

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Civil Servants' Performance: The Mediating Role of Organizational Culture and the Moderating Role of Generational Differences

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of transformational leadership on civil servants' performance, with organizational culture as a mediating variable and generational differences as a moderating variable. The study was conducted among 117 civil servants at the Yogyakarta City Regional Secretariat using a quantitative explanatory approach. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on civil servants' performance and organizational culture. Organizational culture also has a positive and significant effect on civil servants' performance and is the most dominant factor in the research model. Furthermore, organizational culture partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and civil servants' performance, indicating that transformational leadership improves performance both directly and indirectly through organizational culture. However, generational differences do not significantly moderate the effect of transformational leadership on civil servants' performance. This finding indicates that transformational leadership can be applied inclusively across Generations X, Y, and Z. Overall, enhancing civil servants' performance requires strengthening transformational leadership and organizational culture simultaneously.

Keywords : Transformational leadership, organizational culture, civil servants' performance, generational differences, public sector management

1. Introduction

Bureaucratic reform in Indonesia represents a comprehensive transformation process that extends beyond structural and procedural changes to encompass the enhancement of civil servants' competencies and performance. As the primary actors responsible for implementing public policies and delivering public services, civil servants play a strategic role in fostering an adaptive, innovative, and citizen-oriented bureaucracy. In this context, leadership has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness within public institutions. According to Transformational Leadership Theory, transformational leaders are expected not only to perform administrative functions but also to inspire, motivate, and guide organizational change through a compelling vision (Bass & Avolio, 2011). Such leadership is particularly relevant in public sector organizations where employee

commitment, adaptability, and service quality are essential for achieving reform objectives. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that transformational leadership contributes positively to employee performance and organizational outcomes by promoting engagement, innovation, and organizational commitment (Agyabeng, 2025). Recent evidence further suggests that transformational leadership remains one of the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee performance and facilitating organizational adaptability in increasingly complex and dynamic work environments (Bauwens & Cortellazzo, 2025; Islam et al., 2025).

The increasing presence of multiple generations within contemporary workplaces has introduced new challenges and opportunities for human resource management in the public sector. According to Brandi et al., (2026) and Dockweiler (2025), organizations currently accommodate three to four generations simultaneously, creating unprecedented levels of workforce diversity. The coexistence of Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z within government institutions reflects substantial differences in work values, communication preferences, technological literacy, and career expectations. While such diversity can enhance organizational learning, creativity, and knowledge sharing through intergenerational collaboration, it may also generate misunderstandings, communication barriers, and conflicting perceptions regarding work practices and organizational priorities (Rahmawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, generational diversity has become increasingly important in public organizations as younger employees tend to seek flexibility, participation, and innovation, whereas older employees often emphasize stability, procedural compliance, and institutional experience (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Consequently, understanding how leadership approaches operate across different generational groups has become an important concern for both scholars and practitioners in public administration (Huyler et al., 2025).

These dynamics have become increasingly visible within the Indonesian bureaucracy as a result of merit based systems, digital recruitment mechanisms, and large scale retirement waves that have accelerated workforce regeneration (Akmalia et al., 2025). Such developments have altered not only the demographic composition of public organizations but also employees' perceptions of work, leadership, and career development. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Government of Yogyakarta City, where civil servant regeneration has occurred at a relatively rapid pace. Data from the Regional Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency (BKPSDM) of Yogyakarta City indicate a gradual shift toward a younger workforce composition between 2024 and 2025. While the number of employees aged 46 years and above declined from 2,587 to 2,410 due primarily to retirement, the number of employees aged 26 to 35 years increased slightly from 1,643 to 1,649, and employees aged 36 to 45 years increased from 1,308 to 1,359. These trends indicate a gradual

transition toward a more age diverse and younger civil service workforce. Such demographic changes require leaders to adopt management approaches that are responsive to the expectations and characteristics of different generational cohorts.

The challenges associated with generational diversity are further reflected in the organizational realities of the Regional Secretariat of Yogyakarta City. Preliminary interviews with civil servants revealed notable differences in perceptions regarding bureaucratic work practices across generations. Senior employees generally favor formal, hierarchical, and risk averse administrative procedures, whereas younger employees emphasize efficiency, flexibility, and digital innovation in task execution. Younger civil servants often perceive seniority-based norms, top-down communication patterns, and the prevailing culture of *ewuh pakewuh* as barriers to innovation, participation, and upward communication. Conversely, senior employees frequently view younger staff as overly impatient with bureaucratic processes and insufficiently attentive to administrative norms and institutional etiquette. These differences have contributed to communication difficulties, resistance to change, unequal workload perceptions, and declining innovative motivation among younger employees. Moreover, preliminary findings indicate that the prevailing organizational culture still encourages employees to avoid mistakes rather than experiment with innovative solutions, thereby limiting organizational learning and performance improvement. These conditions suggest that generational diversity influences not only interpersonal interactions but also broader organizational processes related to leadership effectiveness, organizational culture, and employee performance.

Within this context, transformational leadership has been widely recognized as a leadership approach capable of addressing organizational complexity and fostering positive employee outcomes. Transformational leaders create shared visions, encourage employee development, and cultivate a supportive work environment that promotes organizational effectiveness (Bass & Avolio, 2011). Nevertheless, the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance is often indirect and influenced by organizational conditions. One of the most important mechanisms through which leadership affects performance is organizational culture, which encompasses the values, norms, and behavioral patterns that guide employees' actions within an organization (Schein, 2016). Transformational leaders play a critical role in shaping adaptive, collaborative, and performance oriented cultures that facilitate employee engagement and organizational success (Etalong & Chikeleze, 2023). However, highly hierarchical and rigid cultures may weaken the effectiveness of transformational leadership by constraining communication, participation, and innovation. At the same time, perceptions of leadership effectiveness may vary across generations because younger employees often value inspirational, participative, and

collaborative leadership, whereas older employees tend to appreciate stability, authority, and experience in leaders (Kamaluddin et al., 2026). Accordingly, generational differences may function as an important boundary condition that strengthens or weakens the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance (Agag et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2026).

Despite growing scholarly interest in leadership and employee performance, significant research gaps remain in understanding the combined roles of organizational culture and generational differences within public sector organizations. Most previous studies have focused primarily on the direct relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, while relatively few have simultaneously examined organizational culture as a mediating mechanism and generational differences as a moderating factor, particularly within local government institutions. This limitation is especially important given the increasing demographic diversity and ongoing bureaucratic reforms occurring in Indonesia. Addressing this gap is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership practices can enhance civil servants' performance in multigenerational public organizations. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of transformational leadership on civil servants' performance, investigate the mediating role of organizational culture, and analyze the moderating role of generational differences among civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of Yogyakarta City. The findings are expected to contribute to the advancement of transformational leadership theory in the public sector while providing practical implications for policymakers and public managers seeking to strengthen organizational performance through effective leadership and workforce management strategies.

2. Research Method

This study employed an explanatory quantitative approach to examine the effect of transformational leadership on civil servant performance, with organizational culture as a mediating variable and generational differences as a moderating variable. The population consisted of 156 civil servants at the Yogyakarta City Regional Secretariat, with 117 respondents selected using the Slovin formula at a 5 percent error level and stratified random sampling based on Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z (Creswell, 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Primary data were collected through a five point Likert scale questionnaire (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Transformational leadership was measured using the four dimensions of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

Organizational culture using the SEGORO AMARTO values based on Yogyakarta Mayor Regulation Number 53 of 2011, and civil servant performance based on work outcomes and behavior according to Ministerial Regulation of Administrative and

Bureaucratic Reform Number 6 of 2022. Generational differences were represented by dummy variables, with Generation Z as the reference category (Gujarati & Porter, 2009; Lindner et al., 2024).

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS. The measurement model was assessed through outer loading, Average Variance Extracted, Heterotrait Monotrait ratio, Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability, while the structural model was evaluated using R Square, Q Square, Variance Inflation Factor, path coefficients, T statistics, and P values (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2022). Bootstrapping was employed to test the direct, mediating, and moderating effects. Secondary data were obtained from relevant personnel documents, regulations, and scholarly literature.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

The descriptive analysis of respondents was conducted to provide an overview of the demographic composition of the sample involved in this study. The analysis specifically focuses on generational differences, which constitute the moderating variable in examining the relationship between transformational leadership, organizational culture, and civil servants' performance. The respondents comprised civil servants working at the Secretariat of Yogyakarta City, with a total of 117 respondents participating in the study.

Generational diversity is an important consideration in this research because employees from different generations may possess distinct characteristics, work expectations, communication preferences, and responses to leadership practices. Therefore, identifying the distribution of respondents across generations provides an initial basis for understanding the composition of the sample and supports the subsequent analysis of generational differences as a moderating variable.

Table 1. Respondent Distribution by Generation

Generational Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Generation X (Born 1965–1980)	64	54.70%
Generation Y or Millennials (Born 1981–1996)	21	17.95%
Generation Z (Born 1997–2012)	32	27.35%
Total	117	100%

Source: Primary data (2026)

Based on Table 1, the respondents were predominantly from Generation X, comprising 64 individuals or 54.70% of the total sample. This was followed by Generation Z, with 32 respondents or 27.35%, while Generation Y or Millennials accounted for 21 respondents or 17.95%. The presence of these three generational groups indicates that the study captures a relatively diverse workforce composition,

providing an appropriate empirical basis for examining whether generational differences influence perceptions of transformational leadership, organizational culture, and civil servants' performance.

3.2 Discriminant Validity Using HTMT

Discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). A value below 0.90 is generally considered acceptable, particularly when constructs are conceptually related. The results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Results Using HTMT

Variables	Organizational Culture	Moderating Effect X_Z	Transformational Leadership	Civil Servants'	Generational Differences
Organizational Culture					
Moderating Effect X_Z	0.181				
Transformational Leadership	0.590	0.073			
Civil Servants' Performance	0.889	0.115	0.616		
Generational Differences	0.177	0.111	0.125	0.142	

Source: Primary data (2026)

Based on Table 2, all HTMT values are below 0.90, with the highest value observed between organizational culture and civil servants' performance at 0.889. This result indicates that the constructs remain empirically distinguishable and satisfy the discriminant validity criterion. Although the value of 0.889 is relatively close to the threshold, it remains within the acceptable range and does not indicate a critical overlap between the two constructs. Thus, the measurement model demonstrates adequate discriminant validity and is appropriate for further structural model analysis.

3.3 Reliability Test and Average Variance Extracted

Reliability and convergent validity were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Values above 0.70 for Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability indicate satisfactory internal consistency, while an AVE above 0.50 confirms adequate convergent validity. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Results

Variables	AVE	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability
Transformational Leadership	0.671	0.955	0.961
Organizational Culture	0.596	0.948	0.954

Civil Servants' Performance	0.716	0.955	0.962
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Source: Primary data (2026)

Based on Table 3, all constructs exceed the recommended thresholds for Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE. The values range from 0.948 to 0.955 for Cronbach's Alpha, 0.954 to 0.962 for Composite Reliability, and 0.596 to 0.716 for AVE. These findings confirm satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity, indicating that the indicators consistently represent their respective constructs. The relatively high AVE values further demonstrate that the constructs explain a substantial proportion of the variance in their indicators, providing a sound basis for subsequent structural model assessment.

3.4 Inner Model Evaluation

3.4.1 Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct explained by its predictors, whereas Q^2 assesses the model's predictive relevance for the observed data. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of R^2 and Q^2 Tests

Dependent Variable	R Square (R^2)	Q Square (Q^2)
Organizational Culture	0.326	0.188
Civil Servants' Performance	0.744	0.518

Source: Primary data (2026)

Based on Table 4, Organizational Culture has an R^2 value of 0.326, indicating that 32.6% of its variance is explained by Transformational Leadership, representing a moderate level of explanatory power. Civil Servants' Performance has an R^2 value of 0.744, meaning that 74.4% of its variance is explained by the model, indicating strong explanatory power, while the remaining 25.6% is attributable to other factors outside the model. Furthermore, both Q^2 values are greater than zero, namely 0.188 for Organizational Culture and 0.518 for Civil Servants' Performance, demonstrating that the model has satisfactory predictive relevance. The relatively high R^2 and Q^2 values for Civil Servants' Performance further suggest that the combination of leadership and organizational factors provides a meaningful framework for explaining performance outcomes among civil servants.

3.4.2 Direct Effects

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. A hypothesis was considered supported when the T Statistics value exceeded 1.96 and the P Value was below 0.05. The analysis examined both direct effects and the moderating effect of generational differences.

Table 5. Results of Direct Effect and Moderating Effect Tests

Path Coefficient	Coefficient (β)	T Statistics ($ O/STDEV $)	P values	Conclusion
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Transformational Leadership → Civil Servants' Performance	0.154	2.045	0.041	Accepted
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Culture	0.571	7.867	0.000	Accepted
Organizational Culture → Civil Servants' Performance	0.772	10.296	0.000	Accepted
Moderating Effect (TL × Generation) → Civil Servants' Performance	-0.053	0.989	0.323	Rejected

Source: Primary data (2026)

Based on Table 5, Transformational Leadership has a positive and significant direct effect on Civil Servants' Performance, as indicated by a β value of 0.154, T Statistics of 2.045, and P Value of 0.041, supporting H1. Transformational Leadership also significantly influences Organizational Culture, with $\beta = 0.571$, T Statistics = 7.867, and P Value = 0.000, supporting H2. Organizational Culture demonstrates the strongest direct relationship with Civil Servants' Performance, with $\beta = 0.772$, T Statistics = 10.296, and P Value = 0.000, supporting H3. In contrast, the interaction between Transformational Leadership and Generational Differences is not significant, with $\beta = -0.053$, T Statistics = 0.989, and P Value = 0.323, resulting in the rejection of H5. This result suggests that the effectiveness of Transformational Leadership in improving civil servants' performance is relatively consistent across generations, indicating that leadership practices may be more influential than generational characteristics in shaping performance outcomes.

3.4.3 Indirect Effects

The mediation analysis was conducted to determine whether Organizational Culture serves as an intermediary mechanism linking Transformational Leadership to Civil Servants' Performance. The specific indirect effect results are presented in Table 6.

Table 4. Results of Indirect Effects

Path	Coefficient (β)	T Statistics ($ O/STDEV $)	P values	Conclusion
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Culture → Civil Servants' Performance	0.441	6.256	0.000	accepted

Source: Primary data (2026)

Based on Table 6, the indirect effect of Transformational Leadership on Civil Servants' Performance through Organizational Culture is positive and significant,

with $\beta = 0.441$, T Statistics = 6.256, and P Value = 0.000. Therefore, H4 is supported. Since the direct effect of Transformational Leadership on Civil Servants' Performance is also significant, while the indirect effect through Organizational Culture is significant, Organizational Culture functions as a partial mediator. This finding emphasizes that Transformational Leadership improves performance not only through direct managerial influence but also by strengthening organizational values and practices that subsequently encourage better employee performance. In the context of the Yogyakarta City Regional Secretariat, the internalization of Segoro Amarto values therefore represents an important organizational mechanism for translating transformational leadership into stronger civil servant performance.

3.5 Discussion

3.5.1 The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Civil Servants' Performance

The results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on civil servants' performance, with a path coefficient of 0.154, T Statistics of 2.045, and P Values of 0.041. Based on Table 1, H1 is supported because the T Statistics exceeds 1.96 and the P Values is below 0.05. This finding indicates that stronger transformational leadership is associated with better civil servants' performance in the Secretariat of Yogyakarta City. Leaders who provide vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support can encourage employees to improve work quality, productivity, timeliness, and work behavior. This finding is consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory and Social Exchange Theory, which emphasize inspiration, employee development, and reciprocal positive relationships between leaders and employees.

The finding is consistent with Saragih (2024), who found that transformational leadership significantly affects civil servants' performance, and Putri & Meria (2022), who demonstrated its influence through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It is also supported by Agazu et al., (2025), who identified a consistent positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance. These findings suggest that transformational leadership is particularly relevant in public organizations because it enables leaders to combine formal administrative authority with employee empowerment, motivation, and continuous performance improvement.

3.5.2 The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Culture

The results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on organizational culture, with a path coefficient of 0.571, T Statistics of 7.867, and P Values of 0.000. Based on Table 1, H2 is supported, indicating that stronger transformational leadership contributes substantially to the development of organizational culture in the Secretariat of Yogyakarta City. Transformational leaders influence organizational culture by communicating organizational values, demonstrating appropriate behavior, motivating employees, and encouraging

collaboration. In this study, these processes are reflected in the SEGORO AMARTO values of independence, discipline, concern, and togetherness. Consistent with Organizational Culture Theory, leaders function as important agents in developing shared values and behavioral norms within organizations.

This finding is supported by Hidayat et al., (2024), who found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational culture, and is consistent with García-Morales et al., (2012), who demonstrated that transformational leadership contributes to organizational learning and innovation. The relatively strong coefficient indicates that transformational leadership not only influences employee outcomes directly but also provides an important institutional mechanism for embedding shared values into everyday organizational behavior.

3.5.3 The Effect of Organizational Culture on Civil Servants' Performance

The findings demonstrate that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on civil servants' performance, with a path coefficient of 0.772, T Statistics of 10.296, and P Values of 0.000. Based on Table 1, H3 is supported, and the coefficient is the largest among the direct relationships in the model, indicating that organizational culture is the strongest predictor of civil servants' performance. The SEGORO AMARTO values provide behavioral guidance through independence in completing responsibilities, discipline in complying with procedures and deadlines, concern for colleagues and citizens, and togetherness in performing organizational tasks. A strong organizational culture therefore helps align individual behavior with organizational objectives and public service expectations.

The finding is consistent with Sulila (2022), who found that organizational culture affects civil servants' performance, and Etalong & Chikeleze (2023), who reported a similar relationship in public sector organizations. It is also supported by Denison & Mishra (1995), who emphasized that involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission within organizational culture contribute to organizational effectiveness. The strong effect identified in this study indicates that strengthening shared organizational values may provide a particularly important pathway for improving civil servants' performance, complementing formal leadership practices and administrative systems.

3.5.4 The Mediating Role of Organizational Culture

The results confirm that organizational culture significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and civil servants' performance. Based on Table 1, the indirect effect is 0.441, with T Statistics of 6.256 and P Values of 0.000. Since both the indirect and direct effects are significant, organizational culture functions as a partial mediator. This finding indicates that transformational leadership improves performance not only directly through motivation, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, but also indirectly by

strengthening organizational values and behavioral norms. In the context of the Secretariat of Yogyakarta City, SEGORO AMARTO provides an important mechanism through which leadership is translated into responsible, disciplined, collaborative, and service oriented behavior.

This result is consistent with Hidayat et al., (2024), who found that organizational culture mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. The significant indirect effect demonstrates that leadership becomes more effective when its values and expectations are institutionalized through organizational culture, making performance improvement less dependent on the direct influence of individual leaders. Thus, organizational culture represents an important organizational mechanism that converts transformational leadership into sustainable employee behavior and performance.

3.5.5 The Moderating Role of Generational Differences

The findings indicate that generational differences do not significantly moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and civil servants' performance. As shown in Table 1, the interaction coefficient is -0.053 , with T Statistics of 0.989 and P Values of 0.323 . Therefore, H5 is not supported because the T Statistics is below 1.96 and the P Values exceeds 0.05 . This result suggests that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is relatively consistent across Generations X, Y, and Z within the Secretariat of Yogyakarta City. The finding may be explained by the standardized nature of public sector employment, where employees operate under common regulations, performance standards, procedures, and organizational expectations.

The finding does not necessarily contradict generational literature. Lyons and Kuron (2014a) noted that generational differences may occur in work values, attitudes, leadership preferences, communication, and career patterns, while Twenge (2010) emphasized that generational differences do not always translate into meaningful differences in workplace behavior. The strong shared culture represented by SEGORO AMARTO may further reduce generational differences by establishing common expectations concerning independence, discipline, concern, and togetherness. Therefore, organizational and institutional factors may be more influential than generational distinctions in determining how civil servants respond to transformational leadership. The findings imply that leaders can apply transformational leadership inclusively across generations while focusing primarily on strengthening leadership quality and organizational culture to improve civil servants' performance.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on both civil servants' performance and organizational culture at the Secretariat of Yogyakarta City. Organizational culture also has a positive and significant effect on performance and represents the strongest direct predictor in the model. Furthermore, organizational culture significantly partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and civil servants' performance, indicating that leadership contributes to performance not only through direct mechanisms such as motivation, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support, but also by strengthening shared organizational values and behavioral norms. In particular, the SEGORO AMARTO values of independence, discipline, concern, and togetherness provide an important organizational mechanism for translating transformational leadership into responsible, collaborative, and service-oriented behavior. In contrast, generational differences do not significantly moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and performance, suggesting that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is relatively consistent across Generations X, Y, and Z within the public sector context.

These findings imply that improving civil servants' performance should prioritize strengthening transformational leadership while simultaneously institutionalizing a strong organizational culture. Future research is recommended to examine other contextual factors that may influence the relationship between leadership and performance, such as employee engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, or digital competency. Further studies could also involve different public sector institutions, regions, and larger samples to improve the generalizability of the findings and provide a broader understanding of how organizational and individual factors shape the effectiveness of transformational leadership.

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