

Championing behavior and employee performance: The role of transformational leadership, work environment, and job stress

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ABSTRACT

Public sector organizations are required to continuously adapt to organizational changes and improve employee performance to deliver effective public services. In this context, leadership and workplace conditions have an important role in encouraging innovative behavior and improving employee performance. This study examines the effects of transformational leadership, work environment, and job stress on championing behavior and employee performance in the public sector. The research was conducted at the Regional Secretariat of Pemalang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, using a quantitative approach. This study uses a census approach, in which all members of the population are included. Data were collected from 150 civil servants and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The results indicate that transformational leadership positively affects championing behavior and employee performance. In addition, the work environment positively influences championing behavior and employee performance. However, job stress has a negative effect on championing behavior and an insignificant effect on employee performance. These findings suggest that effective transformational leadership and a supportive work environment play crucial roles in fostering innovative behavior and enhancing employee performance in public-sector organizations. This study contributes to the literature by integrating leadership, environmental, and psychological factors to explain championing behavior in a government context. The implications highlight the importance of public sector managers strengthening transformational leadership practices and creating conducive work environments to improve organizational outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Local government organizations execute the governance process, deriving their legitimacy from the community. Public trust in governance must be balanced with effective

performance to ensure services are effectively connected to the community (Zumitzavan et al, 2025). Good governance is characterized by the availability of human resources capable of managing government affairs. Often, organizational changes occur in the course of governance, necessitating change management within the organization. Organizational change management entails guiding employees to participate in organizational change processes, as employees are both the source and the means of transformation (Muringa & Shava, 2024). Employee function is crucial, employees must be aware of organizational changes and ready to embrace them. Organizations aspiring to continuous development and progress must be prepared to face challenges and consequences through organizational change (Lee & Kim, 2024).

The top form of behavior change is championing, a key variable in determining the success of organizational change (Dinda & Wahyuni, 2023). Championing behavior reflects employees' attitudes toward change. It involves tangible actions actively supporting important organizational goals or projects. Championing behavior, also referred to as innovative behavior, involves individuals acting to benefit the organization by introducing and implementing new ideas. In a work environment, championing behavior manifests through strong leadership that supports innovation and motivates employees to achieve shared goals (Jönsson & Kähler, 2022). Championing employee behavior fosters positive behavioral changes, contributing to the achievement of new organizational visions and missions (Majid et al., 2023). Employees exhibiting positive organizational behavior contribute significantly to their organization, enhancing overall employee performance (Islam et al., 2021). Performance is fundamentally linked to productivity, which, in turn, hinges on efficiency and effectiveness. Each individual's employee performance varies due to their unique capabilities (Mozgovoy, 2022). High employee performance can assist the government, whereas poor performance can disadvantage the organization, often correlated with workplace stress and the environment. Employee performance is influenced by leaders who effectively manage various internal and external changes. Leaders are expected to formulate frameworks encompassing vision, mission, and strategies to pave new paths, thus competing to achieve expected targets (Jiatong et al., 2022).

According to Jiatong et al. (2022), one of the most critical factors in enhancing employee performance amidst competition is leadership style, particularly transformational leadership. It refers to a leader's ability to influence team members by emphasizing the importance of work outcomes, prioritizing group needs, enhancing employee performance requirements, and improving quality of life (Islam et al., 2022). Essentially, transformational leadership motivates employees to consistently perform better, thereby boosting their confidence and improving their performance. A good leader fosters strong motivation among employees to complete assigned tasks. Employees with high motivation in their work deliver strong performance. Excellent employee performance is demonstrated by strong work motivation and ethical conduct in fulfilling tasks and responsibilities. Transformational leadership eliminates gaps between leaders and employees, leaders continually listen to their employees' input to create effective leadership.

Another factor influencing employee performance is the work environment. The work environment affects human resource productivity within an organization (Soares et al., 2024). A positive work environment encourages peak employee performance while providing comfort and security. Apart from transformational leadership and the work environment, job stress is another factor influencing employee performance. According to Pradoto et al. (2022), job stress affects an individual's emotions, thoughts, and physical condition. Job stress symptoms include emotional instability, anxiety, social withdrawal, sleep difficulties, inability to relax, nervousness, and tension. Job stress is closely linked to performance and has serious implications for both individuals and organizations. Stress can

have positive effects by motivating employees to achieve higher performance levels in solving the challenges they face. Conversely, excessive and negative stress can lead to various symptoms that hinder employee performance.

Previous research by Hao et al. (2015) indicates that civil servants engaged in state and government management functions consider their jobs secure and comfortable due to their permanent employment status and benefits. However, this does not guarantee that civil servants do not experience work-related stress, as most jobs, including civil service positions, carry demands and pressures that can lead to it. These conditions indicate that leadership, work environment, and job stress are important factors that may influence employee attitudes and behavior, particularly championing behavior and employee performance in public sector organizations.

This study is grounded in the job demands–resources (JD-R) theory developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), which posits that the balance between job demands and job resources shapes employee behavior and performance. Job resources such as transformational leadership and a supportive work environment play a crucial role in enhancing employee motivation, fostering innovative behavior, and improving performance outcomes. In contrast, job demands, including job stress, may deplete employee energy and hinder performance. Accordingly, the JD-R framework provides a relevant theoretical basis for understanding how transformational leadership, work environment, and job stress influence championing behavior and employee performance.

Prior research has extensively explored the relationships among transformational leadership, championing behavior, and employee performance. Empirical evidence suggests that transformational leadership contributes to both championing behavior and innovative work behavior (Islam et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022). In addition, other studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly improves employee performance and organizational outcomes (Eliyana et al., 2019; Kloutsiniotis et al., 2023). Furthermore, research examining the roles of work environment and job stress indicates that a supportive work environment enhances employee performance, whereas job stress tends to have a detrimental effect (Chowhan & Pike, 2023).

Despite these findings, most previous studies have investigated these variables independently and have predominantly focused on the private sector. There remains a lack of research integrating leadership, environmental, and psychological factors into a single framework to explain championing behavior and employee performance, particularly in public sector contexts (Mozgovoy, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Lee & Kim, 2024). To address this gap, the present study develops an integrated research model that simultaneously examines the effects of transformational leadership, work environment, and job stress on championing behavior and employee performance in the public sector. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, combining leadership, environmental, and psychological dimensions into a single model, and in its focus on the public sector, which is characterized by unique features such as bureaucratic structures, job security, and distinct organizational cultures.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. Job Demands–Resources Theory

This research adopts the job demands–resources (JD-R) theory developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) as its theoretical foundation. The JD-R model posits that every job involves specific stress-related factors that can be categorized into two main components: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to aspects of work, whether physical, psychological, social, or organizational, that require

sustained effort and may lead to strain, such as work pressure and stress. In contrast, job resources are elements of the job that support the achievement of work goals, help alleviate job demands, and encourage personal growth and development.

Within the context of this study, transformational leadership and the work environment are classified as job resources because transformational leadership and the work environment provide the necessary support for employees to carry out their tasks effectively, increase motivation, and promote positive work behaviors such as championing behavior and enhanced performance. On the other hand, job stress is classified as a job demand because it can reduce employee motivation and negatively affect performance. Therefore, the JD-R theory offers a relevant framework for explaining how transformational leadership, work environment, and job stress influence championing behavior and employee performance (Tummers & Bakker, 2021).

2.1.2. Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory (SET), proposed by Blau (2017), holds that relationships between individuals and organizations are based on reciprocal exchanges. Employees tend to respond to the treatment they receive from their organization or leaders. When employees perceive positive treatment, such as support, trust, and motivation from leaders, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors that benefit the organization.

In the organizational context, transformational leadership can be seen as a form of social exchange in which leaders provide support, inspiration, and recognition to employees. In return, employees respond by demonstrating positive behaviors, such as championing behavior and improved performance (Jiatong et al., 2022). Championing behavior reflects employees' willingness to actively support organizational change, propose innovative ideas, and contribute to organizational development.

Furthermore, SET also explains that employees who feel valued and supported by their leaders tend to develop a sense of obligation to contribute positively to the organization. This reciprocal relationship encourages employees to engage in extra-role behaviors, such as innovation and championing, which are essential for organizational success (Islam et al., 2022). Therefore, SET is relevant in explaining the relationship between transformational leadership and championing behavior, as well as employee performance. When leaders provide strong support and motivation, employees are more likely to reciprocate with positive behaviors and higher performance.

2.1.3. Championing Behavior

Champions are defined as individuals who emerge informally within an organization and make significant contributions to innovation by actively and enthusiastically advancing it through critical stages of the organization (Schon, 1963; Chakrabarti, 1974). Championing behavior is vital for an organizational worker who advocates for change, thereby enabling the organization to progress towards its vision and mission. According to Yuan and Woodman (2010), championing behavior refers to the motivation of organizational members to propose, introduce, and implement new ideas, products, processes, and procedures in the workplace, work unit, or organization. Factors influencing championing behavior include organizational culture and climate, relationships with superiors, job characteristics,

social/group context, and individual differences (age, education level, gender, marital status) (Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

2.1.4. Employee Performance

Generally, performance refers to the work outcomes, satisfaction, and quantity achieved by an employee in fulfilling their primary duties and responsibilities. Employee performance refers to the work an employee carries out, often serving as a basis or standard for evaluation within an organization (Memon et al., 2023). In contrast, organizational performance is the organization's ability to achieve its goals by using resources effectively and efficiently. Therefore, good employee performance in an organization becomes one of the determining factors in achieving organizational goals. Overall performance encompasses actions taken or not taken by employees (Eliyana et al., 2019). Employee performance significantly impacts their contribution to the organization. Efforts to improve organizational performance are focused on enhancing individual and group performance. Employers seek performance improvement to enhance work outcomes and organizational productivity, while for employees, it represents opportunities for self-development and career advancement (Wijaya et al., 2021).

2.1.5. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership identifies change, creates a vision to facilitate change, and implements the necessary plans to achieve it. A leader employing transformational leadership motivates and empowers colleagues (Nguyen et al., 2022). Transformational leadership involves a leader's perspective in transforming an organization's dynamics by formulating, communicating, and implementing a vision for a work unit or organization (Jiatong et al., 2022). Transformational leadership is a style in which leaders motivate and inspire their followers to transcend personal interests and strive for organizational success (Robbins et al., 2015). Transformational leadership has a profound influence on followers; employees led by transformational leaders have higher confidence in their ability to work creatively in various situations and exhibit higher levels of creativity (Wijaya, 2025). According to Islam et al. (2021), transformational leadership motivates employees to exceed expectations and fosters trust, loyalty, pride, and respect for their superiors.

2.1.6. Work Environment

An organization's work environment requires careful attention, as it can affect employees (Larasati & Prajogo, 2022). A good work environment enhances productivity, while a poor one leads to performance declines. A successful work environment can be measured by employees' ability to perform optimally, maintain health, and feel safe and comfortable. Evaluating work environment conditions should be done over a long period (Barton & Le, 2023). An unsuitable work environment can force employees to expend more time and energy, ultimately hindering the efficiency of the work system. The work environment refers to all factors surrounding employees that affect how to work and fulfill their responsibilities. The work environment includes work systems, job design, working conditions, and the relationships between supervisors and employees. These factors can influence their psychological changes resulting from various work events or specific conditions (Schultz & Schultz, 2020).

The work environment can be divided into physical and non-physical components. The physical work environment includes all elements around

employees, such as the workspace, work facilities, cleanliness, lighting, and tranquility, as well as other factors that can affect work processes. In contrast, the non-physical work environment encompasses aspects of working relationships, whether between superiors and subordinates or among colleagues. Factors include superior attitudes towards subordinates, organizational culture, communication flow within the organization, and other elements that can disrupt employee activities (Asatiani et al., 2021).

2.1.7. Job Stress

Job stress is a physiological or psychological reaction to a situation that makes one feel threatened or uncomfortable. Excessive demands on an individual's ability to meet their needs are referred to as stress. Overload can originate from environmental issues, social activities, office work, leisure activities, and social relationships. Everyone experiences some form of fatigue and strives to cope with problems or situations when unexpected and urgent events occur. An example is the stress employees experience from excessive work demands and pressures, which can affect their performance within the organization. An individual might experience symptoms or feelings associated with work-related stress, which can affect organizational and employee performance (Kim et al., 2024). According to Mukherjee et al. (2024), job stress is the pressure and strain experienced by employees at work, which can lead to emotional instability and irritability. Mehrifar et al. (2025) describe job stress as a tense situation causing physical and mental imbalance, affecting workers' emotions, thoughts, and health. Excessive workplace stress can threaten an individual's ability to adapt to the work environment. Job stress requires attention from organizations, as it affects not only employees but also the organization as a whole (Siegel et al., 2022).

2.2. Hypotheses Developments

2.2.1. Positive Effect of Transformational Leadership on Championing Behavior

Transformational leadership is widely recognized as one of the most effective leadership styles in managing organizational change. This leadership approach can shape employee attitudes and minimize resistance or cynicism toward change initiatives (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It has been shown to influence employee behavior by providing strong support and guidance during periods of organizational transformation. Transformational leaders play a key role in enhancing employees' readiness for change, fostering positive attitudes, and encouraging behaviors that support organizational change processes (Raziq et al., 2025). Thus, transformational leadership is considered a suitable approach for facilitating successful organizational change, as it not only focuses on organizational-level transformation but also emphasizes individual development to support change mechanisms (Islam et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Blau's (2017) SET, employees who receive support, motivation, and inspiration from transformational leaders are likely to reciprocate with constructive behaviors. One such behavior is championing, in which employees actively promote new ideas and support organizational change initiatives. Transformational leadership fosters an environment in which employees are encouraged to contribute ideas and participate actively in change processes (Islam et al., 2022; Jiatong et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence also supports this relationship. Previous studies have demonstrated a positive association between transformational leadership and

championing behavior during organizational change (Roy et al., 2026). Similarly, research by Islam et al. (2021) confirms that transformational leadership significantly enhances championing behavior. Based on these arguments and findings, transformational leadership is expected to positively influence championing behavior. **H₁: Transformational Leadership Has a Positive Effect on Championing Behavior.**

2.2.2. Positive Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance

Leaders are responsible for creating an environment that encourages their employees to achieve organizational goals. One critical factor in enhancing employee performance is transformational leadership (Budur & Demir, 2022). Different leadership styles will produce different effects. The transformational leadership style has the most substantial positive impact on excellent performance levels in employee effort. An employee will perform above the standard limit depending on triggering factors such as commitment to leadership, internal motivation, or level of development. However, transformational leadership must foster employee self-awareness and self-esteem to achieve the highest employee performance.

Factors in transformational leadership that can improve employee performance include stimulating employees' desire to achieve challenging goals (Shao et al., 2022). Based on the JD-R theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), transformational leadership can be considered a job resource that enhances employee motivation and performance. Leaders who provide support, inspiration, and direction can improve employee engagement and work outcomes (Eliyana et al., 2019; Kloutsiniotis et al., 2023).

Transformational leaders significantly impact their employees by motivating them to develop their skills and knowledge, benefiting both employee performance and the organization. This is consistent with research by Jiatong et al. (2022), whose hypothesis testing demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influences employee performance. Another study also confirms that transformational leadership positively affects employee performance (Sürücü et al., 2022). Therefore, transformational leadership is expected to positively influence employee performance. **H₂: Transformational Leadership Has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance.**

2.2.3. Positive Effect of Work Environment on Championing Behavior

A supportive work environment plays an important role in encouraging positive employee behavior, including championing behavior. According to the JD-R theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), job resources, such as a conducive work environment, can enhance employee motivation, engagement, and proactive behavior. A work environment that provides adequate facilities, positive interpersonal relationships, and a supportive atmosphere enables employees to feel comfortable and confident in expressing ideas and supporting organizational change.

In addition, SET by Blau (2017) explains that when employees perceive a positive and supportive work environment, they tend to reciprocate with positive behaviors, such as actively contributing ideas and supporting innovation. Championing behavior reflects employees' willingness to promote and support new ideas within the organization. Previous studies have shown that a supportive work environment positively influences innovative behavior and proactive work behavior (Zhenjing et al., 2022; Soares et al., 2024). Therefore, a supportive work environment

is expected to encourage employees to engage in championing behavior. **H₃: Work Environment Has a Positive Effect on Championing Behavior.**

2.2.4. Positive Effect of Work Environment on Employee Performance

The work environment refers to all conditions surrounding employees that can influence how they perform their tasks and responsibilities. Given that employees spend a considerable portion of their time at work, the work environment is an important factor influencing their work outcomes (Lin & Huang, 2021). A supportive and comfortable work atmosphere can enhance motivation, enabling employees to perform more effectively and achieve better results. Employees who perceive their work environment positively are more likely to demonstrate favorable performance outcomes (Udin et al., 2025).

Based on the JD-R theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), the work environment can be viewed as a job resource that plays a crucial role in enhancing employee motivation and performance. Elements such as adequate work facilities, positive interpersonal relationships, and a conducive organizational climate contribute to higher productivity and job satisfaction (Zhenjing et al., 2022; Soares et al., 2024). When organizations provide a safe, comfortable, and well-supported work environment, along with an effective work culture and high-quality facilities, employees are more likely to perform at their best.

Previous studies support these findings. Mozgovoy (2022) found that the work environment has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Similarly, Asatiani et al. (2021) and Voordt and Jensen (2023) reported that a supportive work environment positively contributes to employee performance. Therefore, it is proposed that the work environment positively affects employee performance. **H₄: The Work Environment Has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance.**

2.2.5. Negative Effect of Job Stress on Championing Behavior

Job stress is an important factor that can influence employee behavior. According to the JD-R theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), job stress is a job demand that can reduce employees' energy, motivation, and psychological well-being. High levels of job stress can hinder employees' ability to think creatively, reduce their willingness to take initiative, and limit their participation in organizational change.

Furthermore, from Blau's (2017) perspective on SET, employees who experience high levels of stress may feel less supported by the organization, leading to lower levels of reciprocal positive behavior, such as championing behavior. When employees are overwhelmed by work demands, they are more likely to focus on completing routine tasks rather than engaging in extra-role behaviors, such as proposing new ideas or supporting innovation. Previous studies also indicate that job stress negatively affects innovative behavior and proactive work behavior (Montani & Staglianò, 2022; Zhenjing et al., 2022). Therefore, higher levels of job stress are expected to reduce employees' engagement in championing behavior. **H₅: Job Stress Has a Negative Effect on Championing Behavior.**

2.2.6. Negative Effect of Job Stress on Employee Performance

Job stress is a state experienced by employees due to an uncomfortable work environment and excessive tasks. One factor contributing to job stress is the high pressure and demands of work, which negatively affect employee performance

(Pradoto et al., 2022). Job stress is thought to reduce performance (Mukherjee et al., 2024). This occurs because it can drain the cognitive and emotional capacities that drive productivity and job satisfaction. At a certain level, job stress ultimately reduces employee motivation (Salama et al., 2022).

Based on the JD-R theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), job stress is defined as a job demand that can deplete employees' energy and negatively affect performance. High job stress can decrease employee motivation, well-being, and productivity (Chowhan & Pike, 2023; Mukherjee et al., 2024). Therefore, job stress is expected to negatively influence employee performance. This finding aligns with research by Chen et al. (2022), whose hypothesis testing demonstrated that job stress has a significant negative effect on employee performance. **H₆: Job Stress Has a Negative Effect on Employee Performance.**

Figure 1 illustrates the research model of this study, which examines the relationships between transformational leadership, work environment, job stress, championing behavior, and employee performance. Transformational leadership, work environment, and job stress are proposed to influence both championing behavior and employee performance. Championing behavior is considered a leadership-influenced behavioral outcome. This model integrates leadership, environmental, and psychological factors to explain employee behavior and performance in public sector organizations.

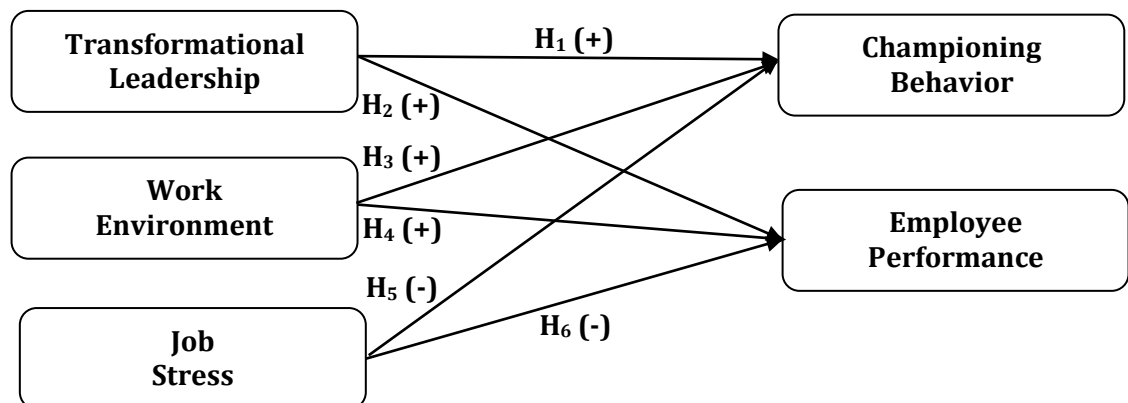


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Research Methods

3.1. Population and Sampling Method

This study adopts a quantitative, causal research design to analyze the relationships among transformational leadership, work environment, job stress, championing behavior, and employee performance. A quantitative method was selected to enable hypothesis testing and to examine the influence of variables through statistical techniques. The population consists of 150 civil servants employed at the Regional Secretariat of Pemalang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, all of whom were included as respondents in this study.

This population was chosen because civil servants play a direct role in organizational operations and policy implementation in the public sector, making them highly relevant to this research's objectives. Given the relatively small population size, this study uses a census approach, in which all members of the population are included. In addition, a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, is utilized. The sampling criteria include civil servants currently working at the Regional Secretariat of Pemalang Regency who have sufficient work experience to understand

leadership practices, work environment conditions, and job-related stress within the organization.

3.2. Data Collection Technique

Data for this study were gathered through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement instruments were adapted from previously validated studies to ensure reliability and validity, while the online method was selected to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and accessibility for respondents. Championing behavior (CB) is an important form of employee behavior in organizations, characterized by active support for change initiatives to achieve organizational goals (Islam et al., 2022). This construct was measured using four indicators: idea exploration, idea generation, idea championing, and idea implementation, consisting of seven items adapted from Islam et al. (2022).

Employee performance (EP) refers to the outcomes achieved by employees in terms of both the quality and quantity of their work, in line with their assigned responsibilities. It was measured using several indicators, including quality of work, quantity of work, responsibility, cooperation, and initiative, comprising eleven items adapted from Asatiani et al. (2021). Transformational leadership (TL) is a leadership style in which leaders motivate and inspire employees to go beyond their own self-interest and contribute to organizational success (Majid et al., 2023). This variable was measured using ten items based on the dimensions proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), namely idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration.

The work environment (WE) refers to all conditions surrounding employees that influence how they perform their tasks (Mozgovoy, 2022). It was measured using eight items, including work atmosphere, availability of work facilities, and interpersonal relationships among colleagues. Job stress (JS) is defined as an individual's response to work demands and pressures that exceed their capabilities or knowledge (Robbins et al., 2015). It was measured using seven items: excessive workload, lack of cooperation within the organization, difficulty in meeting high work standards, and ambiguity in roles and responsibilities.

3.3. Data Analysis Technique

The data in this study were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 3.0. This technique was chosen because it is suitable for both predictive and explanatory purposes and can effectively handle complex relationships among latent constructs without requiring strict assumptions of normality (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis was conducted in two main stages: assessment of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). The measurement model was evaluated for validity and reliability, including convergent validity (factor loadings ≥ 0.7), discriminant validity (AVE ≥ 0.5), composite reliability (≥ 0.7), and Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.7), following the recommended criteria of Hair et al. (2019). Furthermore, the structural model was examined to test the proposed hypotheses and to analyze the relationships among variables. This involved evaluating path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure. Hypothesis testing was conducted at a significance level of 5%.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Characteristics of Respondents

The characteristics of respondents in this study include gender, age, educational background, and length of service, as shown in Table 1. A total of 150 civil servants participated in the survey. By gender, the majority of respondents were male (60.0%), while females accounted for 40.0% of the sample.

In terms of age, most respondents were in the 31–40 age group (35.3%), followed by those aged 41–50 (26.7%), 20–30 (19.3%), and over 50 (18.7%). This suggests that the respondents were predominantly within the productive working-age group. Regarding educational background, nearly half of the respondents held an undergraduate degree (48.7%), followed by senior high school graduates (35.3%), diploma holders (12.0%), and master’s degree holders (3.3%). Only a small proportion of respondents had a junior high school education (0.7%).

The majority of respondents had worked for 5–10 years (42.0%), indicating substantial organizational experience. This was followed by respondents with 11–20 years of service (24.7%), those with more than 20 years of service (19.3%), and employees with less than 5 years of service (14.0%). Overall, the respondent characteristics indicate that the sample comprises experienced civil servants with adequate educational backgrounds, making them well-suited to assess transformational leadership, work environment, job stress, championing behavior, and employee performance.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Men	90	60.0
Women	60	40.0
Age		
20-30 Years Old	29	19.3
31-40 Years Old	53	35.3
41-50 Years Old	40	26.7
> 50 Years Old	28	18.7
Education		
Junior High School	1	0.70
Senior High School	53	35.3
Diploma	18	12.0
Undergraduated	73	48.7
Master	5	3.30
Working Period		
< 5 Years	21	14.0
5-10 Years	63	42.0
11-20 Years	37	24.7
> 20 Years	29	19.3

4.2. Validity and Reliability Test

The validity testing in this study consists of convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity can be achieved when the indicators of a construct correlate highly with one another and have loadings above 0.7. Discriminant validity refers to the cross-loading factor used to assess whether a construct is likely different from other constructs.

The test results in Figure 2 show that the results of each research variable indicator have a loading factor value of > 0.7 and are grouped, which means that it can

be concluded that all statement indicators are valid, and meet the requirements of convergent validity and discriminant validity and can be used to conduct further research.

The consistency reliability test is a tool used to measure the consistency of a questionnaire regarding a construct or variable indicator. This test is conducted by examining the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha value. A construct or variable is considered reliable if its value is greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019).

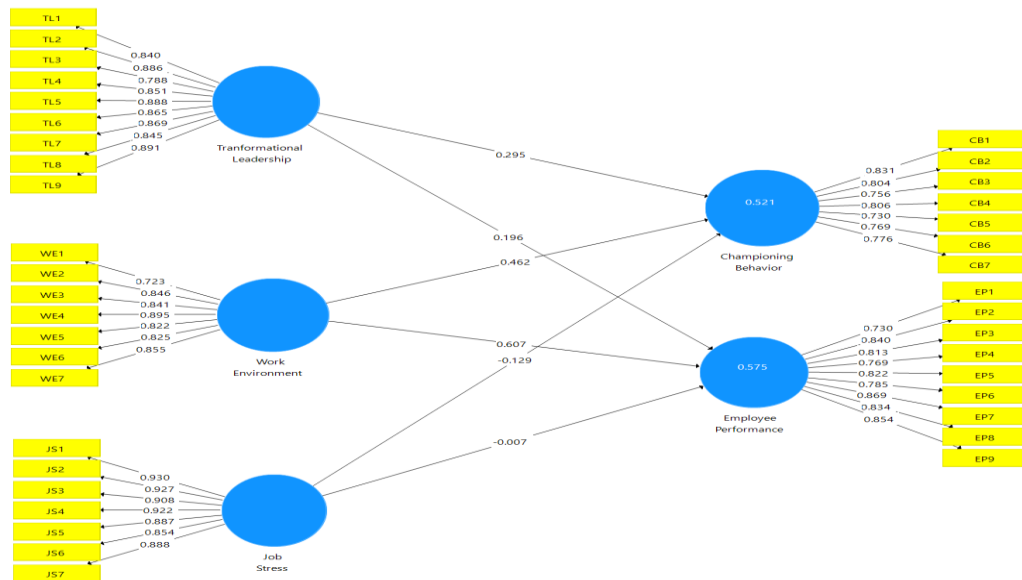


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Based on the results presented in Table 2, all variables in this study demonstrate high reliability, as indicated by composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). These results indicate that the measurement instruments for each variable are consistent and reliable in capturing the constructs under study. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables meet the reliability criteria and are suitable for further analysis.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

Variable	Outer Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Transformational Leadership		0.737	0.955	0.962
TL1	0.840			
TL2	0.886			
TL3	0.788			
TL4	0.851			
TL5	0.888			
TL6	0.865			
TL7	0.869			
TL8	0.845			
TL9	0.891			
Work Environment		0.691	0.925	0.940
WE1	0.723			
WE2	0.846			
WE3	0.841			

Variable	Outer Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
WE4	0.895			
WE5	0.822			
WE6	0.825			
WE7	0.855			
Job Stress		0.815	0.962	0.969
JS1	0.930			
JS2	0.927			
JS3	0.908			
JS4	0.922			
JS5	0.887			
JS6	0.854			
JS7	0.888			
Championing Behavior		0.612	0.894	0.917
CB1	0.831			
CB2	0.804			
CB3	0.756			
CB4	0.806			
CB5	0.730			
CB6	0.769			
CB7	0.776			
Employee Performance		0.662	0.936	0.946
EP1	0.730			
EP2	0.840			
EP3	0.813			
EP4	0.769			
EP5	0.822			
EP6	0.785			
EP7	0.869			
EP8	0.834			
EP9	0.854			

4.3. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing was performed using t-statistics and p-values. A hypothesis is accepted if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 (Hair et al., 2019). Based on the results presented in Table 3, five out of the six proposed hypotheses are supported, while one hypothesis is not supported. Specifically, transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on championing behavior and employee performance. In addition, the work environment has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and championing behavior. Furthermore, job stress has a significant negative effect on championing behavior. However, job stress does not significantly affect employee performance. These findings indicate that leadership and the work environment play significant roles in shaping both employee behavior and performance. In contrast, job stress affects only behavioral outcomes and does not directly impact performance in this study.

Table 3. Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Transformational Leadership → Championing Behavior	0.295	0.302	0.080	3.684	0.000
Transformational Leadership → Employee Performance	0.196	0.205	0.092	2.122	0.035

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Work Environment → Championing Behavior	0.462	0.462	0.076	6.050	0.000
Work Environment → Employee Performance	0.607	0.606	0.079	7.667	0.000
Job Stress → Championing Behavior	-0.129	-0.136	0.062	2.078	0.039
Job Stress → Employee Performance	-0.007	-0.004	0.051	0.131	0.896

4.4. Discussion

4.4.1. Transformational Leadership and Championing Behavior

The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on championing behavior. This indicates that leaders who provide inspiration, motivation, and intellectual stimulation can foster employees' willingness to generate new ideas, support innovation, and actively engage in organizational change processes. These results confirm that leadership plays a crucial role in promoting championing behavior within public sector organizations (Sabar et al., 2022; Majid et al., 2023).

This result is consistent with prior research showing that transformational leadership positively affects both championing behavior and innovative work behavior (Islam et al., 2022; Jiatong et al., 2022). Transformational leaders encourage employees to think creatively, support new initiatives, and actively participate in organizational development (Kloutsiniotis et al., 2023). In public sector organizations, which are often characterized by rigid bureaucratic systems, transformational leadership becomes particularly important in driving employees to embrace change and innovation (Islam et al., 2022).

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding aligns with SET, which posits that employees tend to reciprocate the support and encouragement they receive from their leaders by engaging in positive behaviors (Blau, 2017). In this context, championing behavior can be viewed as a form of reciprocal response. Therefore, transformational leadership is a key driver of employees' motivation to contribute to organizational change initiatives actively (Nguyen et al., 2023).

4.4.2. Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

The findings reveal that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This result can be interpreted through the JD-R theory of Bakker and Demerouti (2007), which emphasizes that job resources, such as transformational leadership, play a crucial role in enhancing employee motivation, engagement, and performance. Leaders offering inspiration, guidance, and support can encourage employees to exceed standard expectations and achieve organizational objectives more effectively. Furthermore, from the standpoint of SET, as outlined by Blau (2017), employees are likely to reciprocate the trust and support provided by their leaders with positive work-related outcomes, including higher performance. When leadership is perceived as empowering and supportive, employees develop a sense of obligation to contribute more actively and effectively to organizational goals (Lee & Kim, 2024).

These findings highlight the importance of transformational leadership in improving employee performance, even within public-sector organizations, which are typically characterized by structured systems and formal regulations. Transformational leaders can enhance employee motivation, foster trust, and instill a strong sense of purpose, all of which contribute to improved performance (Aisyah et

al., 2025). This result is consistent with prior studies reporting a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance (Eliyana et al., 2019; Jiatong et al., 2022; Kloutsiniotis et al., 2023). These studies indicate that transformational leadership enhances performance by strengthening motivation, commitment, and employee engagement. Therefore, transformational leadership can be viewed as a critical organizational resource that not only directly influences employee performance but also indirectly enhances it through behavioral factors such as championing behavior and increased motivation (Qalati et al., 2022).

4.4.3. Work Environment and Championing Behavior

The findings show that the work environment positively and significantly influences championing behavior. This result can be explained by Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) JD-R theory, which highlights that job resources, such as a supportive work environment, can strengthen employee motivation and promote constructive work behaviors. A conducive workplace, characterized by supportive colleagues, sufficient facilities, and a positive organizational climate, equips employees with the resources needed to engage in innovative and change-oriented behaviors, including championing behavior (Molloy et al., 2024; Moon & Lim, 2025).

Moreover, from Blau's (2017) SET perspective, employees who perceive their work environment as supportive and comfortable are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization. Such responses may include generating new ideas, supporting innovation initiatives, and actively contributing to organizational development. In this sense, championing behavior reflects a reciprocal response to the positive conditions provided by the organization (Wijaya & Razaga, 2025).

This finding is consistent with prior studies indicating that a supportive work environment positively affects innovative and proactive work behaviors (Zhenjing et al., 2022). In public sector organizations, which are typically characterized by structured systems, a supportive work environment is crucial to encouraging employees to move beyond routine tasks and actively participate in organizational change. Therefore, this result underscores the importance of fostering a supportive work environment as a key organizational resource to stimulate championing behavior among employees.

4.4.4. Work Environment and Employee Performance

The findings demonstrate that the work environment positively and significantly impacts employee performance. This indicates that a supportive workplace characterized by adequate facilities, a positive atmosphere, and strong interpersonal relationships can enhance employees' ability to perform effectively. A conducive work environment fosters a sense of comfort, security, and support, which in turn contributes to improved performance outcomes (Zhenjing et al., 2022).

These results are consistent with prior research indicating that the work environment positively influences employee performance (Mozgovoy, 2022; Soares et al., 2024). From a theoretical standpoint, this finding aligns with the JD-R theory, which emphasizes that job resources, such as a supportive work environment, play a key role in enhancing employee motivation and performance. In this context, the work environment functions as a resource that facilitates task completion and supports employees in achieving better performance (Soares et al., 2024). These findings indicate that organizations need to create a supportive work environment to

improve employee performance, especially in public-sector organizations, where employees tend to work within structured, formal systems.

4.4.5. Job Stress and Championing Behavior

The result indicates that job stress has a significant negative effect on championing behavior. This finding can be explained by Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) JD-R theory, which suggests that job demands, such as job stress, can reduce employees' energy, motivation, and psychological capacity. High levels of job stress may limit employees' ability to think creatively, reduce their willingness to take initiative, and discourage them from engaging in extra-role behaviors, such as championing behavior.

The view of SET by Blau (2017) explains that employees who experience high levels of stress may perceive a lack of organizational support, which reduces their willingness to reciprocate with positive behaviors. Under stressful conditions, employees tend to focus on completing basic job tasks rather than contributing additional efforts such as proposing new ideas or supporting organizational change.

This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that job stress negatively affects innovative and proactive work behavior (Montani & Staglianò, 2022; Zhenjing et al., 2022). In public sector organizations, excessive job stress may hinder employees' engagement in change-oriented behaviors due to rigid work structures and high administrative demands. Therefore, this finding suggests that job stress should be properly managed to ensure that employees have sufficient psychological resources to engage in championing behavior and contribute to organizational innovation.

4.4.6. Job Stress and Employee Performance

The result indicates that job stress does not significantly affect employee performance. This finding suggests that although employees experience job stress, it does not necessarily reduce their performance. This may be because civil servants tend to have clear job descriptions, stable income, and high job security, which allows them to maintain their performance even when experiencing job stress (Kim & Jung, 2022).

This finding differs from several previous studies that found job stress negatively affects employee performance (Babapour et al., 2022; Chowhan & Pike, 2023). The difference in findings may be due to differences in the research context. Previous studies were mostly conducted in private-sector organizations, where job stress is often associated with performance targets and job insecurity, both of which directly affect employee performance. In contrast, in public sector organizations, job stress may not significantly affect performance because employees tend to have more stable jobs and clearer work systems (Grala, 2023).

From the perspective of the JD-R theory, job stress is categorized as a job demand that can reduce employee performance. However, the results indicate that job demands do not always reduce performance, especially when employees have sufficient job resources, such as supportive leadership and a positive work environment. This means that job resources may play a more important role than job demands in influencing employee performance in public sector organizations.

5. Conclusion

This study seeks to analyze the effects of transformational leadership, work environment, and job stress on championing behavior and employee performance in the

public sector. The results reveal that transformational leadership has a positive and significant impact on both championing behavior and employee performance. Similarly, the work environment has been found to enhance employee performance significantly. In contrast, job stress does not significantly influence employee performance. These findings suggest that leadership and work environment are more critical determinants than job stress in shaping employee behavior and performance within public sector organizations.

From a theoretical perspective, this study supports the JD-R theory, which posits that job resources, such as transformational leadership and a supportive work environment, can strengthen employee performance and promote positive behaviors, including championing behavior. Conversely, job demands, such as job stress, do not necessarily lead to decreased performance, particularly in public-sector settings, where employees typically benefit from job stability and structured work systems. Thus, this study contributes to extending JD-R theory by emphasizing the greater role of job resources than job demands in influencing employee outcomes. Empirically, leadership effectiveness combined with workplace support crucially fosters public sector innovation and productivity.

In practical terms, the findings imply that public sector organizations should prioritize developing transformational leadership and creating a supportive work environment to foster innovation and enhance employee performance. Leaders are encouraged to motivate and support employees, while also providing opportunities for them to contribute ideas and participate in organizational change initiatives. Furthermore, organizations should manage job stress effectively while ensuring employees have adequate resources to perform their duties.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample is limited to civil servants within a single public-sector organization, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Second, the study focuses only on direct relationships between variables and does not account for more complex interactions. Accordingly, future research is recommended to develop more comprehensive models by incorporating mediating and moderating variables. For instance, variables such as job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment may serve as mediators in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Additionally, moderating factors such as organizational culture, employee motivation, and leadership support may provide deeper insights into the conditions under which leadership and work environment influence employee outcomes. Future studies are also encouraged to examine other sectors, including private organizations, to enable broader comparisons and greater generalizability.

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