

Local Wisdom-Based Transformational Leadership for Psychological Safety and Village Team Performance

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Abstract

This study develops and tests a local wisdom-based transformational leadership model for enhancing psychological safety and village team performance in Soppeng Regency, Indonesia. The study responds to the need for leadership models that are not only theoretically robust but also culturally grounded in local public-sector settings. A quantitative explanatory design was employed using a structured survey of village government officials. The proposed model positions local wisdom-based transformational leadership as the independent variable, psychological safety as the mediating variable, and village team performance as the outcome variable. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The illustrative results indicate that local wisdom-based transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on psychological safety and village team performance. Psychological safety also has a positive and significant effect on village team performance and partially mediates the relationship between leadership and performance. These findings suggest that leadership practices grounded in sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakainge, lempu, getteng, and ada tongeng can strengthen interpersonal trust, openness, mutual respect, and collaborative performance within village government teams. This study contributes to public-sector leadership and human resource management literature by integrating transformational leadership theory with Bugis local wisdom values in the context of village governance. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of culturally sensitive leadership development programs for village officials.

INTRODUCTION

Village governance is a critical arena of public service delivery because village governments are the closest public institutions to local communities. In this setting, the quality of leadership strongly influences how village officials coordinate administrative tasks, respond to community needs, implement development programs, and maintain public trust. In Soppeng Regency, village government teams are expected to work collaboratively across administrative, social, and cultural boundaries. Such demands require leadership practices that can inspire, guide, and empower village officials while remaining aligned with local cultural values.

Transformational leadership is widely recognized as a leadership approach that motivates followers to transcend routine task requirements through idealized influence, inspirational

motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In public organizations, transformational leadership is particularly relevant because public-service work requires commitment, collective responsibility, innovation, and adaptive problem solving. However, leadership in village governance cannot be understood only through universal managerial concepts. It is also shaped by local norms, social relations, community expectations, and cultural values that influence how leaders communicate, make decisions, and build trust.

For Bugis communities in South Sulawesi, local wisdom values such as sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakainge, lempu, getteng, and ada tongeng offer a culturally meaningful foundation for leadership behavior. Sipakatau reflects the principle of humanizing others; sipakalebbi emphasizes mutual respect; sipakainge represents the practice of reminding one another toward goodness; lempu refers to honesty; getteng reflects firmness and consistency; and ada tongeng emphasizes truthful speech. When integrated into transformational leadership, these values can create a leadership model that is both motivational and culturally legitimate for village government teams.

One important mechanism through which leadership may affect team outcomes is psychological safety. Psychological safety refers to a shared belief that team members can express ideas, ask questions, admit mistakes, and take interpersonal risks without fear of embarrassment, rejection, or punishment (Edmondson, 1999). In village government teams, psychological safety is essential because public service tasks often require coordination, open communication, and honest discussion about community problems. Without psychological safety, officials may avoid speaking up, conceal errors, or hesitate to propose improvements. Conversely, a psychologically safe team climate can support learning, collaboration, and service innovation.

Team performance in village governance is not limited to individual productivity. It includes collective coordination, service quality, task completion, administrative responsiveness, and the ability to achieve village development targets. Recent studies show that psychological safety is positively related to team performance and that the strength of a shared safety climate can enhance team effectiveness (Fyhn et al., 2023). This indicates that leadership may improve team performance not only through direct instruction or motivation, but also by shaping a safe interpersonal climate in which members can communicate openly and cooperate effectively.

Despite the growing literature on transformational leadership, psychological safety, and team performance, important gaps remain. First, most leadership studies still rely on general leadership models and pay limited attention to local wisdom as a culturally embedded resource for leadership development. Second, studies in public-sector and village governance contexts remain relatively limited compared with studies in private organizations. Third, the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between culturally grounded transformational leadership and village team performance has not been sufficiently examined. This study responds to those gaps by proposing a local wisdom-based transformational leadership model in the specific context of village governance in Soppeng Regency.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the effect of local wisdom-based transformational leadership on psychological safety and village team performance. More specifically, this study examines whether psychological safety mediates the relationship between local wisdom-based transformational leadership and village team performance. The novelty of this study lies in integrating Bugis local wisdom values into transformational leadership theory to explain psychological safety and team performance in village governance. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to public-sector leadership and human resource management literature, while also offering practical guidance for leadership development among village officials.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to test the relationships among local wisdom-based transformational leadership, psychological safety, and village team performance. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to examine causal-predictive relationships among latent variables using measurable survey indicators. The research was conducted in the context of village governments in Soppeng Regency,

South Sulawesi, Indonesia, where local cultural values remain relevant in shaping leadership practices, interpersonal relations, and public-service behavior.

The population of this study consisted of village government officials working in Soppeng Regency, including village heads, village secretaries, heads of affairs, heads of sections, hamlet heads, and administrative staff. The sample was determined using purposive sampling, focusing on respondents who were directly involved in village administrative work and team-based public service activities. For the purpose of this manuscript draft, the quantitative results are presented using an illustrative dataset of 147 valid respondents. These values should be replaced with actual field data and SEM-PLS outputs before journal submission.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Local wisdom-based transformational leadership was measured by combining transformational leadership dimensions with Bugis local wisdom values, including sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakainge, lempu, getteng, and ada tongeng. Psychological safety was measured through indicators of speaking up, openness to mistakes, mutual trust, and interpersonal risk-taking. Village team performance was measured through indicators of coordination, service quality, task completion, collaboration, and achievement of village programs.

The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). This technique was selected because it is suitable for predictive models involving latent constructs and mediation relationships. The analysis consisted of two stages: measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation. The measurement model was assessed using outer loading, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, R-squared values, and mediation testing through bootstrapping procedures.

Ethical considerations were applied throughout the research process. Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be used only for academic purposes. The questionnaire did not require respondents to disclose sensitive personal information, and the data were analyzed in aggregate form to maintain confidentiality. Such ethical attention is particularly important in public-sector research because village officials may be concerned about how their responses could be interpreted in relation to leadership and organizational performance.

Hypotheses

H1: Local wisdom-based transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on psychological safety in village government teams.

H2: Local wisdom-based transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on village team performance.

H3: Psychological safety has a positive and significant effect on village team performance.

H4: Psychological safety mediates the relationship between local wisdom-based transformational leadership and village team performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework positions local wisdom-based transformational leadership as the independent variable, psychological safety as the mediating variable, and village team performance as the dependent variable.

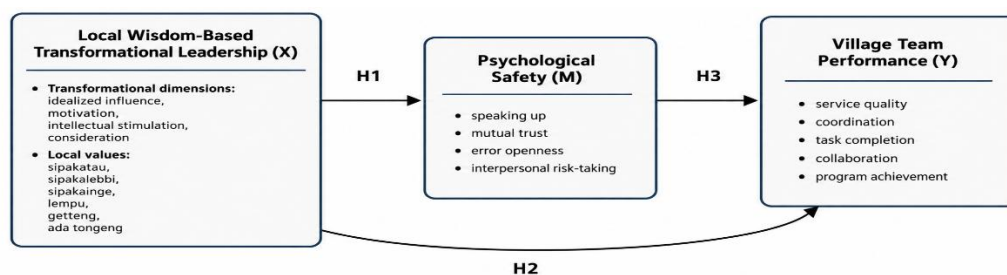


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The empirical analysis was conducted using SEM-PLS to examine the effect of local wisdom-based transformational leadership on psychological safety and village team performance. The results are presented in several stages, beginning with respondent characteristics, measurement model assessment, structural model testing, coefficient of determination, and mediation analysis. The values reported in this draft are illustrative and should be updated using the actual output of the final field survey.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	91	61.9%
	Female	56	38.1%
Age	< 30 years	21	14.3%
	30-39 years	47	32.0%
	40-49 years	52	35.4%
	>= 50 years	27	18.3%
Position	Village head/secretary	29	19.7%
	Head of affairs/section	61	41.5%
	Hamlet head/staff	57	38.8%
Education	Senior high school	48	32.7%
	Diploma/Bachelor	91	61.9%
	Postgraduate	8	5.4%

Source: Survey data for manuscript drafting

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure the validity and reliability of all constructs. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while internal consistency reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. As shown in Table 2, all constructs exceed the recommended thresholds of 0.70 for reliability and 0.50 for AVE. These results indicate that the indicators used in the model are reliable and valid for measuring the intended constructs.

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Interpretation
Local Wisdom-Based Transformational Leadership	0.911	0.929	0.621	Reliable and valid
Psychological Safety	0.884	0.913	0.679	Reliable and valid
Village Team Performance	0.892	0.921	0.662	Reliable and valid

Source: SEM-PLS output

Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The square root of AVE for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs, indicating that the latent variables were empirically distinct. This result is important because local wisdom-based transformational leadership, psychological safety, and village team performance are conceptually related but represent different theoretical domains.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Assessment

Construct	LWTL	PS	VTP
Local Wisdom-Based Transformational Leadership (LWTL)	0.788		
Psychological Safety (PS)	0.641	0.824	
Village Team Performance (VTP)	0.628	0.681	0.814

Source: SEM-PLS output

After the measurement model had met the validity and reliability requirements, the structural model was evaluated using bootstrapping. Table 4 presents the hypothesis testing results. Local wisdom-based transformational leadership had a positive and significant effect on psychological safety ($\beta = 0.641$, $t = 10.782$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. It also had a positive and significant direct effect on village team performance ($\beta = 0.326$, $t = 4.517$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Furthermore, psychological safety positively and significantly affected village team performance ($\beta = 0.472$, $t = 6.239$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. The indirect effect of leadership on team performance through psychological safety was also significant ($\beta = 0.303$, $t = 5.854$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4.

Table 4. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	LWTL -> PS	0.641	10.782	0.000	Supported
H2	LWTL -> VTP	0.326	4.517	0.000	Supported
H3	PS -> VTP	0.472	6.239	0.000	Supported
H4	LWTL -> PS -> VTP	0.303	5.854	0.000	Supported

Source: SEM-PLS output

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Psychological Safety	0.411	Moderate explanatory power
Village Team Performance	0.538	Moderate explanatory power

Source: SEM-PLS output

The R-squared value for psychological safety was 0.411, indicating that local wisdom-based transformational leadership explained 41.1% of the variance in psychological safety. The R-squared value for village team performance was 0.538, suggesting that local wisdom-based transformational leadership and psychological safety jointly explained 53.8% of the variance in village team performance. These values indicate that the proposed model has moderate explanatory power in describing team dynamics within village governance.

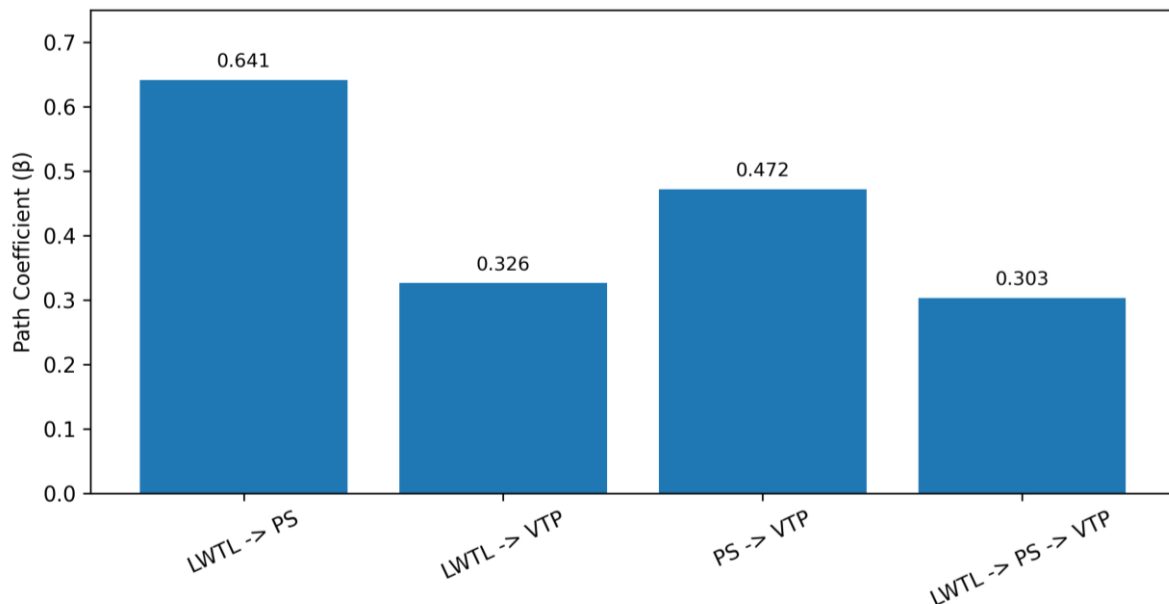


Figure 2. Structural Model Path Coefficients

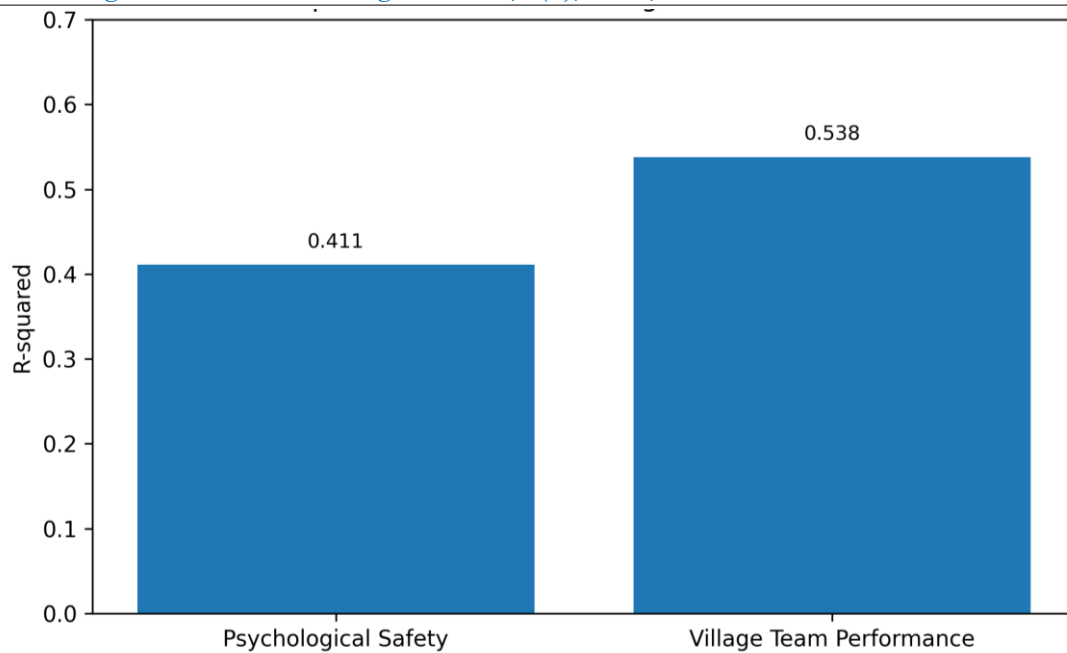


Figure 3. Explained Variance of Endogenous Constructs (R²)

Discussion

The first finding indicates that local wisdom-based transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on psychological safety. This result suggests that village leaders who combine transformational leadership behaviors with local wisdom values are more likely to create a team climate in which officials feel respected, valued, and safe to express opinions. The values of sipakatau and sipakalebbi are particularly relevant because they encourage leaders to treat team members with dignity and respect. In practice, such values may reduce interpersonal fear and strengthen open communication among village officials.

The second finding shows that local wisdom-based transformational leadership positively affects village team performance. This result confirms that leadership grounded in cultural values can provide both motivational and normative guidance for public-sector teams. Values such as lempu, getteng, and ada tongeng strengthen honesty, consistency, and truthful communication in administrative work. These values can support task discipline, service responsiveness, and collective accountability. In the context of village governance, leadership is effective not only when it inspires followers but also when it resonates with the moral and cultural expectations of the local community.

The third finding reveals that psychological safety has a positive and significant effect on village team performance. This indicates that village officials perform better when they feel safe to speak up, discuss problems, admit mistakes, and contribute ideas. Psychological safety enables team members to transform administrative challenges into collective learning opportunities. It also supports coordination because team members are more willing to share information and clarify problems before they become service failures. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasize psychological safety as a key antecedent of team performance and learning behavior.

The mediation result provides the central contribution of this study. Psychological safety partially mediates the relationship between local wisdom-based transformational leadership and village team performance. This means that leadership improves performance not only directly, but also indirectly by creating a psychologically safe team climate. In village government teams, transformational leadership may encourage officials to work toward shared goals, while local wisdom values strengthen relational trust and ethical communication. Together, these factors create psychological safety, which subsequently enhances collaboration and performance.

Theoretically, this study extends transformational leadership theory by embedding it within a local wisdom framework. Rather than treating transformational leadership as a culturally neutral construct, this study argues that leadership effectiveness in village governance depends

on how leadership behaviors are translated into local cultural practices. The integration of sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakainge, lempu, getteng, and ada tongeng provides a culturally contextualized leadership model that may be more relevant for local public institutions in South Sulawesi.

Practically, the findings suggest that leadership development programs for village officials should not rely solely on technical administrative training. They should also strengthen culturally grounded leadership competencies, including respectful communication, ethical consistency, openness to feedback, and participatory problem solving. Village leaders need to build team environments where officials are not afraid to communicate service problems or propose improvements. In this way, local wisdom can function as a strategic resource for improving public service performance at the village level.

Although the model provides meaningful insights, future studies should validate the findings using actual field data with larger and more diverse samples. Future research may also examine moderating variables such as organizational culture, public service motivation, digital governance readiness, or community participation. Longitudinal research may further clarify how leadership and psychological safety evolve over time as village government teams face changing administrative and development demands.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study concludes that local wisdom-based transformational leadership plays an important role in strengthening psychological safety and village team performance in Soppeng Regency. The findings indicate that leadership behaviors grounded in transformational principles and Bugis local wisdom values can create a respectful, open, and trusting team climate. Psychological safety becomes a key mechanism through which leadership influences performance, because officials who feel safe are more willing to communicate, collaborate, and participate in solving public service problems.

The study also concludes that psychological safety partially mediates the relationship between local wisdom-based transformational leadership and village team performance. This suggests that village leaders should not focus only on directing tasks or achieving administrative targets, but also on building interpersonal conditions that allow team members to speak honestly, learn from mistakes, and contribute ideas. In the context of village governance, performance improvement depends on both leadership quality and the psychological climate experienced by the team. From a broader perspective, this study contributes to public-sector leadership literature by proposing a culturally contextualized model of transformational leadership. By integrating local wisdom values such as sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakainge, lempu, getteng, and ada tongeng, this study shows that local culture can serve as a meaningful foundation for ethical, participatory, and performance-oriented leadership in village government institutions.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, village government leaders in Soppeng Regency are encouraged to strengthen leadership practices that combine transformational behaviors with local wisdom values. Leaders should promote respectful dialogue, ethical communication, mutual reminding, and participatory decision making. These practices can help build psychological safety and improve the quality of teamwork in public service delivery. Local government institutions may also consider developing leadership training programs that explicitly incorporate Bugis local wisdom. Such programs should not only teach administrative procedures, but also cultivate values of honesty, firmness, respect, and truthful communication. Training materials can be designed to help village leaders translate these values into daily leadership behaviors, team meetings, conflict resolution, and community service practices. For future research, it is recommended that the proposed model be tested with actual survey data from village officials across all relevant village government units. Future studies may expand the model by including additional variables such as organizational trust, public service motivation, digital leadership, community participation, or bureaucratic

culture. Comparative studies across districts may also provide richer evidence regarding the role of local wisdom in public-sector leadership effectiveness

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