

Employee Championing Behavior in Organizational Change: The Role of Transformational Leadership and Trust in Leader

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This study examines the effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Championing Behavior in the context of Organizational Change and the mediating role of Trust in Leader among employees of PT DSV Solutions Indonesia Semarang Branch. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected through an online questionnaire from 148 employees selected through purposive sampling from a population of 228 employees. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), including measurement and structural model assessments and bootstrapping for hypothesis testing. The findings show that Transformational Leadership has a significant positive effect on Employee Championing Behavior, while Trust in Leader partially mediates this relationship. These findings highlight the importance of transformational leadership and trust in strengthening employees' support for organizational change, particularly in the Indonesian logistics industry undergoing transformation following a corporate acquisition.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital transformation has significantly changed the way organizations conduct business activities and manage human resources. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) is characterized by the integration of digital technologies, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, cloud computing, and automation, all of which require organizations to continuously adapt to an increasingly dynamic business environment. These developments have transformed not only operational processes but also organizational structures, work systems, communication patterns, and employee behavior.

One of the sectors experiencing substantial transformation is the logistics industry. As a strategic sector supporting international trade, goods distribution, and national economic growth, logistics companies are required to continuously improve operational efficiency while adapting to technological innovation and changing customer demands. In Indonesia, government initiatives such as the establishment

of Bonded Logistics Centers (Pusat Logistik Berikat/PLB) have accelerated organizational transformation within logistics companies by encouraging greater operational integration, digitalization, and supply chain efficiency.

One organization that has experienced extensive organizational transformation is PT DSV Solutions Indonesia Semarang Branch, formerly known as PT Agility International Semarang Branch. The company represents a relevant research setting because it has undergone continuous organizational changes, including changes in work systems, job assignments, standard operating procedures, digital technology implementation, and, most importantly, a major corporate acquisition by DSV A/S. This acquisition resulted not only in a change of corporate identity but also substantial restructuring of organizational processes, leadership practices, and employee roles. Such large-scale organizational transformation provides an appropriate context for examining employee behavioral responses to organizational change.

Although organizational change aims to improve organizational effectiveness and competitiveness, it often creates uncertainty among employees. Employees may experience concerns regarding job security, changing responsibilities, new competency requirements, and evolving workplace relationships. Consequently, employees' behavioral responses become a critical factor determining whether organizational change initiatives are successfully implemented.

The organizational change literature identifies various employee responses, including resistance to change, organizational cynicism, readiness for change, commitment to change, and behaviors that actively support organizational transformation. Among these responses, Employee Championing Behavior (PJK) has recently attracted increasing scholarly attention because it represents employees' proactive willingness to advocate, promote, and actively support organizational change. Employees demonstrating championing behavior voluntarily assist colleagues, encourage acceptance of change, and contribute beyond formal job requirements to ensure successful implementation of organizational initiatives ([Faupel & Süß, 2019](#)).

One important antecedent of Employee Championing Behavior is Transformational Leadership (KT). Transformational leaders inspire employees through a compelling vision, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and motivational encouragement, thereby strengthening employee commitment toward organizational goals. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that Transformational Leadership positively influences Employee Championing Behavior during organizational change ([Islam et al., 2020](#); [2020](#); [2021](#)).

Beyond leadership itself, employees' psychological perceptions also influence their willingness to support organizational change. One of the most important psychological mechanisms is Trust in Leader (KPP). During periods of uncertainty, employees who trust their leaders are more likely to perceive organizational change positively, experience lower levels of anxiety, and actively engage in change-related activities. Drawing upon Psychological Contract Theory, trust develops when employees perceive that leaders fulfill implicit obligations through integrity, competence, fairness, and genuine concern. Consequently, Trust in Leader functions as an important psychological mechanism through which Transformational Leadership encourages Employee Championing Behavior.

Accordingly, this study proposes a research model in which Transformational Leadership directly influences Employee Championing Behavior while also exerting an indirect effect through Trust in Leader. The

model integrates leadership theory with Psychological Contract Theory to explain how leadership behaviors shape positive employee responses during organizational change. By incorporating Trust in Leader as a mediating mechanism, the model provides a more comprehensive explanation of the psychological process underlying employee support for organizational transformation.

Despite increasing scholarly interest in these relationships, several important research gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly been conducted in banking, public organizations, and service industries outside Indonesia, limiting the generalizability of their findings to the Indonesian logistics sector. Second, compared with other employee responses such as readiness for change, commitment to change, and resistance to change, Employee Championing Behavior remains relatively underexplored despite being recognized as one of the strongest predictors of successful organizational change. Third, empirical evidence examining Employee Championing Behavior in organizations experiencing large-scale organizational transformation due to mergers, acquisitions, and corporate restructuring remains limited. Finally, while [Islam et al. \(2020\)](#) reported that Trust in Leader fully mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior, little empirical evidence has verified whether the same mechanism operates within Indonesian logistics companies undergoing substantial organizational transformation.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in extending the Transformational Leadership–Employee Championing Behavior model by examining the mediating role of Trust in Leader within the Indonesian logistics industry, particularly in a company experiencing post-acquisition organizational transformation. Unlike previous studies conducted primarily in banking or other service sectors, this study provides empirical evidence from a logistics company facing continuous organizational change, thereby enriching the literature on leadership and organizational change while improving the external validity of previous findings.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Championing Behavior with Trust in Leader as a mediating variable among employees of PT DSV Solutions Indonesia Semarang Branch. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by extending knowledge regarding leadership and employee behavior during organizational change and practically by providing managerial recommendations for organizations seeking to strengthen employee support for successful organizational transformation.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior

Organizational change often creates uncertainty that requires effective leadership to facilitate employees' adaptation and engagement. Transformational Leadership is considered one of the most effective leadership styles in managing organizational change because it inspires employees, strengthens commitment, and encourages them to prioritize organizational goals over personal interests. Through vision, motivation, and individualized support, transformational leaders foster employees' willingness to actively participate in change initiatives.

Employee Championing Behavior refers to employees' active support for organizational change through involvement, advocacy, and efforts to help others adapt to change (Faupel & Süß, 2019). Transformational leaders can encourage such behavior by increasing employees' motivation, strengthening leader-employee relationships, and promoting active participation in organizational change processes (Islam et al., 2020; 2020). Previous studies have consistently reported a positive relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior during organizational change.

Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical findings above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Transformational Leadership has a positive effect on Employee Championing Behavior in the context of Organizational Change.

Trust in Leader as a Mediator between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior

Trust in Leader is an important psychological mechanism that explains how leadership influences employee attitudes and behaviors during organizational change. Transformational leaders build trust by demonstrating integrity, competence, concern for employees, and commitment to organizational goals. As a result, employees become more confident in their leaders and more willing to support change initiatives.

Drawing on Psychological Contract Theory, trust develops when employees perceive that leaders fulfill their expectations and obligations. During periods of organizational change, trust helps reduce uncertainty and encourages employees to engage in positive change-related behaviors. Employees who trust their leaders are more likely to actively support organizational change and demonstrate

Employee Championing Behavior (Islam et al., 2020). Previous research further indicates that Trust in Leader serves as a key mechanism through which Transformational Leadership promotes Employee Championing Behavior.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Trust in Leader mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior in the context of Organizational Change.

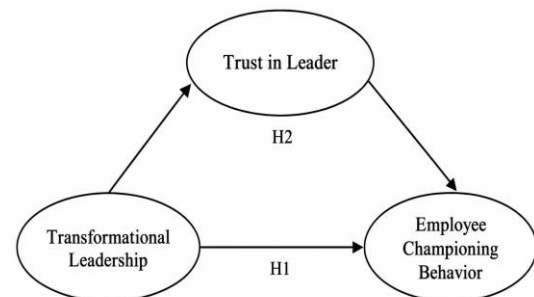


Figure 1. Research Model

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research model. Transformational Leadership is proposed as the independent variable influencing Employee Championing Behavior directly and indirectly through Trust in Leader. The model assumes that transformational leaders enhance employees' trust, which subsequently strengthens employees' willingness to actively support organizational change.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Championing Behavior and the mediating role of Trust in Leader in the context of organizational change. Data were collected through a self-administered online survey using a structured questionnaire distributed to employees of PT DSV Solutions Indonesia Semarang Branch. The study population consisted of 228 employees, and respondents were selected using purposive sampling. To ensure adequate exposure to organizational change, only employees with a minimum tenure of one year were included in the study. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with a two-stage approach consisting of measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation. The measurement model was assessed through tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha. The structural model was evaluated using path coefficient analysis, coefficient of determination (R^2), and predictive

relevance (Q^2). Hypothesis testing, including the examination of the mediating effect of Trust in Leader, was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure to determine the significance of direct and indirect relationships among the study variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients of the research variables. The results indicate that Employee Championing Behavior has the highest mean score ($M = 4.532$; $SD = 0.601$), followed by Transformational Leadership ($M = 4.485$; $SD = 0.629$) and Trust in Leader ($M = 4.260$; $SD = 0.829$). The mean values of all variables are above 4.20, indicating that respondents generally perceived the implementation of transformational leadership, trust in leaders, and employee championing behavior at PT DSV Solutions Indonesia Semarang Branch to be at a very high level. In addition, the relatively low standard deviation values suggest that respondents' perceptions were relatively homogeneous.

The correlation analysis further shows positive relationships among all variables. Transformational Leadership is positively correlated with Trust in Leader ($r = 0.720$) and Employee Championing Behavior ($r = 0.726$). Likewise, Trust in Leader is positively associated with Employee Championing Behavior ($r = 0.706$). These findings provide preliminary evidence that higher levels of transformational leadership are associated with greater trust in leaders and stronger employee championing behavior, thereby supporting the proposed relationships to be further examined through structural model analysis.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment demonstrates satisfactory validity and reliability. All indicator loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.762 to 0.899, indicating adequate indicator reliability. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.861 to 0.914, while Composite Reliability values range from 0.906 to 0.932, both exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.70.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variabel	Standar Deviasi	Mean	Correlation Coefficient		
			X1	X2	Y
Transformational Leadership (X1)	0.629	4.485	1.000	0.720	0.726
Trust in Leader (X2)	0.829	4.260	0.720	1.000	0.706
Employee Championing Behavior (Y)	0.601	4.532	0.726	0.706	1.000

These findings confirm strong internal consistency reliability for all constructs. Convergent validity is also established, as the AVE values range from 0.661 to 0.707, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.50.

Therefore, all constructs satisfy the criteria for reliability and convergent validity and are appropriate for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment Results

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Assessment
Transformational Leadership (KT)	KT1	0.788	0.914	0.932	0.661	Valid & Reliable
	KT2	0.801				
	KT3	0.853				
	KT4	0.793				
	KT5	0.796				
	KT6	0.825				
	KT7	0.834				
Trust in Leader (KPP)	KPP1	0.845	0.906	0.927	0.679	Valid & Reliable
	KPP2	0.850				
	KPP3	0.825				

	KPP4	0.835				
	KPP5	0.806				
	KPP6	0.779				
Employee Championing Behavior (PJK)	PJK1	0.837	0.861	0.906	0.707	Valid & Reliable
	PJK2	0.859				
	PJK3	0.899				
	PJK4	0.762				

The measurement model meets the required reliability and validity criteria, with outer loading, Cronbach’s Alpha, and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70. In addition, the AVE values are above 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model assessment included model fit evaluation, hypothesis testing, coefficient of determination (R²), and predictive relevance (Q²). As presented in Table 2, the model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the empirical data. The SRMR value of 0.066 was below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit, while the NFI value of 0.841 suggested an acceptable level of fit for PLS-SEM analysis.

The path coefficient results indicate that all hypothesized relationships are positive and significant. Transformational Leadership

positively influences Trust in Leader ($\beta = 0.720$, $p < 0.001$) and Employee Championing Behavior ($\beta = 0.451$, $p < 0.001$). Trust in Leader also has a significant positive effect on Employee Championing Behavior ($\beta = 0.382$, $p < 0.001$). These findings support all proposed hypotheses and indicate that transformational leaders foster employee championing behavior both directly and indirectly through employees' trust in their leaders.

The model also demonstrates moderate explanatory power, with adjusted R² values of 0.515 for Trust in Leader and 0.591 for Employee Championing Behavior. Furthermore, the Q² values of 0.337 and 0.416, respectively, are greater than zero, confirming that the model has adequate predictive relevance. Overall, these results indicate that the proposed structural model is statistically robust and provides a reliable basis for explaining the mediating role of Trust in Leader in the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior.

Table 3. Model Fit

Fit Index	Threshold / Criteria	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Assessment
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0.066	0.066	Good Fit
NFI	≥ 0.90 (ideal)	0.841	0.841	Acceptable Fit
d_ULS	–	0.669	0.669	–
d_G	–	0.360	0.360	–
Chi-Square	–	296.447	296.447	–

Table 4. Path Coefficient (Hypothesis Testing)

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	T Critical (5%)	Decision
H1	KT → PJK	0.451	5.746	0.000	1.960	Supported
H2a	KT → KPP	0.720	16.795	0.000	1.960	Supported
H2b	KPP → PJK	0.382	4.704	0.000	1.960	Supported

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Endogenous Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Interpretation
KPP (Trust in Leader)	0.518	0.515	Moderate
PJK (Employee Championing Behavior)	0.597	0.591	Moderate

Table 6. Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Endogenous Variable	SSO	SSE	Q ²	Interpretation
KPP (Trust in Leader)	888	589.095	0.337	Has predictive relevance
PJK (Employee Championing Behavior)	592	345.711	0.416	Has predictive relevance
KT (Transformational Leadership)	1,036	1,036	–	Exogenous variable

Hypotheses Testing

H1. The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Championing Behavior

Hypothesis 1 proposed that Transformational Leadership positively influences Employee Championing Behavior. The results indicate that the relationship is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.451$, $t = 5.746$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1 is supported.

The positive path coefficient indicates that higher levels of transformational leadership are associated with stronger employee championing behavior during organizational change. Leaders who inspire, motivate, and provide individualized support encourage employees to actively participate in organizational change, promote change initiatives, and assist colleagues in adapting to new work practices. This finding suggests that transformational leadership plays an important role in fostering employees' willingness to become change champions within the organization.

H2. The Mediating Role of Trust in Leader

Hypothesis 2 proposed that Trust in Leader mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee

Championing Behavior. The results show that Transformational Leadership has a significant positive effect on Trust in Leader ($\beta = 0.720$, $t = 16.795$, $p < 0.001$), while Trust in Leader also significantly affects Employee Championing Behavior ($\beta = 0.382$, $t = 4.704$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the direct effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Championing Behavior remains significant after the inclusion of Trust in Leader in the model ($\beta = 0.451$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that Trust in Leader partially mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior. Therefore, H2 is supported.

The findings imply that transformational leaders not only influence employees directly but also strengthen employee championing behavior by building trust. Employees who trust their leaders are more confident in organizational decisions, more willing to embrace change, and more likely to actively support and promote change initiatives. However, because the direct effect remains significant, transformational leadership continues to influence employee championing behavior beyond the mediating role of trust, indicating that other psychological or organizational mechanisms may also contribute to this relationship.

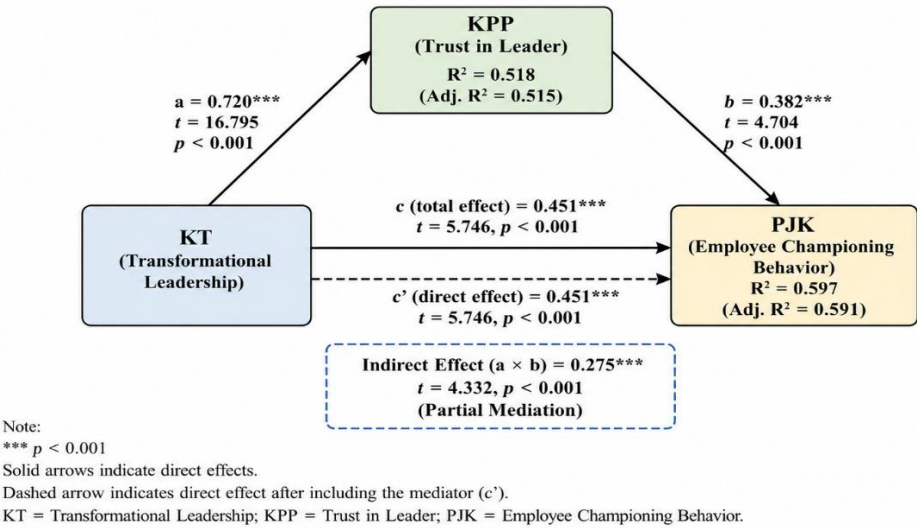


Figure 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Transformational Leadership positively influences Employee Championing Behavior, supporting H1 ([Mete et al., 2022](#)). This result suggests that leaders who articulate a compelling vision, provide individualized support, intellectually stimulate employees, and inspire commitment are more likely to encourage employees to actively support organizational change initiatives. Employees become more willing to advocate for change, assist colleagues in adapting to new work practices, and contribute proactively to organizational transformation.

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Islam et al. ([2020, 2020](#)), who reported that transformational leadership encourages employee championing behavior during organizational change. Likewise, [Faupel and Süß \(2019\)](#) found that transformational leaders reduce employee uncertainty and foster greater employee involvement in change implementation. The findings also support the argument of [Busari et al. \(2020\)](#) that transformational leaders motivate employees to transcend self-interest and pursue collective organizational goals.

The results further indicate that Trust in Leader partially mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior, thereby supporting H2 ([Peng et al., 2021](#)). Transformational leaders foster trust by demonstrating integrity, competence, fairness, and concern for employee well-being during periods of organizational uncertainty. This trust encourages employees to perceive organizational change more positively and increases their willingness to support change initiatives ([Asbari et al., 2020](#)).

The mediating effect found in this study is consistent with the psychological contract perspective, which suggests that employees' perceptions of reciprocal obligations and supportive leadership can foster trust and positive workplace behaviors. In the context of organizational change, transformational leadership can strengthen employees' trust in their leaders, which subsequently encourages employee championing behavior ([Islam et al., 2021](#)). When employees perceive their leaders as trustworthy and supportive, they are more likely to develop stronger trust and actively support organizational change initiatives.

Unlike [Islam et al. \(2020\)](#), who found full mediation of Trust in Leader, this study identified partial mediation. This finding indicates that Transformational Leadership continues to directly influence Employee Championing Behavior even after Trust in Leader is considered. Therefore, trust is an

important psychological mechanism, but it is not the sole pathway through which transformational leadership promotes championing behavior. Other mechanisms, such as work engagement, organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, or change readiness, may also contribute to explaining this relationship ([Ibrahim et al., 2024](#)).

This difference may be attributable to the unique organizational context of PT DSV Solutions Indonesia Semarang Branch, which has experienced significant organizational transformation following a corporate acquisition, digital transformation, and operational restructuring ([Mulyadi et al., 2025](#)). Employees in this context may respond directly to transformational leadership through increased motivation and inspiration while simultaneously developing trust in their leaders. Consequently, both direct and indirect effects remain significant.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined the effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Championing Behavior in the context of organizational change, with Trust in Leader as a mediating variable among employees of PT DSV Solutions Indonesia Semarang Branch. The findings support both proposed hypotheses. First, Transformational Leadership has a significant positive effect on Employee Championing Behavior, indicating that transformational leaders encourage employees to actively support and champion organizational change. Second, Trust in Leader partially mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Championing Behavior, suggesting that employees' trust in their leaders strengthens the positive influence of transformational leadership on employees' willingness to support organizational change. These findings highlight the importance of transformational leadership and trust in fostering positive employee behavior during organizational transformation.

The findings suggest that organizations should strengthen transformational leadership practices by developing leaders' capabilities in communicating a clear vision, providing individualized support, and encouraging employee participation during organizational change. In addition, organizations should foster employees' trust in leaders through transparent communication, consistent decision-making, and fair treatment, as these practices can enhance employees' willingness to actively support change initiatives.

Future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal research designs to better capture employee behavioral changes throughout the organizational change process. Researchers may

also expand the study to different organizations or industries to improve the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, future research could examine additional mediating or moderating variables, such as work engagement, psychological empowerment, organizational commitment, or psychological safety, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Employee Championing Behavior during organizational change.

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