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Empowering Leadership and Employee Task Performance within a State-owned Telecommunication Company: Mediating Effect of Work Engagement

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Abstract:

Mobile and fixed broadband business is growing rapidly in Indonesia telecommunication sector. A state-owned digital telecommunication company, Telkom, plays a major role in addressing the needs of Indonesian digital society by providing triple-play service comprises internet, home telephone and IPTV. In order to a better serve to the customers, Telkom depends upon its employees performance to fulfil their tasks. Therefore, the employees need leaders to empower them. Empowering leadership becomes an important style of leadership to activate employees engagement and influence employees task performance. The aim of this study is to check the effect of empowering leadership on employee task performance through the effect of employee work engagement. A randomly selected sample of 132 employees has been collected for the purpose of data analysis. After analysing questionnaires through structural equation modelling (SEM) approach, the result supported the hypotheses, direct and mediated effects of empowering leadership on employee task performance. Empowering leadership is a significant driver for work engagement, which in turn affects the task performance of employees. In order to reach a high level of employee task performance in the work place, the leaders have to support individual development and give coaching to employee as a critical practise of the empowering leader behaviours.

Keywords: Telecommunication Company, Empowering Leadership, Work Engagement, Task Performance.

Introduction

Nowadays, the telecommunication industry has become the epicentre of technological innovation, as many telecommunication companies have enhancing their business performance by providing broadband information service. As products and services become important elements to be brought in the market, it is important to telecommunication organizations to enhance its performance. PT Telkom, the only state own telecommunication company, has transformed its legacy business to digital due to the high demand of mobile and fixed broadband from Indonesian telecommunication society throughout the country.

Since 2015, Telkom has been providing a one stop service that enables people enjoying

home telephone, internet, and internet protocol television (IPTV) at home, namely IndiHome. From its initial sale in 2015, Telkom claimed to have 2000 subscribers each day in Jakarta and its surroundings. Given that there is an ever-increasing demand for the service, the demand for skilled employees has grown in order to perform the task of installing the network in the demand areas. However, the demand for these skilled individuals that can perform his task completely are not sufficient to market demands. Many consumers were not satisfied to the Telkom services because of the discrepancy of consumer expectations. As such, customers need the problems of the product to be quickly repaired, but it took days to fix them. Complaints referred to employees slowness in handling any disorders in IndiHome product and service.

As a digital product and service, IndiHome can only be applied to homes in which there are fibre optic networks installed in the areas. The technology is still new for the employees. Therefore, they cannot easily and quickly repair the technical defects. For example, if there is flood or electricity excavation interrupted the service in certain areas, the employees have to obtain instructions or approval from managers in order to repair the network in the sites. It is not a decision they can take on their own.

Former Telkom CEO, Arwin Rasyid (2015) stated, when the IndiHome product was introduced, Telkom was in a high growth industry because of the growing demands on fixed broadband. Since Telkom was no longer a dominant telecommunication company in Indonesia, the company has transformed its corporate management system from bureaucracy to be more empowered organization to serve the customers at its best. Decision making should be made quick by directors, and managers. If there was any problem beyond directors or managers authorities, that should be brought in a meeting. But the process of decision making has to be improved in order to be more effective and efficient.

Since then, a new leadership style emerged. A leadership style that can involve followers in relevant decision making, as part of the process of learning about the consequences

of their decisions and action. This is actually the way how a leader empowers employee and develops employee's competence through the consequence of learning. The feeling of empowerment can come from directors or managers (Burke, 1986). In traditional organization, the decision is made by Directors, generated to the manager, then to the employees. There is a top down philosophy of control (Manz and Sims, 1987). In modern organization, there is a corresponding roles of managers and employees to the responsibility and decisions making to accomplish the work (Lawler, 1988).

A big company like Telkom needs empowering leadership that can make leaders remove a condition where employees feel a sense of powerless, and implement a condition where employees can obtain self-efficacy through participative decision making (Arnold et.al, 2000). In this study, empowering leadership becomes a leadership trait to be analysed, especially in a state-owned digital company of Telkom. Empowering leadership occurs when a leader foster trust based relationship with subordinates and share responsibility with employees in order to encourage employees to be more receptive and adaptive to their work environment (Ahearne, Mathieu & Rapp, 2005.).

Some studies have shown the effect of empowering leadership on employee task performance, also known as in-role behaviour. Empowering leadership behaviours can *enable* in-role behaviours directly by strengthening instrumental skills, abilities, and associated efficacy beliefs. In-role behaviour concerns with the duties and responsibilities that are formally assigned to accomplish tasks of employee work role (Raub and Robert, 2010).

The impact of empowering leadership style on task performance can be mediated by employee work engagement as empowering leadership can foster self-efficacy that show how the employee engaged. Work engagement acts as an important mediator that contributes to a link between employees and their outcomes (Kim, Han, and Park, 2019). Prior studies have tested work engagement as mediator that links leadership styles with employee's in role

performance, or the so-called task performance.

The essential objective of this study is to check the relationship between empowering leadership, and work engagement to employee task performance in Telkom. The study begins by a literature review of empowering leadership, work engagement, and task performance, and will go on to the development of hypotheses. Then, author also gives research methodology. The results of the analyses will be discussed at the last section.

Literature Review

Empowering leadership and work engagement

Empowering leadership has emerged as a particular form of leadership, distinct from transformational and transactional leadership (Amundsen, S., & Martinsen, Ø. L, 2014). Argyris (2004) cited a CEO's view that "no vision and strategy can be achieved without enabled and empowered employees". He stated that a top-level executives need to accept responsibility to develop empowered employees, and the management should be changed. To empower employee means to enhance their motivation, allow them to be more adaptive and receptive to their environment, and minimize bureaucratic hurdles that slow responsiveness (Forrester, 2000).

In management, empowerment typically has a more restricted meaning. It is used to denote the enhancement of employees' autonomy in their work, or increased involvement and influence in decision-making more generally within the wider agenda and interests of the organization. (Wall, Wood, and Leach, 2005). There are four main perspectives on empowerment which each of perspectives has its own distinctive literature. This study takes one of the perspectives of empowerment that is called as *role empowerment*. Role empowerment focuses on the delegation of added responsibility to individuals or groups for the execution and management of their own primary tasks (p. 2).

The concept of empowerment in this study focuses on the behaviours of the leader as a

model in managerial systems in which empowering leadership plays important roles. Menon (2001) stated that empowerment involves 'moving decision-making authority down the (traditional) organizational hierarchy'. Empowerment is an enabling process rather than a delegating process (Hakimi, Knippenberg and Giessner, 2010). The possible of empowering process take place when leaders enable to stimulate employees to accomplish tasks. For managers, the stimulation comes from the leader actions. On the contrary, leaders need managers to manage the process of empowered employees through leader empowering behaviours (Burke, 1986).

Ahearne et al. (2005) found a positive relationship between empowering leadership and employee self-efficacy. Empowering leadership provides employees with important feedback that increases their sense of self-efficacy in performing their work (Raub and Robert, 2010). Self-efficacy is conceptually relevant to work engagement. Erkutlu and Chafra (2015) find evidence that empowering leadership behaviour enhance followers' self-efficacy, and identification with the leader. In turn, high self-efficacy and identification with leader improve follower work engagement. The concept of work engagement refers to "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, et al., 2002a).

Through the five dimensions of empowering leadership namely leading by example, participatory decision-making, coaching, information sharing and caring, the work engagement can be stimulated to the employees through intrinsic and extrinsic motivational processes (Tuckey et al., 2012). Intrinsic motivation occurs when employees meet their basic needs for self-determination or control (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation occurs when employee feel a high sense of mastery and self-determination influence their motivation to achieve work-related goals (Conger and Kanungo, 1988).

Work engagement and Task performance

In the era where technology is pivotal for every aspect of business, organizations tend to make employees work hard to reach organizational goals. Some organizations are highly desirable to have engaged employees. Engagement has been shown by organizations to coincide with high levels of creativity, task performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, and client satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2014). Therefore, more and more organizations nowadays are willing to conduct studies on work engagement.

Work engagement captures how employees experience their work: as stimulating and energetic and something to which they really want to devote time and effort. Work engagement is signed by *vigor* as a high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; *dedication* is a strong sense of enthusiasm, pride, and challenge; *absorption*, is fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work (Schaufeli, et. al 2002b). High levels of work engagement have positive out-comes for individuals, such as better psychological health (Xanthopoulou, et al., 2009).

Mounting evidence also links engagement to better work performance of the employee (Bakker, A.B & Bal, P.M., 2010). Christian and Slaughter (2011) identified several measures of work engagement that refer to individuals' experiences during the performance of their work tasks. Employee whose tasks are perceived as significant view the work as purposeful and valuable, and the employee may be willing to exert high levels of energy while working. Because of their strong dedication to their work activities, engaged workers show better in-role (task) performance (Shantz, et al., 2013). In-role (task) performance and extra-role (contextual) performance refer to different aspects of job performance. Borman and Motowidlo, as cited in Jex & Britt, (2008) refer in-role (task) performance to performance on the technical aspects of an employee's job. Based on the previous studies which have found a positive relationship between engagement and task performance.

Empowering leadership and Task Performance

Task performance refers to behaviours that are role prescribed, distinguish one job from another, and contribute to the technical core of the organisation. Borman and Motowidlo described task performance as one of a two-factors of the multi-dimensional nature of job performance (Edwards et al, 2008). Task performance is considered as a particular aspect of an employee's in-role performance within organizations. When employees want to achieve good work performance, they must develop a precise understanding of their role and task requirements (Whitaker, et al., 2007).

Recent study has further suggested that empowering leadership is positively related to task performance i.e. a particular aspect of an employee's in-role performance (Li et al., 2015; Hao et al., 2017). The role of leader behaviours in the empowerment process has been a central component in conceptual descriptions of empowerment (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Kirkman and Rosen, 1999).

Leaders can empower their followers as long as they embrace the empowerment behaviours as their business strategy. Therefore, leaders must be an example of empowerment if they want to successfully empower their employees (Hughes, Ginnet, and Curphy, 2009). Arnold et al., (2000) developed empowering leadership dimensions as behaviours that facilitate employee performance in empowered work environment. One of behaviours of empowering leadership is sharing information to employee. Informing behaviours can provide specific task-relevant knowledge and information (Raub & Robert, 2010).

Empowering leadership can enable in-role behaviour directly by strengthening skills, abilities, and associated efficacy beliefs. For example, leading by example provides an appropriate behavioural model that subordinates can emulate. Coaching behaviours provide feedback and reinforcement when tasks are done correctly. In addition to emphasizing the need to share information to employees and develop employees' decision-making power, leaders

also well consider the importance of training and rewards (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997).

Other researchers suggest that leaders behaviour of giving employees decision-making responsibilities or providing them with opportunities to become involved in decision making. This empowerment is manifested through 'in role' performance and assessed whether employees conscientiously perform their job tasks (Boudrias, et al.). All these practices are part of the enabling process of empowerment from the empowering leadership dimensions to employee task performance. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that empowering leadership influences employee task performance.
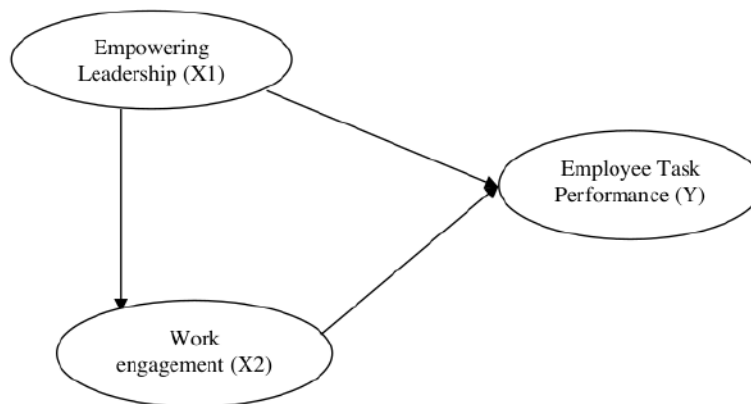
Figure 1. The conceptual model of the research

H$_1$: *Empowering leadership positively affects work engagement.*
H$_2$: *Work engagement positively affects employee task performance*
H$_3$: *Empowering leadership positively affects employee task performance*
H$_4$: *Work engagement mediates the influence of empowering leadership to employee task performance*

Materials and Methods

This study highlights the impact of leadership styles toward employees' performance, in particular, the task performance in a state-owned telecommunication company. Elements of this study are employees and managers. The employees are specifically technicians who mainly work remotely from the office. The data was collected from a total sample of 132 respondents.

Data analysis for variables namely Empowering Leadership (X₁), Work engagement (X₂) , and Employees task performance (Y) is conducted by Structural Equation Model (SEM) using a Linear Structural Model (LISREL) version 8.70 of Joreskog and Sorbom (1993).

The general characteristic of the respondents were overviewed through several aspects, such as: gender, education, age and working period. It is presented in the form of frequency and percentage as shown in Table 1. The majority of the respondents were men (100%) between the ages of under to 30 years old (72.7%), between 31 and 40 years old (15.9%), and above 40 years old (11.4%). The sample is roughly in line with the distribution of the actual population in which the respondents are majority high school graduates (93.2%) compare to bachelor (6.8%), and the predominant period of employment is 1 to 5 years (89.4%).

Table 1. Characteristic of the respondents (n = 132)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Gender	Female	-	-	-
	Male	132	100	100
Age (years)	< 30	96	72.7	72.7
	31 − 40	21	15.9	88.6
	> 40	15	11.4	100
Educational level	High School (SMA)	123	93.2	93.2
	Diploma/Bachelor's Degree	9	6.8	100
	Master's Degree	-	-	-
Length of work (years)	1 − 5	118	89.4	89.4
	6 − 10	12	9.1	98.5
	> 10	2	1.5	100

Measuring Instruments

The **Empowering leadership** was measured by 10 items from Empowering Leadership Questionnaires (ELQ), developed by Arnold et al. Sample items include, ''Sets a good example by the way he/she behaves'' and ''Encourages work group members to express ideas/suggestions''. The average score of responses from respondents was used to compute this measure. Each Items of the questionnaires are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 = 'never' to 5 = 'always'. The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale was 0.903.

Task performance was measured using a-12 generic questionnaires of task performance, developed by the author referring to the dimension created by Campbell (1999) and indicators developed by Koopmans (2014). Each items of questionnaires is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'never' to 5= 'always'. The Cronbach Alpha for this scale, in this study was 0.909.

Work engagement was measured by the 9-item scale of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) from Schaufeli and Bakker 2004. Examples of items include the following: for vigor, "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work"; for dedication, '"My job inspires me"; for absorption 'Time flies when I'm working'. Responses were made on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The Cronbach's a for this scale was 0.946.

Test Research Instruments

Validity Test According to Bambang S. Soedibjo, (2016), a question of questionnaire is said to be valid and can be measured if the value of the validity coefficient ≥ 0.30. The results of validity test shows that all indicators have correlation value more than 0.30. It shows that the questions are significant and valid and deserves to be treated as research data.

Reliability test Reliability test is conducted by calculating the Cronbach Alpha of each question in a variable. According to Ghozali (2013), a construct or variable is said to be reliable if it provides a reliability coefficient > (above) 0.60. Test results of this study indicate that all the variables used to reflect the constructs shows the value of cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.60, this means that the measured variables are reliable.
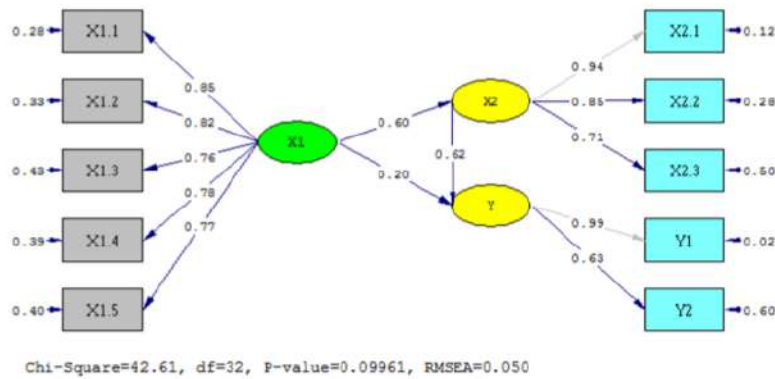
Result

The measurement model is used to examine the discriminant validity of the indicators. The indicator is considered valid if it has a value of loading factor above 0.5

Table 2. Measurement Model

Variable	Indicators		Loading factor	t-value	Remark
Empowering Leadership (X1)	X1.1	Lead by example	0.86	11.71	Valid
	X1.2	Coaching	0.82	11.01	Valid
	X1.3	Informing	0.76	9.88	Valid
	X1.4	Showing concern	0.78	10.27	Valid
	X1.5	Partisipative decision making	0.77	10.16	Valid
Work Engagement (X2)	X2.1	Vigor	0.94	-	Valid
	X2.2	Dedication	0.85	13.33	Valid
	X2.3	Absorption	0.71	9.87	Valid
Employee Task Performance (Y)	Y1	Job-specific task proficiency	0.99	-	Valid
	Y2	non-job specific task proficiency	0.63	6.83	Valid

The table above shows which indicator is valid and dominantly described each variable of the research. From the table, it can be seen that dimension of lead by example in empowering leadership (X1) is the most dominant (0.86). And for the variable of work engagement (X2), the dimension of vigor (0.94) is the most dominant dimension. Then, the most dominant dimension of employee task performance (Y) is job specific task proficiency (0.99).

Chi-Square=42.61, df=32, P-value=0.09961, RMSEA=0.050

Figur 1: Standardized

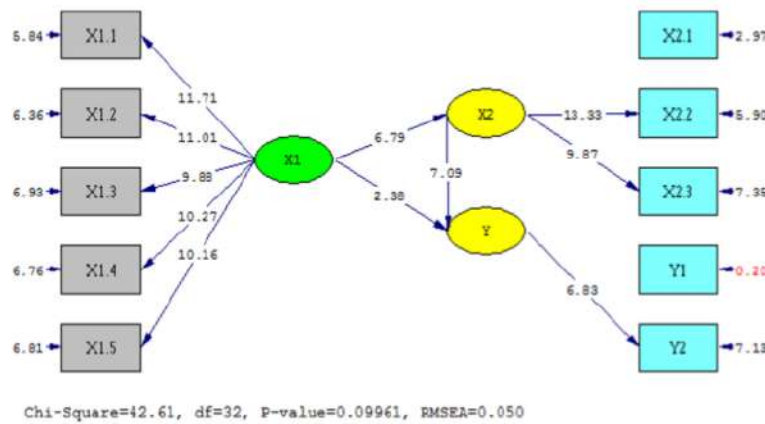Chi-Square=42.61, df=32, P-value=0.09961, RMSEA=0.050

Figure 2. t-value indicator

Hypotheses Testing:

Empowering leadership affects work engagement of the employee in PT Telkom. This is because the value of t-statistics 6.79 > 1.96. Therefore, H_1 is accepted. Test results of this hypothesis support the various concepts and the empirical findings that have been there before. The findings shows that empowering leadership has a positive effect on work engagement.

Work engagement affects to the Employee task performance in PT Telkom. This is because the value of t-statistics 7.09 > 1.96. Therefore, H_2 is accepted. Research showed that Work engagement have positive influence and significant to Employee task performance. It reveals the results of this study have the similarity to the results of previous research on the effect of work engagement on task performance.

Empowering leadership affects employee' task performance of PT Telkom. This is because the value of t-statistics 2.38 > 1.96. Therefore, H_3 is accepted. It reveals the results of this study have the similarity to the results of previous studies that employee engagement has a significantly influence task performance. Work engagement mediates the influence of Empowering leadership towards employee's task performance, this can be seen through the calculation of Sobel test, with the t value is 4.89 > 1.9. Sobel Test: z-value $= a*b/SQRT(b^2 * s_a^2 + a^2 * s_b^2)$. Therefore, H_4 is accepted.

Analysis Goodness Of Fit (GOF)

The author uses a statistical model of Goodness of Fit (GOF) generated from LISREL in order to describe how well and relevance the overall model fits into a set of observation. GOF indices summarize the discrepancy between the observed values and the values expected under a statistical model. It is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Goodness of Fit (GOF)

Index Fit	Value	Value Standard	Remark
Chi-squarem (X^2)	42.61	the less the better	-
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.05	<0.08	Fit
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.97	>0.90	Fit
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.99	>0.90	Fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.99	>0.90	Fit
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.99	>0.90	Fit
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.96	>0.90	Fit
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.94	>0.90	Fit

These results indicate that the variables are declared valid and reliable. The conclusion is that the overall model is in good match.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the results of research , the author concludes that the study has confirmed that empowering leadership affects employee task performance. The five actions, signed by Arnold as the five dimensions of empowering leadership, enable and motivate employee to achieve task performance through the sense of empowerment. Telkom has transformed into an empowered organization, therefore a key initiative of this transformation is the empowerment of employees. This can stimulate the raise of employees' self-efficacy in which employees' task performance can also be obtained through work engagement that mediates the relationship between the influence of empowering leadership to employee task performance. This study focused the dimensions of Empowering leadership proposed by Arnold and others. Exercising human resource practices under different leadership styles in a

different organizations create different outcomes.

To what extent is the employee obtain skills on decision making and sharing authority, depend on the degree of latitude and autonomy the leaders give to employee. Therefore, author suggest that in order to reach a high level of employee task performance in the workplace, the leaders have to support individual development and give coaching to employee as a critical practise of the empowering leader behaviours. A continuous coaching will improve the employee skills and prepare them to meet the challenge of empowerment.

Acknowledgement

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