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Analysis of the influence of transformational leadership, cohesion and work motivation in improving employee performance

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Abstract: Performance challenges in the public sector often translate into job demands that require a high degree of individual innovation. Similarly, the Islamic banking industry is also facing increasing pressures to continuously enhance employee performance. This study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership, work motivation, and group cohesion on employee performance, with the goal of developing a new conceptual model that can serve as a reference for practitioners in the Islamic banking sector, particularly in Indonesia. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select respondents from several Islamic banks across Indonesia, resulting in 350 valid responses that met the predefined criteria. The data were then analyzed using SmartPLS 4. The results indicate that work motivation exerts no significant impact on employee performance. Likewise, transformational leadership is found to have no direct effect on employee performance. However, transformational leadership has a strong and positive effect on group cohesion, which, in turn, significantly influences employee performance. Among the variables tested, the path from transformational leadership to cohesion showed the strongest effect. These results suggest that the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance is more effective when mediated by cohesion. The study concludes that fostering a cohesive work environment enhances the positive effects of transformational leadership on performance outcomes. The implications of this research provide valuable insights for Islamic banking leaders, emphasizing the importance of adopting a transformational leadership style while simultaneously fostering team cohesion to optimize employee and organizational performance.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Work motivation, Cohesion, Employee performance, Islamic Banking.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing prominence and growing interest in Islamic banking within Muslim-majority nations, especially Indonesia, have driven renewed emphasis on the sector's development. Though earlier studies have predominantly centered on conventional banking metrics such as efficiency, profitability, and risk exposure, emerging research underscores the strategic role of Islamic banking in responding to global competition and elevated uncertainty. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening human resource capabilities anchored in Sharia principles—particularly in the areas of digital competence, service innovation, and adherence to Islamic ethical values. Prior research underscores that human capital, characterized by technical expertise, effective leadership, and alignment with the objectives of Maqashid al-Shariah, plays a pivotal role in sustaining organizational performance and driving innovation within the Islamic banking sector (Ahyani et al., 2025; Pertiwi & Herianingrum, 2024; Yazia et al., 2024; Hasugian et al., 2024; Mufid Murtadha et al., 2024). Consequently, this study investigates how enhancing human resource effectiveness, guided by Islamic ethical foundations and digital preparedness, contributes to strengthening the resilience and competitive advantage of Islamic banks.

Although the Islamic banking sector has experienced substantial growth in recent years, its full potential remains constrained by several persistent challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the shortage of competent and adequately trained human resources, which undermines the industry's capacity to sustain competitiveness and deliver high-quality services (Nguyen & Dissertation, 2025). Furthermore, the gap between the normative ideals of Sharia principles and their practical application continues to generate concerns regarding the authenticity and integrity of Islamic banking operations (Latifah & Zuhri, 2024). Trust-related issues also persist, as public confidence in Islamic banking institutions remains relatively low, particularly in terms of transparency and governance (Iman et al., 2025). Furthermore, research in both national and international contexts indicates that theoretical and practical frameworks to comprehensively guide Islamic banking development remain underdeveloped (Rashid & Ghazi, 2021). Consequently, the legitimacy and effectiveness of Islamic banks—especially when compared with conventional financial institutions—continue to represent a multidimensional challenge for policymakers, practitioners, and academics alike.

Strengthening employee performance is consistently linked to measurable gains in organizational outcomes, as shown by recent evidence across contexts and levels of analysis. A large-scale meta-analysis finds that organizational training—one of the most direct levers to enhance employee capabilities—has a positive association with firm-level performance (Ikbal, 2025). SAGE Journals Complementary research shows that improving the work environment elevates task performance, a pathway through which organizations realize productivity and effectiveness gains (Surianto & Nurfahira, 2024). PMC Similarly, studies that examine organization-facing HR mechanisms (e.g., employee HR attributions) report significant links to performance, reinforcing the argument that micro-level performance improvements aggregate to stronger organizational results (Niswah et al., 2023). Wiley Online Library In the Islamic banking context, Indonesian evidence underscores that empowered, committed, and well-managed employees drive better performance in Sharia banks, signaling that human capital remains pivotal for competitiveness (Yuliar, 2021; Putra Kusuma et al., 2025). UIR Press Journal UIN Ar-Raniry Journal Portal Extending this logic to contemporary work designs, organizational studies caution that performance-enhancing practices (e.g., flexible work arrangements) should be structured to sustain innovation and productivity at the organizational level—again highlighting the centrality of managing employee performance to achieve organizational effectiveness (Volery & Tarabashkina, 2021). Frontiers Guided by this evidence base, this study investigates the factors shaping organizational performance within the Islamic banking sector, with particular attention to mechanisms that enhance employee performance.

Recent empirical research reinforces the pivotal role of work motivation in driving employee performance: in Jakarta's logistics sector, a study found that higher employee motivation significantly enhances performance, with engagement and a green work environment serving as important mediating factors (Novita & Padmantyo, 2026). Similarly, transformational leadership continues to emerge as a critical influencer: a systematic literature review across various sectors confirms its positive impact on employee performance, highlighting how inspirational, visionary leaders foster improved outcomes (Nurlaela et al., 2025). Recent evidence also highlights the pivotal role of team cohesion—manifested through psychological safety, shared norms, and coordinated task execution—in enhancing both individual and collective performance across diverse organizational settings (Grossman et al., 2022). Collectively, these insights reaffirm that motivation, transformational leadership, and team cohesion constitute essential drivers of employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

This research aims to investigate the key determinants influencing employee performance within Indonesia's Islamic banking sector by synthesizing insights from prior studies into an integrated conceptual framework. The proposed model identifies motivation, competence, and team cohesion as the independent variables, while employee performance functions as the dependent variable. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable implications for practitioners and policymakers in developing more effective performance enhancement frameworks within Islamic banking institutions in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research indicators were adapted from prior studies, and the questionnaire was constructed using a likert scale. The instrument was then administered online via google forms and distributed through social media platforms. Data were collected using a non probability purposive sampling approach, in which respondents were selected based on predetermined criteria. Therefore, the respondents of this study were 420 employees of Islamic banks who were registered in the WA group of 7 Sharia banks in Indonesia. The data collected from respondents as many as 350 employees is valid to answer all questions, and then processed by data analysis techniques using Smart PLS .

Minto, (2016) which states that the results of the model construct test can be seen from the results of the output data on the critical value estimation parameter (CR), if the CR is greater than 1.96 ($CR > 1.96$) then the hypothesis is accepted, if less than this value is rejected. The higher the CR value, the more significant the effect, or vice versa. The instrument data to be processed is developed within the framework of the hypothetical model shown in Figure 1 below:

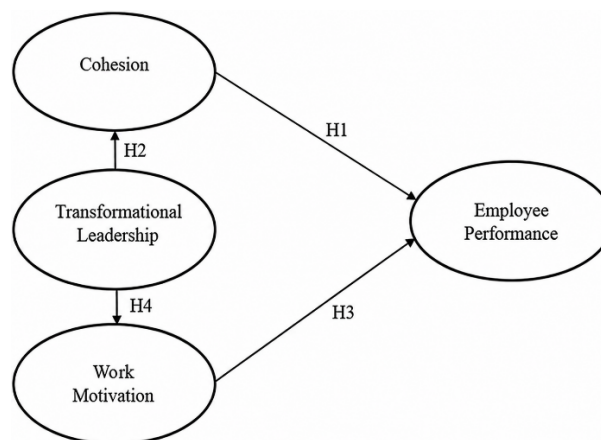


Figure 1. Hypothesis Model Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis in this study employed the Partial Least Squares (PLS) data analysis technique. The results of the PLS analysis are reported in two stages, namely the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and the evaluation of the structural model (inner model).

a. Results of the Outer Model Evaluation

The assessment of the outer model was conducted to examine convergent validity, discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability, all of which were obtained through the PLS Algorithm procedure.

1) Convergent Validity

Tabel 1. Convergent Validity

	Cohesion	Employee Performance	Transformasional Leadership	Work Motivation
Co1	0,875			
Co2	0,836			
Co3	0,817			
Co4	0,786			
EP1		0,817		
EP2		0,810		
EP3		0,873		
TL1			0,802	
TL2			0,811	
TL4			0,766	
WM2				0,809
WM3				0,798
WM4				0,851

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Based on Table 1, it can be observed that each indicator for all variables in this study meets the convergent validity criteria, with loading values greater than 0.70. Therefore, the data are considered valid and satisfy the requirements of convergent validity.

2) Discriminant Validity

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Variables	Cohesion	Employee Performance	Transformational Leadership	Work Motivation
Cohesion	0.829			
Employee Performance	0.685	0.834		
Transformational Leadership	0.809	0.681	0.793	
Work Motivation	0.680	0.614	0.669	0.819

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that the cross-loading values of each indicator are higher for their respective constructs than for the other constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model meets the criteria for discriminant validity.

3) Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted

Variables	Cohesion	Employee Performance	Transformational Leadership	Work Motivation
Cohesion	0.829			
Employee Performance	0.685	0.834		
Transformational Leadership	0.809	0.681	0.793	
Work Motivation	0.680	0.614	0.669	0.819

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Based on Table 3, it is evident that all variables in this study have AVE values greater than 0.50, indicating that each variable is valid and meets the criteria for Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

4) Composite Reliability

Table 4. Composite Reliability

Variables	Composite Reliability	Criteria	Description
Employee Performance	0.872	> 0.7	Reliable
Transformational Leadership	0.836	> 0.7	Reliable
Work Motivation	0.860	> 0.7	Reliable

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Based on Table 4, it can be observed that all variables in this study have composite reliability values greater than 0.70, indicating that each variable is reliable and meets the criteria for composite reliability.

5) Cronbach's Alpha

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Criteria	Description
Employee Performance	0.781	> 0.7	Reliable
Transformational Leadership	0.709	> 0.7	Reliable
Work Motivation	0.755	> 0.7	Reliable

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

Based on Table 5, it can be seen that all variables in this study have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70, indicating that each variable is reliable and fulfills the criteria for Cronbach's Alpha.

b. Results of the Inner Model Evaluation

According to Purwanto & Sudargini. (2021), the inner model represents the structural model that illustrates the relationships among latent constructs and evaluates the extent to which the exogenous variables explain the endogenous variables. This structural assessment functions as a hypothesis testing procedure by examining the predictive relationships specified in the research framework. In this study, the evaluation of the inner model is carried out using the

coefficient of determination (R-square) to measure the explanatory power of the model, as well as the Q-square value to assess its predictive relevance.

Table 6. Results of the Structural Model (Inner Model) Evaluation

Testing	Test Result	Criteria
Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)		
Employee Performance	0.510	Medium
Transformational Leadership	0.448	Medium
Predictive Relevance (Q-Square)		
Employee Performance	0.330	Medium
Transformational Leadership	0.271	Medium

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0, 2025

1) R-Square (R^2) Test

The R^2 value is used to measure the explanatory power of the independent constructs on the dependent constructs. According to Hasanuddin et al. (2024), an R^2 value of 0.75 is categorized as substantial (strong), 0.50 as moderate, and 0.25 as weak. The analysis results show that the Cohesion construct has an R^2 value of 0.654 (Adjusted = 0.652), which falls within the strong category, approaching substantial. The Employee Performance construct has an R^2 value of 0.510 (Adjusted = 0.505), which is classified as moderate. Meanwhile, the Transformational Leadership construct has an R^2 value of 0.448 (Adjusted = 0.445), also categorized as moderate. Overall, the research model demonstrates good explanatory capability, as all endogenous constructs fall within the moderate to strong categories, with none falling below the minimum threshold of 0.25.

2) Q-Square (Q^2) Test

Q^2 is used to assess the predictive capability of the model, obtained through the blindfolding procedure. The Q^2 criteria are as follows: values greater than 0 indicate predictive relevance, with 0.02–0.14 categorized as small, 0.15–0.34 as moderate, and ≥ 0.35 as large (Wijaya et al., 2023). The results show that Cohesion ($Q^2 = 0.426$) falls within the large category, Employee Performance ($Q^2 = 0.330$) is in the moderate category approaching large, and Transformational Leadership ($Q^2 = 0.271$) is categorized as moderate. However, the Work Motivation construct has a Q^2 value of 0.000, indicating that the model has no predictive relevance for this construct. This suggests that the exogenous variables in the model are not yet able to adequately predict Work Motivation, highlighting the need for further attention to theoretical considerations and measurement aspects.

3) Model Fit Evaluation

The fit summary results indicate that the SRMR value for the saturated model (0.097) remains below the threshold of 0.10, although the value for the estimated model is slightly higher (0.105). The d_ULS (0.860–0.995) and d_G (0.455–0.483) values are relatively small, indicating a reasonably good level of model fit. Meanwhile, the NFI values (0.672–0.678) reflect a moderate and acceptable degree of model adequacy. These results suggest that the proposed model demonstrates an adequate model fit, even though the primary emphasis in PLS-SEM remains on explanatory power (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Overall, the evaluation results indicate that the research model is acceptable and appropriate.

- (1) The measurement model satisfies the reliability and convergent validity criteria, although there are indications of discriminant validity issues within the Transformational Leadership construct.

- (2) The inner model demonstrates good explanatory power and predictive relevance, with Transformational Leadership emerging as the most dominant construct influencing Cohesion, Work Motivation, and Employee Performance.
- (3) The fit summary supports the overall adequacy of the model, despite minor deviations observed in the SRMR value of the estimated model.
- (4) Thus, this study provides empirical evidence that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in strengthening team cohesion and work motivation, which in turn enhances employee performance.

c. Evaluation Of Research Hypotheses

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	P-Values
Cohesion → Employee Performance	0.497	0.000
Transformational Leadership → Cohesion	0.809	0.000
Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.275	0.002
Work Motivation → Transformational Leadership	0.669	0.000

Hypothesis testing was conducted by analyzing the path coefficients and p-values in the structural model. According to Kurnianto & Kharisudin. (2022), a hypothesis is supported when the path coefficient aligns with the theoretical expectation and the p-value is less than 0.05.

1) Effect of Cohesion on Employee Performance

The results show that Cohesion has a significant positive effect on Employee Performance, with a path coefficient of 0.497 and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This indicates that higher levels of cohesion within an organization or team lead to improved employee performance. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that cohesion influences employee performance is supported.

2) Effect of Transformational Leadership on Cohesion

The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Cohesion demonstrates a path coefficient of 0.809 with a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This is the highest coefficient among all paths in the model, indicating that transformational leadership plays a highly dominant role in enhancing team cohesion. Thus, the hypothesis proposing that transformational leadership influences cohesion is strongly supported.

3) Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

The results show that Work Motivation has a significant positive effect on Employee Performance, with a path coefficient of 0.275 and a p-value of 0.002 (<0.05). Although the contribution is smaller compared to the effect of Cohesion, this result confirms that work motivation is an important factor in improving employee performance. Therefore, the hypothesis concerning the effect of work motivation on employee performance is supported.

4) Effect of Transformational Leadership on Work Motivation

The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Work Motivation also shows a significant effect, with a path coefficient of 0.669 and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This finding reinforces that transformational leadership substantially enhances employees' work motivation. Thus, the hypothesis stating that transformational leadership influences work motivation is supported.

The hypothesis testing results indicate that all paths in the research model are significant and align with the theoretically expected directions.

- 1) Transformational Leadership is proven to be the most dominant factor, exhibiting a very strong influence on Cohesion and a substantial effect on Work Motivation.
- 2) Cohesion plays a crucial role in enhancing Employee Performance, contributing even more strongly than Work Motivation.

- 3) Work Motivation also has a significant effect on Employee Performance, although its influence is comparatively smaller.
- 4) Overall, these findings reinforce the argument that transformational leadership serves as a primary driving force that shapes team cohesion and work motivation, ultimately leading to improved employee performance.

The structural model presented in Figure 2 illustrates the relationships among the variables examined in this study using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach through SmartPLS 4. The model demonstrates the direct relationships between Transformational Leadership, Work Motivation, Cohesion, and Employee Performance, along with the indicators used to measure each construct. This structural framework serves as the basis for evaluating the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) in order to examine the proposed research hypotheses.

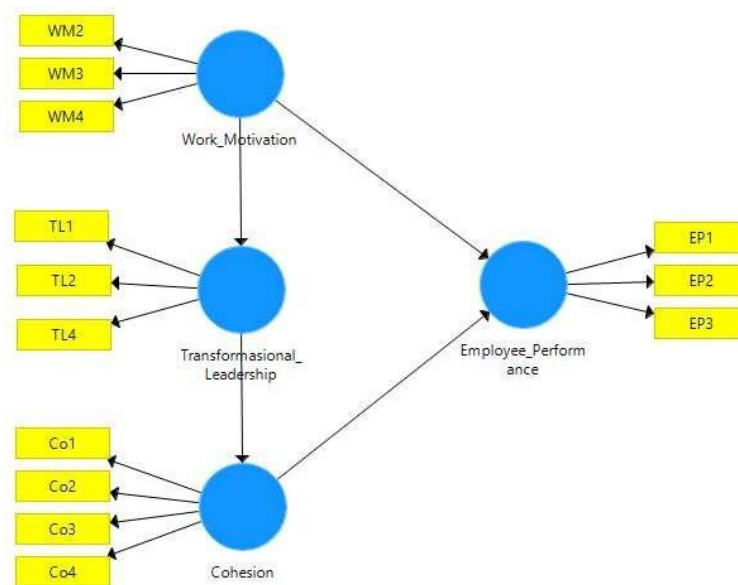


Figure 2. Structural Model of the Research

DISCUSSION

This research seeks to analyze the determinants of employee performance within the Indonesian Islamic banking sector. The initial hypothesis posits that work motivation exerts a positive influence on employee performance. Contrary to the findings of previous studies by Firman et al. (2024), Winarno. (2023), and Nurasia et al. (2022), which consistently report a positive and significant relationship between work motivation and employee performance, the results of this study reveal no significant effect of work motivation on employee performance. This unexpected outcome suggests that motivation alone may not be a sufficient driver of performance within the unique organizational and cultural contexts of Indonesian Islamic banks.

Similarly, existing literature by Arifudin et al. (2020), Rivai. (2020), and Transformasional et al. (2025) identifies Transformational Leadership as a key determinant of employee performance. However, the results of this study do not confirm the hypothesized relationship, as the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance was found to be statistically insignificant. This outcome questions the traditional assumptions regarding the leadership–performance nexus and underscores the importance of adopting a more contextualized perspective that accounts for cultural, organizational, and religious dimensions within Islamic banking institutions.

Conversely, the results provide strong empirical support for the hypothesis that cohesion exerts a positive and significant impact on employee performance. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Lestari et al. (2025), Riansyah et al. (2026), and Inkia Fristky & Suwarni. (2023), who highlight team cohesion as a key driver of performance enhancement. In the present study, cohesion emerged as the most influential determinant of employee performance, emphasizing the critical role of interpersonal trust, shared objectives, and collective unity in shaping individual outcomes. These results are further corroborated by Hikmah et al. (2025), Isnaeen et al. (2026), and Zebua et al. (2025), who contend that cohesion strengthens communication, collaboration, and a sense of belonging—elements particularly essential in service-oriented environments such as Islamic banking.

Furthermore, the study identifies a significant positive association between transformational leadership and work motivation, aligning with the findings of Rio Martha et al. (2020), Oupen & Yudana. (2020), Efendi et al. (2023), and Transformasional et al. (2022). Although transformational leadership does not directly affect employee performance within this context, its contribution to enhancing motivation remains noteworthy. This implies that leadership may exert an indirect but pivotal influence on employees' attitudes and emotional engagement, potentially leading to improved performance outcomes over time or within alternative organizational environments.

Notwithstanding these important findings, the present study recognizes several inherent limitations. The sample was drawn from employees of seven different Islamic banks, each with potentially diverse organizational cultures, management styles, and operational environments. This heterogeneity could have introduced variation in responses that diluted the strength of some relationships, particularly those involving subjective constructs like motivation and leadership perception. Future research should consider stratifying samples by bank type or conducting in-depth case studies to uncover organizational nuances that may mediate or moderate the effects observed.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that work motivation has no effect on employee performance, and transformational leadership likewise shows no direct impact on performance. However, transformational leadership demonstrates a significant positive influence on cohesion, representing the strongest pathway, while cohesion in turn positively affects the performance of employees in Islamic banks. This research contributes as a reference model for Islamic Banking Directors in improving employee performance and banking performance, in order to pay attention to the Transformational Leadership factor and not to ignore the Cohesion factor in Islamic Banks in Indonesia.

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