The Effect of Transformational Leadership and Adhocracy Organizational Culture on Organizational Commitment with Work Engagement as A Mediating Variable in Digital Start-Up Employees

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Abstract: Leadership and culture plays an important role in attracting and retaining employees, especially the dominant organizational culture found in startups is adhocracy culture. The purpose of the study is to explain the effect of transformational leadership and adhocracy culture in digital startup companies on organizational commitment and examine the mediating effect of job attachment in this relationship. This study uses a quantitative approach to examine the influence of transformational leadership and adhocracy culture on organizational commitment with work engagement as a mediating variable. Data were collected from 256 digital startup employees in Indonesia through a closed questionnaire using a 1–6 Likert scale. The research instruments included GTL, OCAI and scales. Validity was tested using KMO, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with LISREL 8.8 software. The results showed that job attachment affects organizational commitment as well as being a mediating variable that can affect the relationship between transformational leadership and adhocracy culture on organizational commitment of digital startup employees. These findings can be used to improve organizational commitment by exploring more deeply the use of transformational leadership and adhocracy culture that lead to work engagement and improve employee engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

The ever-evolving information technology has driven the economy to become digital-based in the industrial era 4.0. This development has triggered the emergence of many startup companies in Indonesia, which focus on utilizing technology to provide innovative solutions to various problems. Despite the increasing number of startups in Indonesia and global achievements Startup Ranking (2022), such as being one of the countries with the highest number of startups, the industry is faced with challenges such as high employee turnover rates.

Startups often fail due to difficulties in adapting their products to the market or because they plan too quickly. High employee turnover, especially among millennials who dominate the industry, suggests that career stability and a clear organizational culture are important factors in attracting and retaining talent (Griva et al., 2023).

Organizational cultures in startups tend to incorporate elements from adhocracy cultures, which support the innovation and flexibility needed to survive in a dynamic business environment (Goncalves et al., 2019; Griva et al., 2023). In addition, leaders in startup companies play an important role in developing digital culture and retaining employees through transformational leadership (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2024). Work engagement and organizational commitment are important constructs in organizational research. Work engagement can increase employee loyalty and performance in organizations (Yeshitila & Beyene, 2019). Further research is needed to understand the influence of transformational leadership and adhocracy culture on employee engagement and organizational commitment in startup companies in Indonesia. Digital-based startups are companies that utilize information and communication technology facilities to provide alternative solutions to Indonesian problems. (Boughaleb et al., 2025). The emergence of digital startups is generally motivated by the spirit to utilize modern technology to solve problems in the environment. Startup founders see opportunities to solve problems using technology that has the potential to generate profits from the products and services they offer. Therefore, sensitivity and adaptability to reading opportunities are the most important capital to have.

Transformational leadership can be defined as the influence of leaders on their followers where followers have trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for their leaders (Ugwu et al., 2016). Transformational leadership is a theory that describes the ability of a leader to encourage, inspire and motivate followers(Flynn, 2019). Transformational leadership is usually considered part of charismatic behavior (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leaders with transformational leadership type tend to do things together with their co-workers or colleagues rather than making simple agreements. This type of leader can be described by behaviors with idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulus; and consideration of other individuals. Khan et al. (2022) have described the components of transformational leadership as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

Organizational culture is a widely shared set of fundamental beliefs that organizations have developed while dealing with problems with external adaptation and internal integration. Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas (2021) developed a concept called CVT or Competing Values Framework, which is the value of organizational culture and is measured by the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) method.

Interestingly in digital startups, organizational culture is considered an important indicator in the context of new ventures (Proksch, 2024). Yang et al. (2022) Competing Values Framework (CVF) identifies four types of corporate cultures that can coexist to some degree in firms with a persistent competitive streak: clan culture, adhocracy culture, hierarchy culture, and market culture. The adhocracy culture itself is a strong culture in organizations that focuses more on "external positioning with a high degree of flexibility and individuality."

Startup companies have been found to exhibit an agile culture, one of which integrates Adhocracy culture, which allows them to experience sustainable innovation growth (Goncalves et al., 2019). Then in research conducted by Griva et al., 2023) early-stage digital startups must adopt an agile culture, one of which is the culture of adhocracy. Companies should instill a high level of innovation to learn, utilize their digital capabilities purposefully, build and improve their ability to absorb, adapt and sell, empathize with their foster employee intrapreneurship activities, and recruit employees as a whole according to their current culture.

Work engagement is a positively disposed mental state that is mutually motivating in relation to work. It is characterized by passion, dedication, and absorption (Imperatori, 2017). Employees who have an attachment to work can make the work they do feel positive and convert that pleasure into effective action (Aboramadan, 2023). In its application, there are three aspects in measuring work engagement (Kulikowski, 2017)namely the Vigor aspect

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is characterized by persistence in making efforts to do the task and persistent in facing the difficulties that exist in their work, the Dedication aspect is characterized by an employee's feeling of value towards his work, and the Absorption aspect is characterized by full focus at work and high interest in work.

According to Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas (2021) Organizational commitment has become one of the most frequently examined constructs in organizational research because of the impact it shows on outcomes that are important to individuals and organizations. Furthermore, Allen (2016) argue that commitment is a multidimensional construct that indicates the relative strength of an individual's identification with and loyalty to an organization.

Organizational commitment is the most widely used concept in current research, especially in non-Western countries (Allen, 2016). Wołowska (2014)argue that organizational commitment is characterized by 3 (three) psychological factors, namely: (1) Firstly, identification, which is the belief and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) Second, there is involvement and willingness to give considerable effort to achieve the organization's goals; and; (3) The third is loyalty to the organization and a strong desire to stay in the organization.

METHODS

This research is a quantitative study that examines 4 variables with the following research model.
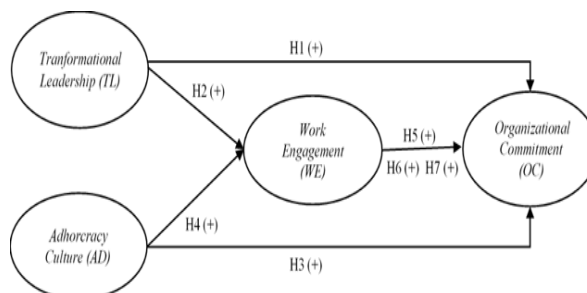

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

In this study there are several instruments used, the following are research instruments that will be the basis for obtaining information from research, including the measurement of transformational leadership variables measured by 7 questions taken from the Global Transformational Leadership (GTL) questionnaire compiled by Turan et al. (2024). The instrument used in measuring the adhocracy culture variable is the concept of (Misigo et al., 2019). This concept is able to provide an overview of the type of culture of an organization, one of which is adhocracy culture. Furthermore, (Yang et al., 2022) developed this instrument into 5 statements. Furthermore, researchers used an instrument adapted by (Misigo et al., 2019) consisting of 9 statements to measure work engagement variables. Finally, the researcher adopted a measuring instrument developed by (Knight et al., 2017). This questionnaire measures three dimensions of organizational commitment namely affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC), and normative commitment (NC). The instrument was rated using a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree. (Bolarinwa, 2020) explains the number of research samples where the sample size can use a ratio of five times the number of indicators used in the study. Based on this explanation, the sample size can be calculated based on the number of indicators multiplied by five to ten. This study has 45 statement indicators, so following the points above, the sample size can range fSrom 225 - 450 respondents. Thus, the researcher decided to take a

sample of 225 respondents, which is five times the number of research indicators. The sample used is 256 digital startup employees in Indonesia. In addition, to control respondents who are digital startup employees, the researcher provides a screening statement including the company the respondent works for. In ensuring that the company used is a digital-based startup company, the researcher also sought further information on the respondent's company profile on the company's official website.

Validity was tested on all variables that fit the research framework mentioned earlier. These variables include transformational leadership, adhocratic culture, work engagement, and employee commitment. In testing the validity of the questionnaire, the study applied a factor validity process that aims to measure each item arranged with more than one factor. Factor validity is measured by correlating the factor score (total items in one factor) with the total factor score (total of all factors). Factor analysis in this test is based on the use of the Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling (KMO), which is an index of comparison between the correlation coefficient and the partial correlation coefficient. If the sum of the squares of the partial correlation coefficients between all pairs of variables is relatively small compared to the sum of the squares of the correlation coefficients, the KMO value will be close to 1. As a guide, the KMO value is considered adequate if it is more than 0.5. After conducting validity and reliability tests with the results of Lisrel 8.8 data processing, another check is carried out which aims to see whether the model used can show how well the theoretical structure used to represent reality as represented by the data answered by respondents (Hair et al., 2019). This check is carried out by looking at the output results in the form of goodness-of-fit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data quality test is useful to ensure the data for making a decision. This test consists of validity and reliability tests.

Factor analysis in this test is based on the use of the Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling (KMO) As a guide, the KMO value is considered adequate if it is more than 0.5. The indicators used in this study all have KMO results above 0.5 so that all items in this variable are declared valid and can be used in the main test process.

The level of reliability is measured using a value known as the reliability coefficient, which has a range of values between 0 and 1. Reliability testing uses the Cronbach's Alpha formula, where an alpha value <0.50 is interpreted as a low level of reliability, an alpha value between the range of 0.50 and 0.70 means moderate reliability, alpha above 0.70 is interpreted as sufficient reliability. Based on the results of reliability testing for the five variables tested in this study. The results of this test show Cronbach alpha variable transformational leadership (α 0.814), adhocracy culture (α 0.682), work engagement (α 0.836) and organizational commitment (α 0.952) so that all variables are reliable and can be trusted to reveal the information needed in this study.

Hypothesis Test

In this study, a one tailed test type or one- way test is used with the criteria requirement that the significance value of t-values is greater than 1.64 and or the p-values is smaller than 0.05. In the chart, the SLF value (t-value) can be seen. The causal relationship can be seen more clearly in the following figure:
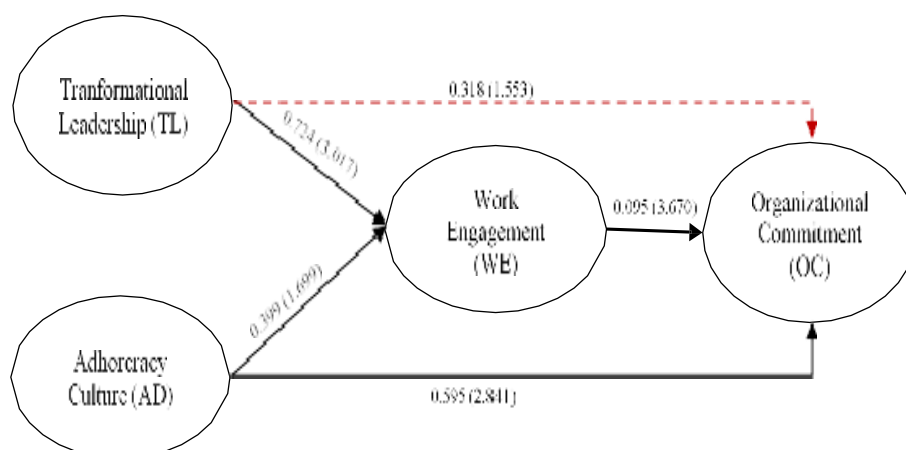
Figure 2. Path Diagram
Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Direct Effect Test

Hypothesis testing is intended to test whether there is an effect of exogenous variables directly on endogenous variables. Hypothesis testing can be seen through the t statistic value. The test criteria state that if the path coefficient is positive and the T statistic ≥ T-table (1.64), it is stated that there is a significant effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. The results of the analysis can be seen through the summary in table 1 below:

Table 1. Analysis Results on Each Direct Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	SE	T Statistic	Conclusion
Transformational leadership has a positive influence on organizational commitment	0.318	0,143	1,553	Not Significant
Transformational leadership has a positive influence on work engagement	0,724	0,233	3,017	Significant
Adhorcracy Culture has a positive influence on organizational commitment	0,595	0,145	2,841	Significant
Adhorcracy Culture has a positive influence on work engagement	0,399	0,227	1,699	Significant
Work engagement has a positive influence on organizational commitment	0,095	0,019	3,670	Significant

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

Test of Indirect Effect

Testing the indirect effect hypothesis is intended to test whether there is an indirect effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables through mediating variables. The test criteria state that if the T statistic value> t-table (1.96) then it is stated that there is a significant

effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables through mediating variables. The results of the analysis can be seen through the summary in table 2 below:

Table 2. Analysis Results on Each Indirect Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Indirect Coefficients	Total Effect	Conclusion
Adhocracy Culture has a positive influence on organizational commitment with mediation of work engagement.	.238	.833	Significant
Transformational leadership has a positive influence on organizational commitment with mediation of work engagement.	.069	.387	Significant

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

The following is an explanation of the results of hypothesis testing from research that examines the relationship between transformational leadership, adhocracy culture on organizational commitment and work engagement as a mediating variable:

Hypothesis 1: transformational leadership has a positive influence on organizational commitment

From the results of the hypothesis testing conducted, the transformational leadership variable does not have a significant influence on the organizational commitment variable. This is evidenced by the relationship t-value of 1.553, which is lower than the criterion value for significant influence, which is greater than 1.64. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected and the type of transformational leadership has no influence on the level of organizational commitment in digital startup employees.

This finding is not in accordance with research conducted by Eliyana and Ma'arif (2019) which shows that transformational leadership has a significant direct effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Although the study explained that transformational leadership can increase the level of organizational commitment because these leaders are able to create an environment that motivates, inspires, and connects subordinates with organizational goals and values, this was not proven in the research conducted on digital startup employees. According to Burns in (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016) transformational leadership is a description of a leader who can create a vision and environmental conditions to motivate his followers to achieve beyond expectations. So that the role of this leadership is more focused on employee self-development than the encouragement of the bond that employees have with the company where they work.

Hypothesis 2: transformational leadership has a positive influence on work engagement

From the results of the hypothesis testing conducted, the transformational leadership variable has a significant influence on the work engagement variable. This is evidenced by the relationship t-value of 3.017, which is higher than the criterion value for a significant influence, which is greater than 1.64. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the higher the level of transformational leadership will increase the level of digital startup employee engagement at work.

This finding is in accordance with previous research conducted by Rahmadani, et.al (2020). According to research conducted by (Rahmadani & Schaufeli, 2022) it is known that leadership affects the work engagement of individuals working in companies in Indonesia,

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especially if they apply the concept of "diuwongke" leadership and transformational leadership itself. This leadership promotes a positive work environment by providing support and feedback, as well as empowering and inspiring with a clear vision. Then influencing individuals and increasing employee motivation and spurring work engagement. It was further explained that leaders who want to foster work engagement should focus more on employees who feel underappreciated.

Hypothesis 3: adhocracy culture has a positive influence on organizational commitment.

From the results of the hypothesis testing conducted, the adhocracy culture variable has a significant influence on the organizational commitment variable. This is evidenced by the relationship t-value of 2.841, which is higher than the criterion value for significant influence, which is greater than 1.64. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the higher the level of adhocracy culture owned by digital startup employees will increase their level of organizational commitment.

This finding is in accordance with research conducted by (Ng, 2023) which states that adhocratic culture is a significant positive predictor variable of commitment in the organization. Adhocratic culture is able to encourage agile behavior, have a work ethic, be creative and innovative, and respond quickly to change (Karneli, 2023) so that it is suitable for digital startups that have disruptive and scalable business models and mindsets that are usually designed to experience rapid growth (Lewrick, 2022). An adhocracy culture encourages employees to be actively involved in the decision-making process and innovation. This can create a strong sense of belonging and organizational commitment as employees feel they have a significant role in achieving organizational goals.

Hypothesis 4: adhocracy culture has a positive influence on work engagement

From the results of the hypothesis testing conducted, the adhocracy culture variable has a significant influence on the work engagement variable. This is evidenced by the relationship t-value of 1.699, which is higher than the criterion value for significant influence, which is greater than 1.64. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the higher the level of adhocracy culture owned by digital startup employees will increase their level of engagement at work.

The results of this study are in accordance with previous research conducted by (Afrifa Jr et al., 2022) who found a positive influence given by adhocracy culture on work engagement. Adhocracy culture centers on the development of creativity and innovation, autonomy, diversity, and the creation of challenging and stimulating work (Lewrick, 2022). This means giving employees the opportunity to be independent and innovative and involving them in various tasks to encourage their development. Research over the years has proven that assigning employees to carry out various tasks along with providing autonomy and resources has a positive impact on work engagement (Palumbo, 2021).

Hypothesis 5: work engagement has a positive influence on organizational commitment.

From the results of the hypothesis testing conducted, the work engagement variable has a significant influence on the organizational commitment variable. This is evidenced by the t-value of the relationship of 3.670, which is higher than the criterion value for significant influence, which is greater than 1.64. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted and work engagement has an influence on the level of organizational commitment in digital startup employees. This finding is in accordance with research conducted by (Tang et al., 2022) which states that of all the factors they examined, the relationship between organizational commitment and work engagement has the strongest relationship. This means that the more employees of an organization feel themselves involved in their work, the greater the level of organizational commitment they have. Engagement occurs when people are committed to their work and the organization and are motivated to achieve high levels of performance. According to by (Tang et al., 2022) work engagement has also

become an umbrella concept to cover various ways that employers can use to obtain additional effort or wisdom from employees in the form of their willingness to work and be loyal to the organization. In addition, job attachment is also able to encourage employees to remain loyal to the company and encourage better performance (Darmawan et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 6: adhocracy culture has a positive influence on organizational commitment with mediation of work engagement.

From the results of the hypothesis testing conducted, the adhocracy culture variable has a significant influence on the organizational commitment variable when mediated by work engagement. This is evidenced by the indirect effect value of 0.238, and has a relationship t-value of 1.867, higher than the criterion value for significant influence, which is greater than 1.64. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. The results of this study prove that the research conducted by (Afrifa Jr et al., 2022) which found a positive effect of bureaucratic culture on work engagement and the research of (Tang et al., 2022) which found a strong relationship between organizational commitment and work engagement is true. This means giving employees the opportunity to be independent and innovative and involving them in various tasks to encourage their development. Thus, a culture that continues to encourage and allow employees to carry out various tasks along with providing autonomy and resources has a positive impact on work engagement which can also affect their commitment to the organization. Based on the results of this study, the effect of adhocracy culture on work engagement is significant. Furthermore, the effect of work engagement on organizational commitment is significant, and the effect of adhocracy culture on organizational commitment is also significant. This shows that work engagement is stated as a partial mediation on the influence of adhocracy culture on organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 7: transformational leadership has a positive influence on organizational commitment with mediation of work engagement.

From the results of the hypothesis testing conducted, the transformational leadership variable has a significant influence on the organizational commitment variable when mediated by work engagement. This is evidenced by the indirect effect value of 0.069 with a relationship t-value of 1.966, higher than the criterion value for significant influence, which is greater than 1.64. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

The results of this study are in accordance with previous research conducted by (Rahmadani & Schaufeli, 2022) that transformational leadership is able to influence the work attachment of individuals working in companies in Indonesia. Basically, transformational leaders provide a pleasant work environment for their followers by communicating meaning and vision that guides and motivates their followers. In addition, transformational leaders also support and empower their followers and provide them with positive feedback and recognition thus initiating a motivational process that leads to work engagement. This employee work attachment is ultimately able to influence the level of employee organizational commitment. As in the research who found the strongest relationship between work attachment and organizational commitment and (Darmawan et al., 2020). who also stated that attachment can mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Not only does work engagement help reduce work stress levels, it also brings organizational and financial success through increased employee motivation and organizational commitment. Disengaged employees tend to distance themselves from their job role and cognitively withdraw from the current work situation. Therefore, work engagement is an important factor in organizations.

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Based on the results of this study, the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement is significant. Furthermore, the effect of work engagement on organizational commitment is significant, and the effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment is insignificant. This shows that work engagement is declared as full mediation on the effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to examine the level of organizational commitment of employees of digital-based startup companies in Indonesia. The phenomenon of transformational leadership and adhocracy culture in employees of digital-based startup companies and how much influence it has in shaping their commitment to the organization. The results of this study indicate that transformational leadership does not have a direct influence on organizational commitment, but can influence if mediated by work engagement. While adhocracy culture can directly influence organizational commitment, as well as mediated by work engagement. In conducting this research, there are several limitations that can affect the results concluded. The factors that influence the organizational commitment behavior of digital startup employees in this research only consist of three variables, namely transformational leadership type, adhocracy culture and job attachment while there are many other factors that influence organizational commitment. In addition, the questionnaire used was preformed to be positive, which may have influenced the responses given. The study found that adhocracy culture has a significant direct effect on both organizational commitment and work engagement. Transformational leadership does not directly influence organizational commitment but has a significant effect on work engagement. Work engagement significantly mediates the relationship between both transformational leadership and adhocracy culture on organizational commitment. Transformational leadership is more effective in fostering organizational commitment when it enhances employee work engagement. Meanwhile, adhocracy culture contributes to commitment both directly and indirectly through increased engagement. This highlights work engagement as a crucial mediating variable in connecting leadership style and organizational culture to employee commitment in digital startups. Digital startup management should promote transformational leadership practices and foster an adhocracy culture that emphasizes innovation, flexibility, and autonomy. These strategies help create a positive and engaging work environment, enhancing employee commitment and reducing turnover—critical for sustaining growth and competitiveness in a dynamic industry.

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