employees feel psychologically supported and valued, they are more likely to demonstrate initiative, persistence, and commitment in completing their responsibilities.

Previous empirical studies have consistently reported a positive relationship between employee well-being and performance outcomes. For example, Mohamad and Abiddin (2024) found that employee well-being contributes to improved concentration and work effectiveness, while Din *et al.*, (2025) and Lala and Firman (2026) reported that employees with higher levels of well-being tend to exhibit stronger engagement and superior job performance. In the context of higher education institutions, educational staff with higher well-being are expected to provide more responsive services, maintain better work quality, and contribute more effectively to institutional objectives. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: *Employee well-being positively influences the performance of educational staff.*

Furthermore, the influence of employee well-being on performance may occur indirectly through work motivation. Self-Determination Theory proposes that employees who experience higher levels of well-being are more likely to satisfy their psychological needs, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation. Enhanced motivation subsequently encourages employees to exert greater effort, persist in overcoming work-related challenges, and achieve higher levels of performance. In this regard, work motivation functions as an underlying psychological mechanism that translates positive well-being experiences into desirable performance outcomes.

Empirical evidence also suggests that motivation plays a crucial mediating role in linking individual psychological conditions to work outcomes. Employees who experience favorable working conditions often become more motivated, and this increased motivation subsequently contributes to improved performance. Accordingly, work motivation is expected to explain how employee well-being influences the performance of educational staff. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:



H6: *Work motivation mediates the relationship between employee well-being and the performance of educational staff.*

2.3 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower followers to achieve goals that exceed formal organizational expectations (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Unlike transactional leadership, which primarily relies on exchanges and rewards, transformational leadership focuses on stimulating employees' internal values, aspirations, and commitment to organizational objectives. The construct is commonly characterized by four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these dimensions, transformational leaders act as role models, communicate an inspiring vision, encourage innovative thinking, and provide personalized support for employee development (Kartikasari *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, transformational leadership creates a work environment that promotes employee growth, engagement, and organizational commitment.

Transformational Leadership Theory suggests that leaders play a critical role in shaping employees' psychological states and motivational processes. By articulating a compelling vision, recognizing employee contributions, and fostering professional development, transformational leaders help employees perceive their work as meaningful and valuable. Such leadership behaviors strengthen employees' sense of competence, purpose, and belonging, which subsequently enhance their willingness to exert effort toward organizational goals. In educational institutions, where service quality and collaboration are essential, transformational leaders can encourage educational staff to become more committed to supporting academic and administrative activities.

Empirical evidence supports the positive relationship between transformational leadership and work motivation. Morf and Bakker (2024) found that transformational leadership enhances employees' motivation and engagement by providing inspiration and developmental support. Similarly, Meida Arif *et al.*, (2025) reported that transformational leadership significantly increases employees' willingness to invest effort in achieving organizational objectives. These findings indicate that transformational leaders are capable of stimulating employees' intrinsic motivation by fostering a supportive and empowering work environment. For educational staff, leaders who provide guidance, encouragement, and developmental opportunities are likely to strengthen employees' enthusiasm and commitment toward their responsibilities. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: *Transformational leadership positively influences the work motivation of educational staff.*

Beyond motivation, transformational leadership is also expected to directly influence employee performance. Transformational leaders encourage employees to exceed minimum job requirements by cultivating a shared vision and promoting a sense of collective responsibility. Employees who are inspired by their leaders tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, initiative, and persistence, all of which contribute to superior performance outcomes. Moreover, transformational leaders facilitate employee development by providing constructive feedback, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support, thereby enabling employees to perform their duties more effectively.

Previous studies have consistently reported a positive association between transformational leadership and employee performance. Morf and Bakker (2024) found that transformational leadership improves performance through enhanced engagement and organizational support, while Vu *et al.*,



(2025) demonstrated that transformational leadership is positively associated with employee effectiveness across diverse organizational contexts. Within higher education institutions, transformational leaders can motivate educational staff to provide higher-quality administrative and academic services, thereby contributing to institutional effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: *Transformational leadership positively influences the performance of educational staff.*

In addition to its direct effect on performance, transformational leadership may exert an indirect influence through work motivation. Transformational Leadership Theory argues that leaders shape employee behavior by influencing their attitudes, values, and motivational states. Employees who receive inspiration, support, and recognition from transformational leaders are more likely to develop stronger motivation to contribute to organizational success. This heightened motivation subsequently encourages employees to exert greater effort, demonstrate persistence in overcoming work-related challenges, and achieve superior performance outcomes.

From this perspective, work motivation serves as an important psychological mechanism through which transformational leadership translates into improved performance. Employees are not merely influenced by leadership behaviors themselves but by the motivational states generated through those behaviors. Therefore, work motivation is expected to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and the performance of educational staff. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: *Work motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and the performance of educational staff.*

2.4 Work Motivation

Work motivation refers to the psychological forces that determine the direction, intensity, and persistence of employees' work-related behavior (Robbins *et al.*, 2017). Motivation influences the extent to which individuals are willing to invest effort, pursue organizational objectives, and persist in accomplishing work-related tasks despite challenges and obstacles. As one of the most widely studied constructs in organizational behavior, work motivation has been recognized as a fundamental driver of employee effectiveness and organizational success.

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) provides a comprehensive explanation of work motivation by distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arises when employees engage in work because they find it meaningful, enjoyable, or personally fulfilling, whereas extrinsic motivation stems from external incentives such as rewards, recognition, promotion opportunities, or organizational support. Although both forms of motivation can influence employee behavior, SDT suggests that intrinsically motivated employees are more likely to demonstrate sustained effort, proactive behavior, and higher-quality performance because their actions are driven by internalized values and personal commitment rather than external pressures alone.

Within organizational settings, work motivation serves as a critical psychological mechanism linking workplace conditions and leadership practices to employee outcomes. Employees who experience supportive organizational environments and effective leadership are more likely to develop stronger motivational states, which subsequently encourage greater effort and commitment toward organizational goals. In this regard, motivation functions not only as an individual characteristic but also



as a dynamic process through which organizational factors influence employee behavior and performance.

The positive relationship between work motivation and employee performance has been widely supported in the literature. Motivated employees tend to exhibit higher levels of persistence, responsibility, and initiative in completing their tasks. They are also more willing to devote cognitive and emotional resources to their work, resulting in improved productivity and service quality. According to SDT, motivated employees are more likely to achieve optimal functioning because they willingly invest effort in activities that align with both personal and organizational objectives. Empirical evidence further supports this argument. Iddrisu (2023) found that work motivation significantly enhances employee performance by encouraging greater effort and commitment to work-related responsibilities. Similarly, Ariani Hertina and Etikariena (2024) reported that motivated employees demonstrate higher levels of productivity and effectiveness in achieving organizational goals. In the context of higher education institutions, educational staff with stronger work motivation are expected to provide more responsive administrative services, maintain higher work quality, and contribute more effectively to institutional performance. Therefore, work motivation can be considered a crucial determinant of educational staff performance. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: *Work motivation positively influences the performance of educational staff.*

2.5 Educational Staff Performance

Educational staff performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively fulfill their assigned duties and responsibilities in supporting organizational objectives. Employee performance is commonly reflected through indicators such as work quality, work quantity, timeliness, efficiency, and responsibility in completing assigned tasks (Titirloloby *et al.*, 2025). As a multidimensional construct, performance represents not only the outcomes achieved by employees but also the effectiveness with which they utilize their skills, knowledge, and organizational resources to accomplish work objectives.

Within higher education institutions, educational staff constitute a critical component of institutional operations because they provide administrative, technical, and support services that facilitate the implementation of academic activities. Their responsibilities encompass a wide range of functions, including academic administration, student services, information management, financial administration, and institutional coordination. Consequently, the effectiveness of educational staff directly influences the quality of academic services, operational efficiency, and overall institutional performance.

The growing complexity of higher education environments has further increased the importance of educational staff performance. Universities are increasingly required to provide efficient services, maintain high levels of stakeholder satisfaction, and adapt to rapid technological and organizational changes. In this context, educational staff are expected not only to perform routine administrative tasks but also to demonstrate initiative, adaptability, and service-oriented behavior. Therefore, high levels of performance among educational staff are essential for ensuring institutional effectiveness and sustaining the quality of educational services.

From an organizational behavior perspective, employee performance is often viewed as the ultimate outcome of various individual and organizational factors, including employee well-being, leadership practices, and work motivation. Employees who experience supportive working conditions,



effective leadership, and strong motivational states are more likely to demonstrate superior performance outcomes. Accordingly, educational staff performance serves as an appropriate outcome variable for examining how psychological and organizational factors contribute to organizational effectiveness within higher education institutions:

3. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among employee well-being, transformational leadership, work motivation, and the performance of educational staff. A quantitative approach was selected because the study aims to test hypotheses and analyze relationships among variables empirically using numerical data collected through a questionnaire survey (Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted at private universities specializing in economics in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The subjects of this study were educational staff, including employees working in academic administration, finance, student affairs, libraries, and other supporting units involved in academic service activities. The selection of private universities as the research setting was based on the consideration that these institutions require high-quality administrative services to support academic processes, making them relevant for examining factors influencing educational staff performance.

The population of this study consisted of all educational staff working at private economics universities in South Sulawesi. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling approach, in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria determined by the researcher (Sugiyono, 2018). The criteria for respondents included: (1) active educational staff members, (2) having a minimum of two years of work experience, and (3) being directly involved in administrative or academic service activities. The sample size was determined using the rule of thumb commonly applied in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, which recommends a minimum of five to ten times the number of indicators used in the model (Hair *et al.*, 2021). This study employed 15 indicators, consisting of three indicators of employee well-being, four indicators of transformational leadership, four indicators of work motivation, and four indicators of educational staff performance. Based on this guideline, the minimum required sample size was 75 respondents.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on measurement indicators adopted from previous studies. The research instrument used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to measure respondents' perceptions of each statement (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships among latent variables simultaneously and to test both direct and indirect effects within the proposed research model (Hair *et al.*, 2021).

The analysis procedure consisted of several stages, including descriptive analysis of respondents, evaluation of the measurement model (validity and reliability testing), and testing of the structural model to assess the hypothesized relationships among variables. Through this analytical approach, the study aims to provide empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between employee well-being, transformational leadership, and the performance of educational staff in private universities.

Table 1. Research Instrument

Variable	Indicator	Code	Source
Employee Well-Being	Physical well-being at work	EWB1	(Donaldson <i>et al.</i> , 2024)
	Psychological well-being	EWB2	
	Work comfort and balance	EWB3	
Transformational Leadership	Idealized influence	TL1	(Mathende & Yousefi, 2021)
	Inspirational motivation	TL2	
	Intellectual stimulation	TL3	
	Individualized consideration	TL4	
Work Motivation	Internal motivation to work	WM1	(Robbins <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
	Desire to achieve work performance	WM2	
	Need for recognition at work	WM3	
	Enthusiasm in working	WM4	
Educational Staff Performance	Work quality	ESP1	(Iddrisu, 2023)
	Work quantity	ESP2	
	Timeliness in completing tasks	ESP3	
	Responsibility toward work	ESP4	

Source: Data processed by Author, 2026.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis Results

4.1.1 Characteristics of Respondents

To provide an overview of the respondents involved in this study, the demographic characteristics of respondents were analyzed based on several aspects, including gender, age, educational level, and work experience. This information is important for understanding the background of the educational staff participating in the study and ensuring that the respondents possess relevant experience related to the variables examined in this research.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	29	38.7
	Female	46	61.3
Age	21–30 years	18	24.0
	31–40 years	34	45.3
	41–50 years	16	21.3
	>50 years	7	9.4
Education Level	Diploma (D3)	14	18.7
	Bachelor (S1)	44	58.7
	Master (S2)	17	22.6
Work Experience	2–5 years	20	26.7
	5–10 years	31	41.3
	11–15 years	16	21.3
	>15 years	8	10.7

Source: Data processed by SPSS 26, 2026.

Based on Table 2, the majority of respondents were female (61.3%), while male respondents accounted for 38.7%. Most respondents were between 31 and 40 years old (45.3%). In terms of educational level, the majority held a bachelor’s degree (58.7%). Regarding work experience, most



respondents had between 5 and 10 years of work experience (41.3%). These findings suggest that most respondents are within the productive working-age group and have sufficient educational backgrounds and work experience.

4.1.2 Convergent Validity

To assess the convergent validity of the measurement model, the outer loading values, Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were examined using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with SmartPLS 4.0. An indicator is considered valid if the loading value exceeds 0.70 (Ghozali & Latan, 2015), while the reliability of the construct is considered acceptable if Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values are greater than 0.70, and AVE values exceed 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2021).

Table 3. Convergent Validity

Variable	Indicator	Loading	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Employee Well-Being	EWB1	0.817	0.797	0.808	0.711
	EWB2	0.823			
	EWB3	0.888			
Transformational Leadership	TL1	0.741	0.778	0.806	0.589
	TL2	0.821			
	TL3	0.707			
	TL4	0.813			
Work Motivation	WM1	0.897	0.862	0.872	0.708
	WM2	0.836			
	WM3	0.842			
	WM4	0.788			
Educational Staff Performance	ESP1	0.719	0.752	0.759	0.572
	ESP2	0.774			
	ESP3	0.810			
	ESP4	0.719			

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS 4.0, 2026.

As shown in Table 3, all indicators have loading values above 0.70, indicating that they meet the convergent validity criterion. Furthermore, the values of Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability for each construct exceed 0.70, and the AVE values are above 0.50. These results indicate that the indicators used in this study are valid and reliable for measuring the constructs of employee well-being, transformational leadership, work motivation, and educational staff performance.

4.1.3 Discriminant Validity

To evaluate discriminant validity, the cross-loading values of each indicator were examined. Discriminant validity is achieved when the loading value of an indicator on its corresponding construct is higher than its loadings on other constructs.

As shown in Table 4, each indicator has a higher loading on its respective construct than on other constructs. This indicates that the indicators are more strongly associated with their intended latent variables than with other variables in the model. Therefore, the measurement model satisfies the criterion for discriminant validity.

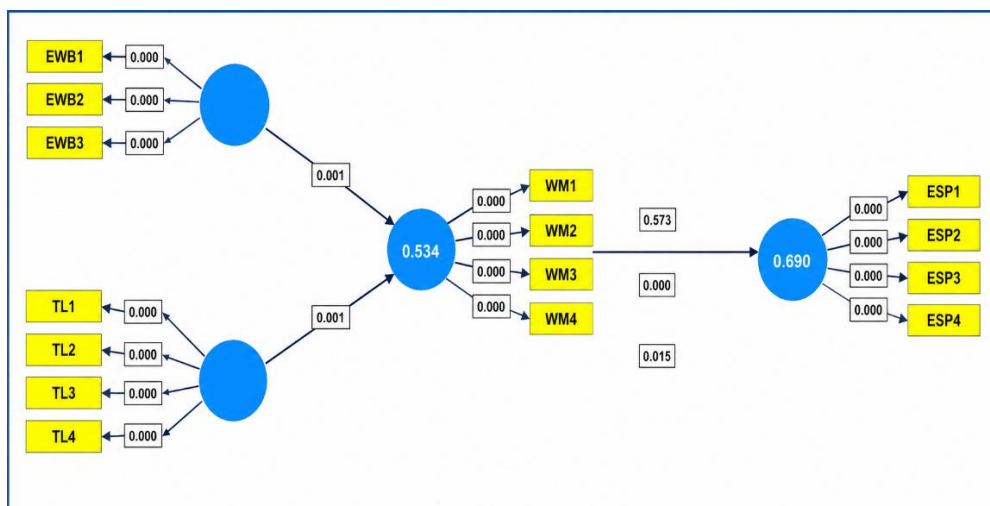


Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Cross Loadings)

Indicator	Employee Well-Being	Transformational Leadership	Work Motivation	Educational Staff Performance
EWB1	0.817	0.718	0.506	0.550
EWB2	0.823	0.565	0.602	0.485
EWB3	0.888	0.665	0.628	0.654
TL1	0.585	0.741	0.730	0.709
TL2	0.596	0.821	0.437	0.483
TL3	0.549	0.687	0.326	0.366
TL4	0.620	0.813	0.453	0.526
WM1	0.674	0.635	0.897	0.745
WM2	0.611	0.592	0.836	0.705
WM3	0.479	0.499	0.842	0.594
WM4	0.529	0.569	0.788	0.604
ESP1	0.430	0.447	0.441	0.719
ESP2	0.348	0.550	0.630	0.774
ESP3	0.522	0.617	0.667	0.810
ESP4	0.711	0.546	0.622	0.719

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS 4.0, 2026.

4.1.4 R-Square



Source: Data processed by SmartPLS 4.0, 2026.

Figure 1. Bootstrapping Result

To evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model, the coefficient of determination (R-square) was examined. The R-square value indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous variables that can be explained by the exogenous variables in the model. In addition, R-square adjusted is used to provide a more accurate estimate by considering the number of predictors included in the model. The results of the R-square analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. R-Square and R-square adjusted

Endogenous Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Educational Staff Performance	0.690	0.677
Work Motivation	0.534	0.521

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS 4.0, 2026.



Based on Table 5, the R-square value for Educational Staff Performance is 0.690, indicating that 69.0% of the variance in educational staff performance can be explained by the variables included in the model, namely employee well-being, transformational leadership, and work motivation. The remaining 31.0% of the variance is explained by other variables not included in this study. Meanwhile, the R-square value for Work Motivation is 0.534, indicating that 53.4% of the variance in work motivation can be explained by employee well-being and transformational leadership, while the remaining 46.6% is explained by other factors outside the model. According to commonly accepted criteria, an R-square value of 0.75 is considered substantial, 0.50 moderate, and 0.25 weak. Therefore, the R-square values obtained in this study indicate that the model has moderate explanatory power.

The predictive relevance of the structural model was evaluated using the Stone–Geisser Q-square (Q^2) value. The Q-square value was calculated based on the R-square values of the endogenous variables, namely Educational Staff Performance (0.690) and Work Motivation (0.534). The calculation resulted in a Q-square value of 0.856. Since the Q-square value is greater than zero, it indicates that the proposed research model has predictive relevance and is capable of predicting the observed data effectively. This finding suggests that the structural model has strong predictive capability in explaining the relationships among employee well-being, transformational leadership, work motivation, and educational staff performance.

4.1.5 Path Coefficient

After evaluating the explanatory power of the structural model through the R-square and Q-square values, the next step is to examine the path coefficients in order to test the proposed research hypotheses. The path coefficient analysis aims to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables included in the research model. The significance of these relationships was assessed using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4.0, which generates t-statistics and p-values for each path relationship. A hypothesis is considered supported when the t-statistic value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between variables. The results of the direct effect analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Direct Effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
Employee Well-Being → Work Motivation (H1)	0.395	0.385	0.122	3.244	0.001	Accepted
Transformational Leadership → Work Motivation (H2)	0.382	0.400	0.112	3.416	0.001	Accepted
Employee Well-Being → Educational Staff Performance (H3)	0.075	0.074	0.132	0.563	0.573	Rejected
Transformational Leadership → Educational Staff Performance (H4)	0.295	0.295	0.121	2.430	0.015	Accepted
Work Motivation → Educational Staff Performance (H5)	0.539	0.541	0.077	7.034	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS 4.0, 2026.



Based on Table 6, the results of the direct effect analysis show that employee well-being has a positive and significant effect on work motivation, with a coefficient value of 0.395, a t-statistic of 3.244, and a p-value of 0.001 (< 0.05). Therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating that higher levels of employee well-being lead to higher work motivation among educational staff. Furthermore, transformational leadership also has a positive and significant effect on work motivation, with a coefficient value of 0.382, a t-statistic of 3.416, and a p-value of 0.001 (< 0.05). These results indicate that H2 is accepted, suggesting that transformational leadership can enhance the work motivation of educational staff.

However, the results indicate that employee well-being does not have a significant effect on educational staff performance, with a coefficient value of 0.075, a t-statistic of 0.563, and a p-value of 0.573 (> 0.05). Therefore, H3 is rejected, meaning that employee well-being does not directly influence the performance of educational staff. In addition, transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on educational staff performance, with a coefficient value of 0.295, a t-statistic of 2.430, and a p-value of 0.015 (< 0.05). Thus, H4 is accepted, indicating that transformational leadership can improve the performance of educational staff.

Finally, the results show that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on educational staff performance, with a coefficient value of 0.539, a t-statistic of 7.034, and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). Therefore, H5 is accepted, indicating that higher work motivation leads to better educational staff performance.

Table 7. Indirect Effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
Employee Well-Being → Work Motivation → Educational Staff Performance (H6)	0.213	0.206	0.068	3.110	0.002	Accepted
Transformational Leadership → Work Motivation → Educational Staff Performance (H7)	0.206	0.218	0.074	2.774	0.006	Accepted

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS 4.0, 2026.

Based on Table 7, the results of the indirect effect analysis show that employee well-being has a positive and significant indirect effect on educational staff performance through work motivation, with a coefficient value of 0.213, a t-statistic of 3.110, and a p-value of 0.002 (< 0.05). Therefore, H6 is accepted, indicating that work motivation mediates the relationship between employee well-being and educational staff performance.

Furthermore, transformational leadership also has a positive and significant indirect effect on educational staff performance through work motivation, with a coefficient value of 0.206, a t-statistic of 2.774, and a p-value of 0.006 (< 0.05). Thus, H7 is accepted, suggesting that work motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and educational staff performance. These findings indicate that work motivation plays an important mediating role in strengthening the influence of employee well-being and transformational leadership on educational staff performance.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 The Effect of Employee Well-Being on Work Motivation

The results of this study indicate that employee well-being has a positive and significant effect on the work motivation of educational staff. This finding suggests that higher levels of well-being experienced by employees tend to increase their motivation to perform their duties. In this study, employee well-being reflects employees' perceptions of physical comfort, psychological security, and a balanced working environment, all of which contribute to shaping their enthusiasm and willingness to work.

This result can be explained through Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which states that individuals are more likely to develop stronger intrinsic motivation when their psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are fulfilled. When employees experience well-being in the workplace, they tend to feel more valued, supported, and psychologically secure. These conditions stimulate a stronger internal drive to perform work tasks effectively. The findings are also relevant when viewed in light of the characteristics of respondents in this study. As shown in Table 2, most respondents are between 31 and 40 years old and have 5–10 years of work experience. Employees within this age and experience range are generally in a productive career stage, where psychological comfort and work-life balance become increasingly important factors influencing their work attitudes. Therefore, when educational staff perceive that their workplace provides adequate support and well-being, they are more likely to demonstrate stronger work motivation.

This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that employee well-being contributes positively to work motivation and engagement. (Rasmussen *et al.*, 2024) and (Donaldson *et al.*, 2024; Firman *et al.*, 2026) highlight that well-being strengthens employees' intrinsic motivation by creating a psychologically supportive environment. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the view that employee well-being functions as an important psychological resource that encourages educational staff to perform their duties with greater motivation.

4.2.2 The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Work Motivation

The results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the work motivation of educational staff. This indicates that the leadership style practiced by leaders plays an important role in shaping employees' motivational levels. Leaders who inspire, support, and empower their subordinates are more likely to encourage employees to become more enthusiastic and committed to their work. This finding aligns with Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994), which emphasizes that transformational leaders influence employees through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these dimensions, leaders are able to inspire employees, communicate a compelling vision, and support their personal and professional development.

When viewed from the characteristics of respondents, the majority of educational staff in this study hold a bachelor's degree (S1) and possess moderate work experience. Employees with such educational backgrounds are generally capable of understanding organizational goals and responding positively to inspirational leadership. In such situations, transformational leadership becomes particularly effective in stimulating employees' motivation because it aligns organizational vision with employees' personal development. Therefore, the positive influence of transformational leadership on work motivation in this study can be understood as the result of effective communication, leadership



support, and inspirational guidance provided by leaders within the university environment. These leadership practices create a sense of purpose among employees, which ultimately strengthens their motivation to perform their work responsibilities. This finding supports previous research showing that transformational leadership plays an important role in enhancing employee motivation. Studies by (Bakker *et al.*, 2023; Meida Arif *et al.*, 2025) demonstrate that transformational leadership fosters stronger work motivation by encouraging employee engagement and commitment.

4.2.3 *The Effect of Employee Well-Being on Educational Staff Performance*

The findings reveal that employee well-being does not have a significant direct effect on educational staff performance. This suggests that although employees may experience a favorable level of well-being, such conditions do not automatically lead to improved performance outcomes. From a theoretical perspective, this result can still be explained through Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) The theory suggests that well-being primarily influences psychological states that support intrinsic motivation rather than directly determining work performance. In other words, well-being may create a positive psychological environment, but employees still need motivation and effort to translate that condition into higher performance.

When related to the characteristics of respondents, the majority of respondents have 5–10 years of work experience and are in the mid-career stage. Employees at this stage may already possess sufficient work skills and routine work patterns, meaning that performance is likely influenced more by motivation and leadership support than by well-being alone. Therefore, well-being may function as a supporting condition rather than a direct determinant of performance. This finding differs from some previous studies that reported a direct positive relationship between employee well-being and performance (Din *et al.*, 2025; Mohamad & Abiddin, 2024). However, the current study suggests that within the context of educational staff, the effect of well-being on performance is more likely to occur through motivational mechanisms rather than direct influence.

4.2.4 *The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Educational Staff Performance*

The results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational staff. This means that leaders who demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors are able to encourage employees to perform their tasks more effectively. According to Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994), leaders who provide inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support can influence employees' attitudes and behaviors. These leadership practices help employees understand organizational goals and motivate them to contribute more actively to achieving those goals.

In the context of this study, the majority of respondents have higher education backgrounds and sufficient work experience, which means they are capable of responding positively to inspirational leadership. Employees who perceive their leaders as supportive and visionary tend to develop stronger commitment toward their tasks. As a result, their work performance improves. This finding supports previous research suggesting that transformational leadership enhances employee performance by fostering engagement and commitment (Morf & Bakker, 2024; Vu *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, transformational leadership appears to be a key organizational factor in improving educational staff performance within private universities.



4.2.5 The Effect of Work Motivation on Educational Staff Performance

The results show that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on educational staff performance, and it is the strongest predictor of performance in this study. This finding indicates that employees who possess stronger motivation tend to demonstrate better performance in carrying out their duties. This result is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which suggests that motivated individuals tend to direct their behavior toward achieving goals and maintaining persistence in their tasks. Employees who are motivated are more likely to invest greater effort, maintain focus, and perform their responsibilities more effectively.

Considering the characteristics of respondents, most educational staff are within the productive working-age group (31–40 years old) and have moderate work experience. Employees at this stage are typically highly career-oriented and motivated to achieve work targets. Therefore, motivation becomes a key factor that drives their work performance. This finding supports previous studies demonstrating that work motivation significantly improves employee performance (Ariani Hertina & Etikariena, 2024; Iddrisu, 2023). Thus, motivation acts as an internal force that transforms employees' abilities and efforts into concrete performance outcomes.

4.2.6 The Mediating Role of Work Motivation between Employee Well-Being and Educational Staff Performance

The findings indicate that work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between employee well-being and educational staff performance. This means that employee well-being enhances performance indirectly by strengthening employees' motivation. This result can be explained through Self-Determination Theory, which states that supportive work environments first influence employees' psychological states and motivation before affecting their behavior and performance. When employees feel psychologically comfortable and supported, they become more motivated, which ultimately leads to improved performance.

Considering the characteristics of respondents, the majority of employees have sufficient experience and educational backgrounds. In such cases, motivation plays a critical role in transforming positive work conditions into productive work behavior. Without motivation, well-being alone may not be sufficient to drive performance improvements. This finding therefore confirms that motivation acts as a psychological mechanism that translates employee well-being into higher performance outcomes.

4.2.7 The Mediating Role of Work Motivation between Transformational Leadership and Educational Staff Performance

The results show that work motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and educational staff performance. This indicates that transformational leadership improves performance not only directly but also indirectly by increasing employees' motivation. According to Transformational Leadership Theory, leaders who inspire and empower employees are able to stimulate employees' internal motivation. When employees feel supported and encouraged by their leaders, they develop a stronger commitment toward organizational goals, which subsequently enhances their performance.

The characteristics of respondents also support this finding. With most employees having higher education levels and professional experience, inspirational leadership becomes particularly



effective in motivating them. Employees who perceive strong leadership support are more likely to demonstrate higher motivation and stronger work engagement. This result aligns with previous studies suggesting that motivation serves as a key mechanism through which transformational leadership influences performance (Farah *et al.*, 2025; Meida Arif *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, transformational leadership contributes to better performance not only through direct influence but also by strengthening employees' motivational states

5. Concluding Remarks and Recommendation

This study examines the relationships among employee well-being, transformational leadership, work motivation, and educational staff performance in private universities. The results demonstrate that employee well-being and transformational leadership significantly enhance work motivation, while transformational leadership and work motivation positively influence educational staff performance. However, employee well-being does not directly affect performance. Importantly, the findings reveal that work motivation acts as a key mediating mechanism through which employee well-being and transformational leadership contribute to improved educational staff performance. These results highlight that psychological conditions and leadership practices influence performance primarily through employees' motivational processes.

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the application of Self-Determination Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory by integrating employee well-being and transformational leadership as determinants of work motivation within a single research model in the context of higher education institutions. The novelty of this research lies in demonstrating that work motivation serves as a critical pathway linking psychological well-being and leadership practices to performance outcomes among educational staff. Practically, the findings suggest that university management should prioritize leadership practices that inspire employees and foster a supportive work environment, as these factors are essential for strengthening employees' motivation and improving institutional service performance.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was limited to educational staff in private universities specializing in economics in South Sulawesi, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other institutional contexts. In addition, the model examined only a limited number of variables affecting performance. Future research is therefore encouraged to incorporate additional organizational and psychological variables, expand the research scope to different types of higher education institutions, and involve larger samples in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing educational staff performance.

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Statement of Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the author used generative artificial intelligence tools to support the scientific writing process. Grammarly was used to check grammar, refine writing style, and improve clarity in scientific writing. All interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this study are the sole responsibility of the author.

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