

The Effect Of Transformational Leadership And Work Motivation On The Performance Of Operational Employees Of Pt Karunia Bakti Utama, Garut District

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Article History

Received: 15-08-2026

Revised: 11-09-2026

Published: 30-09-2026

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Work Motivation; Employee Performance; Land Transportation

ABSTRACT

This study tests the effects of transformational leadership and work motivation on operational employee performance at PT Karunia Bakti Utama, Garut Regency. A quantitative explanatory survey involved 147 respondents selected from 231 employees using the Slovin formula and simple random sampling. Questionnaire data were analyzed through instrument and classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression, t-test, F-test, and the coefficient of determination. The mean scores were 3.30 for transformational leadership, 3.36 for work motivation, and 3.68 for performance. The regression equation was $Y = 5.914 + 0.260X_1 + 0.341X_2$. Transformational leadership ($t = 8.009$; $p < 0.001$) and work motivation ($t = 6.810$; $p < 0.001$) had positive and significant effects. Their simultaneous effect was also significant ($F = 67.254$; $p < 0.001$), with $R^2 = 0.483$. Leadership role modeling, individualized attention, compensation, occupational security, and workplace relationships are practical priorities.

INTRODUCTION

The land transportation sector not only moves passengers from one point to another but also maintains interregional economic and social connectivity. Service quality in this sector is largely determined by accurate coordination, safety, speed of response, and consistent behavior of operational staff. Changing mobility patterns and intermodal competition require transportation companies to manage human resources as a strategic capacity, not merely as routine field personnel (Puradiraja et al., 2025).

Operational employees face direct challenges such as travel schedules, time pressures, passenger needs, road conditions, and interpersonal coordination. This combination of demands places individual performance at the heart of service continuity. Effective human resource management requires linking organizational direction, leadership behavior, work

motivation, and performance standards to ensure employee contributions are not siloed (Stone et al., 2024).

PT Karunia Bakti Utama is a land transportation company operating in Garut Regency since 1997 under the auspices of the Mayasari Group. Initial observations revealed that the company lacks a structured and comprehensive performance appraisal system. The lack of a formal instrument has the potential to lead to differing assessment standards, limited feedback, and a weak foundation for employee development. This situation makes leadership behavior and internal employee motivation two important mechanisms that can guide daily work execution.

A pre-survey of 20 employees revealed that the most prominent performance issue lies in initiative. Fifteen employees stated they were not proactive and creative in understanding and completing tasks. Work quality was also lacking, with 13 employees assessing that work could not be completed effectively with minimal errors. These initial findings indicate that performance issues extend beyond the quantity of work, but also include the courage to act, thoroughness, and the ability to solve problems independently.

Organizational behavior explains that work outcomes are shaped through the interaction of individual characteristics, group dynamics, and organizational systems. Leadership exists at the group level because it shapes how members understand goals, accept direction, and respond to change. Motivation exists at the individual level because it determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of effort. Performance is the visible output of the intersection of these two mechanisms (Liu et al., 2023).

Transformational leadership is relevant when organizations require more than just adherence to instructions. This approach motivates followers through vision, role modeling, stimulating thought, and attention to individual development. Leaders not only ensure work gets done, but also build a rationale for why work must be performed to a higher standard (Hadi & Marpaung, 2023).

Four dimensions shape transformational leadership. *Idealized Influence* is related to the example, trust, and pride of followers towards the leader. *Inspirational Motivation* is seen in the ability to convey goals and generate optimism. *Intellectual Stimulation* provides space to assess problems from a new perspective. *Individualized consideration* places the needs and development of each employee as a leadership concern (Avolio et al., 2022).

pre-survey indicated that implementation is uneven. Fourteen respondents did not feel adequate inspiration and encouragement from their superiors, while role models and encouragement for creative thinking were also not strongly perceived. This gap is crucial for transportation work, which often requires quick decisions and field coordination. Adaptive leaders are expected to combine clarity of direction with the empowerment of subordinates so that operational responses do not always depend on direct orders (Singh et al., 2023).

Work motivation complements the leadership function by providing psychological energy for task execution. This drive explains why someone initiates action, sustains effort,

and prioritizes when facing multiple demands. Work experiences that provide value, security, recognition, and social support tend to make work more sustainable (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022).

Motivation measures in this study included compensation, security, relationships with coworkers, and relationships with superiors. These four aspects were chosen because they directly relate to the experiences of operational employees. Rewards reflect recognition for contributions and job risks, security helps maintain focus, and work relationships determine the quality of coordination. Social support and fair treatment can also maintain employee engagement when workloads increase (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

pre-survey revealed compensation as the biggest weakness. Fifteen out of 20 respondents did not assess rewards commensurate with workload. A sense of security and relationships with superiors also received less than positive ratings. This finding indicates that morale is not solely built through instruction; companies also need to ensure employees feel recognized, protected, and have supportive interpersonal relationships.

Employee performance in this study is understood through quality, quantity, responsibility, cooperation, and initiative. These dimensions allow assessment to move from visible results to behaviors that contribute to sustained results. Quality and quantity assess output, responsibility and cooperation reflect how work is carried out, while initiative captures the ability to act without always waiting for direction (Syahnego et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence regarding the relationship between variables is not entirely consistent. Several studies have found that transformational leadership strengthens performance through providing direction, empowerment, and building commitment (Andri & Moko, 2024; Dharmawan et al., 2025; Intiar, 2023). Other findings indicate an insignificant effect when the relationship is tested across different organizations and variable configurations (Ardiyansah & Elmi, 2025; Wardani & Nohong, 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024).

A similar pattern emerges in work motivation. Work drive has been shown to be related to outcome achievement in various organizations (Sakinah et al., 2025; Salahudin et al., 2023). However, several studies have found insignificant results or indicated that the effect depends on engagement, job satisfaction, or organizational characteristics (Jaya et al., 2025; Nurlinda & Hidayat, 2024). These differences raise the need to reexamine the model on operational employees in land transportation companies.

The novelty of this study lies in the characteristics of the object and its managerial situation. Operational employees at PT Karunia Bakti Utama work under pressure from time pressure, field coordination, passenger service, and safety responsibilities, while a formal performance appraisal system is not yet adequately developed. The study aimed to describe the conditions of these three variables while simultaneously examining the influence of transformational leadership and work motivation on performance, both partially and simultaneously.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research uses a quantitative approach with a causal associative method through *explanatory survey*. This design was chosen to measure the tendency of respondents' answers and to test the direction and magnitude of the influence of two independent variables on one dependent variable. The unit of analysis was the operational employees of PT Karunia Bakti Utama, Garut Regency. The population was 231 people, consisting of six operational division personnel, 23 *checkers*, 93 drivers, 92 conductors, and 17 conductors. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula, resulting in 147 respondents. The selection of sample members was carried out through *simple random sampling*, *random sampling* so that every member of the population has an equal opportunity to be involved.

The operationalization of the variables is summarized in Table 1. Transformational leadership refers to four dimensions of leader behavior, work motivation includes reward experiences and work relationships, while performance is assessed from the results and behavior of task implementation.

Table 1. Summary of operationalization of variables

Variables	Dimensions	Number of items
Transformational leadership (X_1)	<i>Idealized influence ; inspirational motivation ; intellectual stimulation ; individualized consideration</i>	20
Work motivation (X_2)	Compensation; sense of security; relationships with coworkers; relationships with superiors	12
Employee performance (Y)	Quality; quantity; responsibility; cooperation; initiative	10

The suitability of the instrument was evaluated through item-total correlation and *Cronbach's Alpha*. Items are declared valid if the calculated r exceeds 0.30, while reliability is accepted at alpha values above 0.70. The regression model is checked for normality, residuals, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity before hypothesis testing is carried out. Descriptive analysis was used to map the average scores for each dimension. Partial effects were tested using a t-test at a 5% error level, while simultaneous effects were tested using an F-test. The coefficient of determination was used to determine the proportion of performance variation that can be explained by transformational leadership and work motivation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent characteristics

The respondents were dominated by the productive age group. Employees aged 26–35 years old made up 35.37%, followed by those aged 36–45 years old at 33.33%. A total of 89.80% of respondents were male, in line with the occupational composition of drivers, conductors, assistants, and *checkers*, which dominate the operational sector. The highest educational background was high school/vocational high school or equivalent, at 65.31%.

Those with 4–6 years of experience were the largest group, accounting for 34.69%, while 25.17% had worked for more than six years. This diversity of experience provided respondents with a sufficient basis for assessing the company's leadership styles, motivational conditions, and work practices.

Table 2. Respondent characteristics

Characteristics	Dominant category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	26–35 years	52	35.37%
Gender	Man	132	89.80%
Education	High school/vocational school/equivalent	96	65.31%
Years of service	4–6 years	51	34.69%

Instrument quality and model assumptions

All items met the validity limits. The calculated *r* values for transformational leadership ranged from 0.650 to 0.797, work motivation from 0.725 to 0.828, and employee performance from 0.681 to 0.823. Internal consistency was also excellent, as *the Cronbach's α values were* The *alpha* of each variable far exceeds 0.70. The residuals follow the diagonal line in the *Normal PP Plot graph*, so the distribution pattern is considered close to normal. The *tolerance value* of both independent variables is 0.968 and the VIF is 1.033 indicating the absence of multicollinearity. The residual points in *the scatterplot* are randomly distributed around the zero axis without forming a specific pattern, so the model does not show symptoms of heteroscedasticity.

Table 3. Summary of instrument testing and classical assumptions

Testing	Transformational leadership	Work motivation	Employee performance
Validity	0.650–0.797	0.725–0.828	0.681–0.823
Reliability	0.952	0.942	0.930
Multicollinearity	Tolerance 0.968; VIF 1.033	Tolerance 0.968; VIF 1.033	–
Normality and heteroscedasticity	Residuals are close to normal	Random residual distribution	–

Description of research variables

Descriptive results show a heterogeneous pattern across dimensions. Transformational leadership and work motivation are in the moderately good category, while performance is in the good category. This difference suggests that employees are able to maintain work results through experience, operational habits, and team coordination, even though leadership support and motivation are not optimal across all aspects.

Table 4. Descriptive scores of variables and dimensions

Variables	Dimensions	Score	Category
Transformational	<i>Idealized influence</i>	2.91	Pretty good

Variables	Dimensions	Score	Category
leadership	<i>Inspirational motivation</i>	3.57	Good
	<i>Intellectual stimulation</i>	3.43	Good
	<i>Individualized consideration</i>	3.29	Pretty good
	Average variable	3.30	Pretty good
Work motivation	Compensation	3.05	Pretty good
	Sense of security	3.68	Good
	Relationships with coworkers	3.05	Pretty good
	Relationship with superiors	3.68	Good
	Average variable	3.36	Pretty good
Employee performance	Quality of work	3.76	Good
	Quantity of work	3.64	Good
	Responsibility	3.40	Good
	Cooperation	3.99	Good
	Initiative	3.64	Good
	Average variable	3.68	Good

Transformational leadership earned an average of 3.30. *Inspirational Motivation* is the strongest dimension with a score of 3.57, which means that employees have relatively received encouragement, trust, and explanations of work goals from their superiors. The *idealized dimension The influence score* only reached 2.91. This score indicates that role models, pride, emotional closeness, and encouragement of creativity have not been consistently experienced by all employees.

The distinction between inspiration and role modeling is important to understand carefully. Verbal direction can generate momentary enthusiasm, but transformational influence requires a congruence between the leader's message and behavior. Follower trust grows when discipline, fairness, openness, and courage to take responsibility are evident in daily actions. A consistent role model makes the organization's vision more easily accepted as a shared commitment, not simply as an instruction (Zin et al., 2023).

Work motivation averaged 3.36. Sense of security and relationships with superiors each scored 3.68, while compensation and relationships with coworkers both scored 3.05. Employees experienced job protection and supportive vertical relationships, but rewards and horizontal harmony didn't provide the same strong motivation.

Compensation has a broader meaning than routine pay because it signals how the organization values workload, risk, and contribution. Perceived inadequate benefits can weaken the psychological connection between effort and reward. Unharmonious relationships between colleagues also have the potential to increase coordination burdens, especially in jobs that require rapid information exchange and interdependence . (Marta et al., 2021).

Employee performance averaged 3.68. Cooperation was the highest-scoring dimension, with a score of 3.99, while responsibility scored the lowest at 3.40, although it remained in the good category. The strength of cooperation aligns with the nature of transportation work,

which requires coordination between drivers, conductors, conductors, *checkers* , and operational staff.

Lower responsibility scores indicate the need for clear task boundaries, targets, and accountability mechanisms. Collective work can be successful, but without clear accountability, successes or failures are easily attributed to the team as a whole. A structured performance appraisal system can help link individual contributions to group outcomes and provide more objective feedback.

Inter-variable influence

Multiple linear regression yields the equation $Y = 5.914 + 0.260X_1 + 0.341X_2$. Both coefficients are positive. A one-unit increase in transformational leadership is estimated to increase performance by 0.260 units when work motivation is constant, while a one-unit increase in work motivation is estimated to increase performance by 0.341 units when transformational leadership is constant.

Table 5. Regression results and hypothesis testing

Parameter	B	Std . Error	Beta	t/F count	Sig .
Constant	5,914	2,716	–	2,178	0.031
$X_1 \rightarrow Y$	0.260	0.032	0.488	8,009	0,000
$X_2 \rightarrow Y$	0.341	0.050	0.415	6,810	0,000
Simultaneous effects	–	–	–	F = 67.254	0,000
Coefficient of determination	R = 0.695	R ² = 0.483	Adj . R ² = 0.476	–	–

Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on performance with a t-test of 8.009 and a significance level of 0.000. The *standardized value The beta coefficient* of 0.488 is the largest in the model, indicating that leadership has a relatively stronger influence than work motivation. This finding confirms that the way superiors provide direction, build trust, encourage thinking, and pay attention to employees is directly related to the quality of task performance.

Transportation operations concretely define leadership influence. Clear instructions can prevent miscoordination, support during problems can expedite responses, and role models establish behavioral standards when direct supervision is unavailable. This influence operates not only through formal authority but also through employee acceptance of the values and goals communicated by the leader (Avolio et al., 2022).

These results extend findings that position transformational leadership as a performance driver in service organizations and across different employee groups (Andri & Moko, 2024; Intiar, 2023). Similar trends were also found when leadership was examined alongside job characteristics, indicating that leader behavior remains relevant even when work outcomes are influenced by task design (Dharmawan et al., 2025).

Differences with insignificant results can be explained by the characteristics of the subjects. In organizations with well-established procedures, automated decisions, or a high

degree of professional autonomy, the direct influence of leaders may be less. PT Karunia Bakti Utama does not yet have a robust formal performance appraisal system, so superior behavior serves as the primary reference for interpreting targets and work quality. This situation makes leadership influence more readily apparent than in organizations with standardized management systems.

Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance, with a t-value of 6.810 and a significance level of 0.000. A beta coefficient of 0.415 indicates a substantial contribution after controlling for leadership. Employees who feel secure, receive support, and perceive rewards as deserved tend to maintain more consistent effort.

The influence of motivation can be understood through three functions: stimulating action, guiding behavioral choices, and maintaining persistence. In operational work, persistence is essential when employees face long schedules, changing field conditions, and the need to maintain service. Strong motivation helps employees maintain quality, meet targets, and demonstrate initiative without requiring constant supervision (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022).

The direction of the results aligns with research that found that work motivation improves performance in service and government organizations (Sakinah et al., 2025; Salahudin et al., 2023). The differences with non-significant findings suggest that motivation does not always operate in a vacuum. Employee engagement, satisfaction, reward systems, and job clarity can strengthen or weaken this relationship (Nurlinda & Hidayat, 2024).

The simultaneous effect obtained an F count of 67.254 with a significance of 0.000. The R value of 0.695 illustrates a fairly strong relationship, while the R^2 of 0.483 means that 48.3% of the performance variation can be explained by transformational leadership and work motivation. The remaining 51.7% is related to untested factors, such as discipline, competence, work environment, workload, organizational culture, experience, and compensation systems.

These two variables have distinct but complementary functions. Leadership provides direction, meaning, and support, while motivation determines how strongly employees translate that direction into effort. Leadership without motivation can result in understanding that lacks work energy. Motivation without leadership direction risks producing efforts that are not fully aligned with company priorities.

Theoretical and managerial implications

At a theoretical level, the findings confirm that operational performance is best understood as the outcome of cross-level processes. Leadership operates through group interactions, while motivation operates through individual psychological processes. When direction from superiors is met with strong work motivation, work behavior is more easily maintained in situations demanding speed and coordination. This pattern strengthens the organizational behavior explanation of the interrelationship between individuals, groups, and organizational outcomes (Liu et al., 2023).

The characteristics of PT Karunia Bakti Utama provide further explanation regarding the significant influence of leadership. The informal performance appraisal system means employees rely more heavily on their superiors' direction, behavior, and consistency as a benchmark for their work. This doesn't mean the company should maintain its reliance on leadership figures. Instead, the findings highlight the need to transform effective leadership practices into organizational procedures, standards, and habits to ensure work quality remains consistent with changes in leadership.

Managerial follow-up can be structured in stages. The initial stage focuses on standardizing leadership direction and behavior through brief operational meetings, post-task feedback, and recording recurring issues. The next stage assesses the appropriateness of benefits, risks, and workloads and improves interpersonal communication. The next stage links performance indicators to coaching, incentives, and employee development so that rewards are not dependent on informal assessments.

Periodic measurements can use the five proven performance dimensions, but companies need to add objective indicators relevant to transportation operations, such as schedule adherence, number of complaints, reporting accuracy, and incidents of procedural errors. Combining perceptual data with operational records will yield a more balanced evaluation. This information can also help management distinguish problems stemming from capabilities, motivation, coordination, or unclear work systems.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Transformational leadership at PT Karunia Bakti Utama is in the fairly good category with a score of 3.30. Its main strength lies in *inspirational leadership*, while *idealized Influence* remains the weakest. Work motivation is also in the fairly good category, with a score of 3.36. Sense of security and relationships with superiors are the strongest aspects, while compensation and relationships with coworkers require strengthening. Employee performance scored 3.68 and is in the good category; cooperation is the highest dimension and responsibility is the lowest.

Hypothesis testing demonstrated that transformational leadership and work motivation each had a positive and significant effect on performance. The relative influence of leadership was stronger, with a beta of 0.488 exceeding the beta of work motivation of 0.415. Both variables were also significant simultaneously, explaining 48.3% of the variation in performance.

Companies are advised to strengthen leadership role models through discipline, fairness, openness, clear direction, and attention to individual development. Motivational policies should be directed at evaluating performance-based benefits and incentives, job protection, team communication, and conflict resolution. A formal performance appraisal system should be established with clear targets, regular monitoring, and feedback linked to coaching and rewards.

The generalizability of the results is limited by the use of a single company, a cross-sectional design, and perception data derived from the same respondent source. The model also fails to incorporate other factors that explain 51.7% of the variation in performance. Future research could examine work discipline, competence, work environment, organizational culture, workload, or job satisfaction; use objective performance data; and compare multiple transportation companies to broaden the explanatory power of the findings.

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