

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Personnel Performance Through Work Discipline as A Mediating Variable at The Indonesian National Police Headquarters

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of transformational leadership on personnel performance, with work discipline as a mediating variable, among staff of the Personal Secretariat of the Indonesian National Police Headquarters. The study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to 135 personnel selected via simple random sampling. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, path analysis, and mediation testing to identify direct and indirect relationships among variables. The findings indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work discipline, while work discipline has a positive and significant effect on personnel performance. However, transformational leadership does not have a significant direct effect on personnel performance. Mediation analysis shows that work discipline significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and personnel performance. These results suggest that transformational leadership contributes to performance improvement indirectly by strengthening work discipline. The originality of this study lies in highlighting the critical role of work discipline as a behavioral mechanism linking leadership style to performance outcomes within a highly structured public-sector organization. The findings provide empirical evidence that effective leadership must be supported by strong disciplinary practices to achieve optimal personnel performance.

Keywords: transformational leadership, work discipline, personnel performance, mediation analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Human resources are a key factor in determining an organization's success. In complex government institutions such as the Indonesian National Police, the successful implementation of duties depends heavily on the quality, discipline, and performance of its personnel. Public demands on the police institution have increased in the era of bureaucratic reform, where society expects services that are professional, transparent, accountable, and responsive to social and technological developments.

One strategic unit that plays a crucial role in supporting the duties of the highest leadership of the Indonesian National Police is the Staff of the Personal Secretariat. This unit primarily assists, organizes, and manages the strategic needs of police leaders, including administrative support, information, and cross-unit coordination. Given its vital role, the personnel of this unit are required to demonstrate high performance, strong discipline, and effective leadership that can mobilize members to support leadership duties effectively.

To support the development of superior human resources, the Indonesian National Police, through the Assistant for Human Resources, has established strategic performance indicators in the Decree of the Assistant for Human Resources of the Chief of Police No. Kep/820/V/2020. Although the document is formally applied to the Human Resources Staff unit, these indicators also serve as benchmarks for personnel development across all work units, including the Personal Secretariat staff. The established performance targets include the Human Resources Professionalism Index, personnel fulfillment, talent pool readiness, educational development, and performance and budget accountability systems. Several relevant indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Target Performance Indicators For The SSDM Polri For 2020–2024

No.	Strategic Objectives	IKU/IKP	Target					Description
			2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
1.	Human Resource Professionalism	Indonesian National Police Human Resource Professionalism Index	74,75	75,75	76,75	77,75	78,75	Jianstra, Dalpers, Binkar, dan Watpers
2.	Fulfillment of human resources per unit/central work unit at the regional level	Percentage of personnel requirements met in each unit/work unit at the central and regional levels	65%	66%	67%	68%	70%	Jianstra, Dalpers, and Inkar
3.	Availability of outstanding cadres in the leadership of the Indonesian National Police	Percentage of talent pool integrity	99%	99%	99.5%	99.5%	99.5%	Binkar
4.	The implementation of assessment and formulation of strategies for developing Polri human resources	Percentage of fulfillment of human resource development assessment documents that become Polri policy	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Jianstra
5.	The implementation of career development for Indonesian National Police personnel	Percentage increase in Indonesian National Police personnel participating in development training	2%	2,2%	2,4%	2,6%	2,8%	• Jianstra • Dalpers
		Persentase <i>assesse</i> penilaian kompetensi	90%	91%	92%	93%	94%	Binkar

No.	Strategic Objectives	IKU/IKP	Target					Description
			2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
6.	The implementation of guidance and services regarding the rights of members and civil servants of the Indonesian National Police	yang memenuhi persyaratan						Binkar, Watpers dan Psikologi
		Level of fulfillment of the rights of members and civil servants of the Indonesian National Police	65%	67%	69%	71%	73%	
7.	The realization of clean and transparent SSDM governance	SSDM SAKIP Score	70,1	70,2	70,29	70,35	70,39	Renmin
		SSDM budget performance score	92,1	92,2	92,3	92,4	92,5	Renmin

Overall, the data in the table show an upward trend in macro achievements. The Indonesian National Police's human resource professionalism index increased from 74.75 in 2020 to 78.75 in 2024. Personnel requirements fulfillment also rose from 65% to 70%, and competency assessments from 90% to 94%. At first glance, this condition suggests that Polri's human resources performance is relatively stable and tends to improve. The data show that, even with annual target increases, optimal performance depends not only on systems and policies but also on the quality of individual personnel.

Personnel performance in this study is understood as the result of individual work, measured against established standards. Personnel performance within the Indonesian National Police's SPRIPIM remains a challenge that needs attention. According to (Edison et al., 2017) Performance appraisal is the process of observing employees' work to determine whether it is successful or unsuccessful. (Suryani et al., 2020) Add that performance is an evaluation of how well the work compares to the established standards.

Several problems persist in the field, particularly at SPRIPIM Mabes Polri: tardiness, late completion of administrative reports, a lack of initiative in responding to sudden orders, and work results that still require repeated improvement. These phenomena confirm the gap between organizational targets and the reality of personnel performance. Demands for improving the quality of Polri human resources continue to grow, in line with technological developments, social dynamics, and public expectations of the police institution. These issues show that improving personnel performance is not only a matter of technical ability, but also concerns leadership and discipline as internal factors that shape work ethic.

Discipline issues are one factor affecting individual performance. Work discipline is the responsibility of personnel to comply with applicable rules, ethics, and work standards. (Soejarminto & Hidayat, 2023). Discipline includes punctuality, adherence to SOPs, consistency of behavior, and responsibility at work. Phenomena such as tardiness and rule violations indicate that discipline is not yet fully optimal at SPRIPIM. Therefore, work discipline is used in this study as a mediating variable. Without discipline, work objectives will not be optimally achieved even if the systems and policies are good. Discipline includes punctuality, compliance with leadership orders, consistency in implementing procedures, and awareness of standards. The persistence of disciplinary violations in the field shows that discipline is an important factor to consider in efforts to improve the performance of SPRIPIM personnel.

Work discipline is treated as a mediating variable because it is considered an important link between leadership influence and performance outcomes. In other words, strong transformational leadership will encourage high levels of discipline, and this discipline will

ultimately improve personnel performance. This is reinforced by previous studies, such as Ndolu et al. (2022), which state that discipline can be an intermediary variable in the relationship between leadership and performance. Meanwhile, work performance is defined as the results an individual achieves in carrying out their assigned duties and responsibilities, based on predetermined standards, targets, and timeframes (Suryani et al., 2020).

In addition, the role of leadership is also very decisive. In management theory, there are various types of leadership, including authoritarian, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership. The Indonesian National Police, as a semi-military organization, tends to use authoritarian or transactional leadership, in which superiors emphasize orders and subordinate obedience. However, in the face of the demands of modernization and public service, a transformational leadership style is considered more relevant.

(Suseno, 2019) outlines four dimensions of transformational leadership, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders can set an example, inspire, encourage creativity, and attend to members' personal needs. Transformational leadership is a style that inspires, motivates, and develops subordinates' potential through a visionary approach, empowerment, and personal coaching. Transformational leaders not only give orders but also create meaning, set an example, and shape a progressive organizational culture.

Transformational leadership will not have a significant impact without good work discipline. Work discipline is a form of personnel compliance and responsibility for adhering to regulations, rules, and work ethics within an organization. Discipline reflects a commitment to time, responsibility for tasks, and awareness to work optimally in accordance with organizational regulations. According to (Paryanti et al., 2024) High discipline at work is the key to organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Considering the importance of these three variables in supporting organizational success, the relationship between transformational leadership, work discipline, and personnel performance is important to study further, especially in the context of work in the SPRIPIM Polri environment, which is a strategic work unit in supporting the activities of the highest leadership of the Indonesian National Police. Research integrating these three variables into a single structural model is still limited, especially in military-police organizations such as the Indonesian National Police. Therefore, this research is not only beneficial from an academic perspective but also provides practical contributions to the formulation of leadership- and discipline-based HR development policies, particularly for improving personnel performance in work environments that demand high levels of accuracy, speed, and integrity, such as SPRIM Polri.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The research consists of independent variables (X), namely Transformational Leadership; dependent variables (Y), namely Employee Performance; and mediating variables (Z), namely Work Discipline. Thus, the research framework used in this study is as follows:

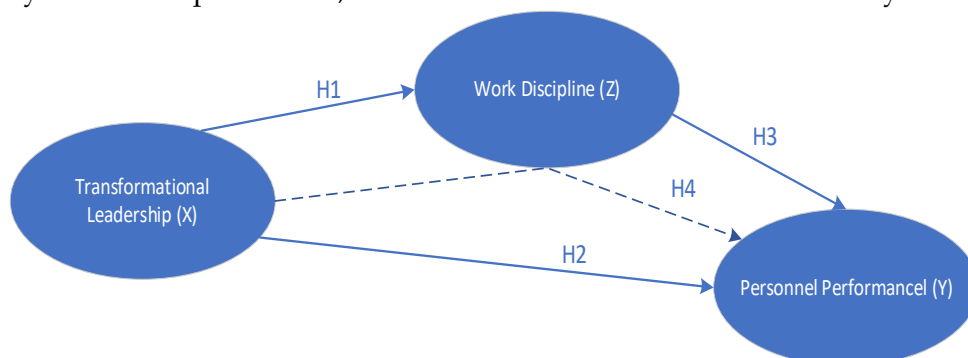


Figure 1. Framework

H1: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on work discipline.

Leadership plays a very important role in providing direction, influencing outcomes, and motivating employees within an organization. One leadership style considered effective for addressing the challenges of modern organizations is transformational leadership. This leadership style emphasizes inspiration, vision change, and increasing the capacity and commitment of organizational members. (Makmuriana, 2021) states that transformational leaders can improve performance through four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In a work environment such as SPRIM POLRI, leaders who can personally motivate and guide their subordinates will foster greater loyalty and enthusiasm. When leaders set an example and provide a clear vision, personnel will be more motivated to work beyond the organization's expectations. Thus, transformational leadership not only provides direction but also builds commitment and work engagement, all of which lead to improved performance. It can therefore be concluded that there is an influence between transformational leadership and personnel performance.

H2: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on personnel performance

Work discipline is an important aspect in creating a structured and productive work environment. (Ndolu et al., 2022). In the context of police organizations such as SPRIPIM POLRI, personnel discipline reflects commitment, compliance with procedures, and professionalism in carrying out strategic tasks alongside leadership. One important factor that can encourage work discipline is the leadership style applied by immediate superiors. Transformational leadership plays a crucial role in shaping subordinates' behavior and attitudes, including discipline. Leaders who set a positive example, establish high moral standards, and encourage the personal development of subordinates will influence their attitudes toward rules and work responsibilities. Transformational leaders also tend to use a humanistic, inspirational approach that not only emphasizes punishment for violations but also fosters internal awareness and commitment to complying with rules.

H3: Work discipline has a significant effect on personnel performance

Work discipline is the main foundation for achieving optimal performance in an organization (Setiawan, 2024). In a military-police work environment such as SPRIM POLRI, discipline not only reflects compliance with rules but also demonstrates mental preparedness and moral responsibility in carrying out state duties. Personnel performance is measured not only by how many tasks are completed but also by how those tasks are carried out in accordance with specified time, procedural, and quality standards. Personnel with high discipline tend to be more organized in completing their work, more focused on organizational goals, and more consistent in maintaining their work ethic. Conversely, a lack of discipline is often associated with tardiness, irregularity, errors in task execution, and weak accountability. Therefore, work discipline is an important indicator in assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of personnel performance.

H4: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on personnel performance mediated by work discipline

The relationship between transformational leadership and personnel performance is not always direct. In many organizational contexts, leadership's influence on performance is also mediated by internal individual factors, including work discipline. This means that good leadership encourages the development of work discipline, which directly improves performance. In the SPRIPIM POLRI environment, transformational leaders can influence personnel through exemplary behavior, motivation, and individual attention, thereby indirectly shaping their discipline towards their work. When discipline is firmly instilled, personnel will automatically work more optimally, be punctual, follow SOPs, and be results-

oriented.

METHODS

Based on the established research objectives, this study adopted an explanatory research method to examine the relationship between the variables proposed in the hypothesis. There are five variables in this study: the independent variable, Transformational Leadership; the dependent variable, Personnel Performance; and the mediating variable, Work Discipline, in accordance with the research objective, which is to determine the effect of style on personnel performance through work discipline as a mediating variable at SPRIPIM Mabas Polri. The population used in this study is 203 personnel at SPRIPIM Mabas Polri.

To determine the sample size, this study uses the Slovin formula: $n = \frac{203}{1 + (203 \times 0,05^2)} = \frac{203}{1,51} = 134,66$ (rounded to 135 samples). Thus, the sample size for this study is 135 respondents.

In this study, the operationalized variables are all variables included in the formulated hypothesis. To provide a clear picture and facilitate the study's implementation, it is necessary to define the variables to be studied.

Table 2. Operational Definition of Variables

Variables	Definition	Indicator	Item	Measurement
Transformational Leadership (X)	Transformational leadership is a leadership model that is believed to be effective in improving employee performance and job satisfaction.	1. Charisma	1-2	Questionnaire
		2. Motivational inspiration	3-5	Questionnaire
		3. Intellectual stimulation	6-9	Questionnaire
		4. Individual consideration	10-12	Questionnaire
Personnel Performance (Y)	Performance is the result of an interaction that is measured and estimated over a specific period, taking into account predetermined requirements or arrangements.	1. Quality	1-4	Questionnaire
		2. Timeliness	5-6	Questionnaire
		3. Effectiveness	7-9	Questionnaire
		4. Independence	10-12	Questionnaire
Work Discipline (Z)	Work discipline is an attitude of obedience, respect, and appreciation for applicable rules, both written and unwritten, and the ability to carry them out without evading punishment for violating assigned duties and authorities.	1. Objectives and Capabilities	1-3	Questionnaire
		2. Exemplary Conduct	4-6	Questionnaire
		3. Close Supervision	7-9	Questionnaire
		4. Penal Sanctions	10-12	Questionnaire

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity testing is a process for determining whether a measuring instrument, such as a questionnaire, is truly capable of measuring what it is intended to measure in a study. The following are the validity tests for each variable:

Table 3. Validity Test Results

Variable	No. Statement	Value r_{hitung}	Value r_{tabel}	Decision
X	1.	0,8225	0,4438	Valid
	2.	0,8394	0,4438	Valid
	3.	0,7194	0,4438	Valid
	4.	0,7423	0,4438	Valid
	5.	0,7100	0,4438	Valid
	6.	0,6760	0,4438	Valid
	7.	0,6430	0,4438	Valid
	8.	0,8916	0,4438	Valid
	9.	0,8207	0,4438	Valid
	10.	0,7650	0,4438	Valid

Variable	No. Statement	Value r_{hitung}	Value r_{tabel}	Decision
Y	11.	0,6894	0,4438	Valid
	12.	0,4763	0,4438	Valid
	1.	0,4988	0,4438	Valid
	2.	0,5391	0,4438	Valid
	3.	0,5623	0,4438	Valid
	4.	0,5800	0,4438	Valid
	5.	0,6281	0,4438	Valid
	6.	0,8059	0,4438	Valid
	7.	0,5661	0,4438	Valid
	8.	0,6110	0,4438	Valid
	9.	0,5381	0,4438	Valid
	10.	0,6235	0,4438	Valid
Z	11.	0,6547	0,4438	Valid
	12.	0,7045	0,4438	Valid
	1.	0,7417	0,4438	Valid
	2.	0,5564	0,4438	Valid
	3.	0,6122	0,4438	Valid
	4.	0,6769	0,4438	Valid
	5.	0,6162	0,4438	Valid
	6.	0,5538	0,4438	Valid
	7.	0,6613	0,4438	Valid
	8.	0,5054	0,4438	Valid
	9.	0,6076	0,4438	Valid
	10.	0,4728	0,4438	Valid
	11.	0,7433	0,4438	Valid
	12.	0,6051	0,4438	Valid

The decision on whether an item is reliable is made if α is greater than or equal to 0.7. α means the intercept or constant, which is a number that has a fixed value. The intercept or constant, symbolized by α , is the point of intersection between the regression line equation and the vertical axis.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Number of Items	Reference Value	Nilai Alpha Cronbach's	Status
12	0,700	0,870	Reliabel
12	0,700	0,88	Reliabel
12	0,700	0,910	Reliabel

A hypothesis is a tentative answer to a problem that has been formulated and will be examined in the study. Simple regression analysis is used to test the first, second, and third hypotheses. Furthermore, path analysis is used to test the fourth hypothesis. Because regression analysis was performed twice, there will be two path coefficient models. The following are the variables tested in equation one, namely the variable of transformational leadership on the variable of work discipline:

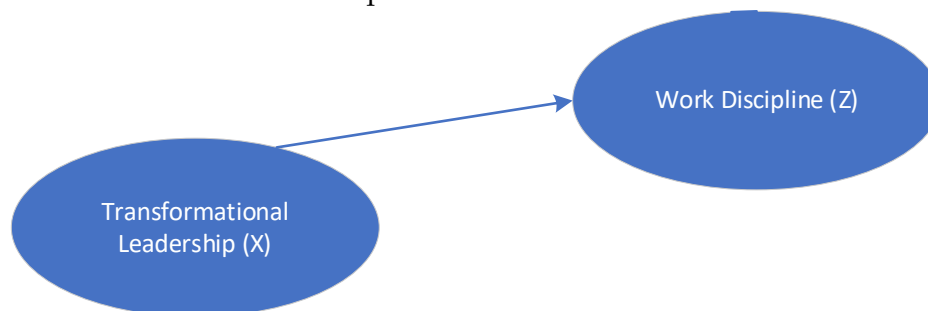


Figure 2. Analysis of Equation 1

The partial test assesses the independent influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable. If $t_{count} > t_{table}$, then H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, and conversely,

if $t_{count} < t_{table}$, then H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected. The t-table value is calculated with $\alpha = 0.05$ and $df = (n-k)$ or $(135-2) = 133$. From these conditions, the t-table value is 1.65639.

Table 5. Partial Test Results for Equation 1

		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-.048	2.296		-.021	.983
	Transformational Leadership	.945	.058	.815	16.232	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Work Discipline

Based on the regression results in the table above, a t-test was performed by comparing the t-count value with the t-table at the 5% significance level (1.6563).

Discussion

H1: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on work discipline.

The results of the study indicate that Transformational Leadership has a significant effect on Work Discipline, as evidenced by a t-value of 16.232 > t-table of 1.65639 and a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05. This means that improving the quality of transformational leadership will directly improve the work discipline of SPRIPIM Mabes Polri personnel. The better the example, motivation, individual attention, and intellectual stimulation leaders provide, the greater the discipline of personnel in carrying out their duties. Theoretically, transformational leadership can influence subordinates' behavior through inspiration, long-term vision, and moral guidance. Leaders at SPRIPIM Mabes Polri need to strengthen their transformational leadership style in their daily activities, such as providing inspirational guidance, building interpersonal closeness, and setting a good example. This effort is important because research shows that increased personnel discipline stems from effective leadership behavior.

Next, a partial test of the following two equations was conducted:

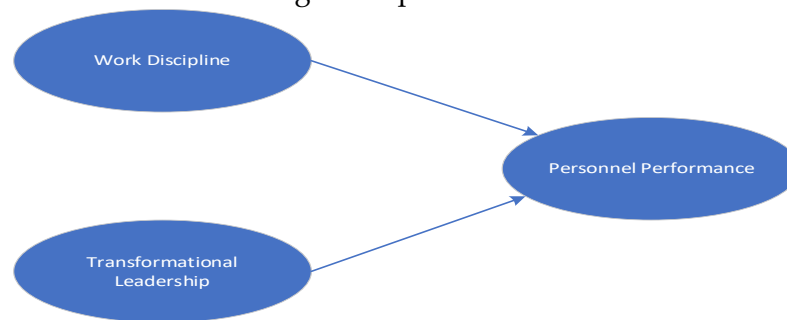


Figure 3. Analysis of Equation 2

The t-table value with $\alpha = 0.05$ and $df = (n-k)$ or $(135-3) = 132$. From these conditions, the t-table value is 1.65648. Then, a t-test or partial test of the two equations is performed as follows.

Table 6. Partial Test Results for Equation 2

		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	24.260	2.351		10.321	.000
	Transformational Leadership	.144	.103	.180	1.403	.163
	Work Discipline	.252	.089	.364	2.839	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Personnel Performance

This test assesses the independent effect of each independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y), based on the regression results in the table above. The partial test is performed by comparing the t-count value with the t-table with an error rate of 5%, which is 1.65648.

H2: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on personnel performance.

The results of the study indicate that Transformational Leadership does not have a significant effect on Personnel Performance, with a t-value of $1.403 < t\text{-table of } 1.65639$ and a significance value of $0.163 > 0.05$. This means that even though leaders have implemented a transformational leadership style, there has been no direct improvement in SPRIPIM personnel performance. SPRIPIM leaders at the National Police Headquarters cannot rely solely on transformational leadership to improve performance. It is necessary to strengthen supporting factors such as work discipline, work culture, supervision, and consistency in SOP implementation to achieve real performance improvements.

H3: Work discipline has a significant effect on personnel performance.

The results of the study indicate that Work Discipline has a significant effect on Personnel Performance, with a t-value of $2.839 > \text{the } t\text{-table value of } 1.65639$ and a significance level of $0.005 < 0.05$. This means that the higher the level of discipline among SPRIPIM personnel, the better their performance, particularly in quality, timeliness, effectiveness, and independence. SPRIPIM Mabes Polri needs to strengthen discipline through close supervision, fair rewards and punishments, and a culture of compliance with SOPs. This strategy will improve the quality of personnel performance and support the achievement of organizational targets.

Next is the mediation test, which helps determine whether the third variable (mediator) functions as an intermediary in the relationship. In the Sobel test, the Sobel test calculation was used with the following results:

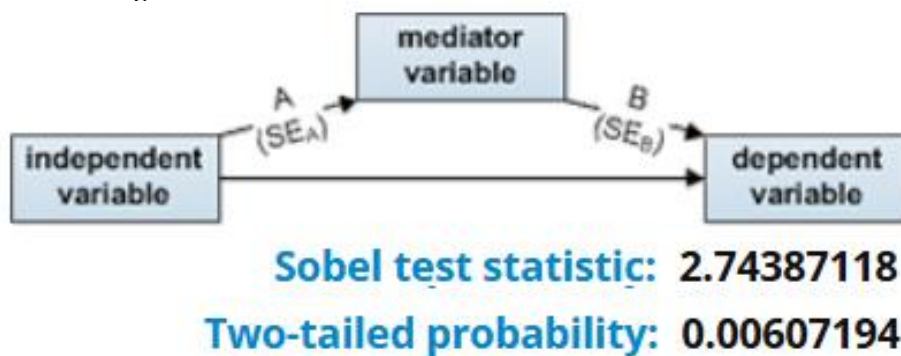


Figure 4. Sobel Test Results

H4: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on personnel performance mediated by work discipline

The Sobel test results show a Z-value of $2.4387 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.006 < 0.05$, indicating that work discipline significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and personnel performance. This means that transformational leadership can improve performance only if it first improves members' discipline. SPRIM leaders at the National Police Headquarters need to make discipline development a primary focus in implementing transformational leadership. Approaches such as close supervision, motivation, and exemplary behavior will improve discipline and ultimately enhance personnel performance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that transformational leadership significantly influences work discipline, indicating that leadership practices characterized by role modeling, motivation, and individual consideration are effective in shaping disciplined work behavior. Transformational leadership does not directly influence personnel performance, suggesting that leadership style alone is insufficient to improve performance outcomes. Work discipline has been shown to have a significant positive effect on personnel performance, demonstrating that adherence to rules, punctuality, and responsibility are essential determinants of performance quality. Furthermore, work discipline plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership and personnel performance, confirming that leadership contributes to performance improvement indirectly by enhancing discipline. Overall, the findings emphasize that strengthening work discipline is a key strategy for translating transformational leadership into improved personnel performance within the organization.

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