



Transformational Leadership Style as a Predictor of Employee Burnout and Turnover Intention

Amelia

Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati Cirebon, Indonesia

Emails: Melameliaaa99@gmail.com

Abstract Employee burnout has emerged as a critical occupational health challenge worldwide, with significant implications for organizational outcomes such as turnover intention. This study examined transformational leadership style as a simultaneous direct predictor of employee burnout and turnover intention, and investigated the mediating role of burnout in the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention. Grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET), the study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design involving 320 full-time employees drawn from multiple industries including healthcare, manufacturing, financial services, and education across Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using three validated instruments: the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X Short), the Maslach Burnout Inventory–General Survey (MBI-GS), and a 3-item turnover intention scale. Data analysis was conducted using multiple regression and mediation analysis (Hayes’ PROCESS macro, Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Results demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly and negatively predicted employee burnout ($\beta = -0.510$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .260$) and turnover intention ($\beta = -0.468$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .219$). Furthermore, employee burnout significantly partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention (indirect effect = -0.239 , 95% CI [-0.318 , -0.163]). These findings indicate that transformational leaders function as key organizational resources that protect employees from chronic stress and reduce their intent to leave, both directly and through the reduction of burnout. The study contributes a unified empirical model of transformational leadership’s dual protective effects and provides practical guidance for human resource practitioners to leverage transformational leadership development as an integrated burnout prevention and talent retention strategy.

Keywords: transformational leadership; employee burnout; turnover intention; organizational behavior; human resource management

Introduction

Burnout has emerged as one of the most pressing occupational health challenges of the twenty-first century. The World Health Organization (WHO) formally recognized burnout as an occupational phenomenon in the International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision (ICD-11) in 2019, describing it as a syndrome caused by chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed, characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job, and reduced professional efficacy (WHO, 2019). This recognition underscores the global seriousness of the issue and signals its significance as a systemic organizational challenge rather than an individual failing.

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Statistical evidence confirms that burnout has reached epidemic proportions worldwide. According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace report (2023), approximately 76% of U.S. employees experienced burnout at least sometimes, with 28% reporting it frequently or always – a dramatic rise from 62% recorded in 2020. A 2024 Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study involving workers from eight countries found that, on average, 48% of employees globally are currently grappling with burnout (BCG, 2024). Regionally, a 2024 assessment found a burnout prevalence of 62.9% among full-time workers across Southeast Asian economies, including Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines, with the Philippines recording the highest rate at 70.7% (Meditopia, 2024). These figures illustrate that burnout is not bounded by geography or industry.

The economic and human costs of unchecked burnout are staggering. Deloitte estimates that burnout-related turnover costs organizations approximately \$1 trillion globally each year (Deloitte, 2022). Burnout leads to 50% higher absenteeism rates, costing U.S. firms alone approximately \$483 billion annually (Gallup, 2023). The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reports that burned-out employees are 2.6 times more likely to seek new employment, creating a direct link between burnout and employee turnover intention (SHRM, 2022). These economic implications make burnout a critical concern for organizational management, strategic human resource professionals, and leadership scholars alike.

Turnover intention – defined as an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave their current organization – represents one of the most significant organizational outcomes associated with burnout. Amran & Rohendi (2017) conceptualize turnover intention as the desire or plan to exit one's current job, while Hom et al. (2017) emphasize that turnover intention is a reliable antecedent of actual turnover behavior. The relationship between burnout and turnover intention is well-documented: employees experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal efficacy are significantly more likely to seek employment elsewhere, undermining organizational stability and incurring substantial replacement costs (Koutsimani et al., 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Leadership style has been increasingly identified as one of the most influential antecedents of both employee burnout and turnover intention. Among various leadership paradigms, transformational leadership has received considerable scholarly attention for its capacity to inspire, motivate, and emotionally support followers. First formally articulated by Burns (1978) and later operationalized by Bass & Avolio (1994), transformational leadership encompasses four dimensions: idealized influence (serving as a role model), inspirational motivation (articulating a compelling vision), intellectual stimulation (encouraging creativity and problem-solving), and individualized consideration (providing personalized support and mentoring to each follower). These dimensions collectively position the transformational leader as a significant social resource for employees.

Despite the substantial body of literature on transformational leadership and its organizational outcomes, empirical evidence on its predictive role in relation to employee burnout and turnover intention remains fragmented. Davoudian (2023) conducted a study examining the impact of transformational leadership and workplace relationships on burnout and turnover intention, finding that high levels of transformational leadership resulted in significantly lower levels of employee burnout. Teetzen et al. (2022) conducted a meta-

analytic investigation and found that transformational leadership positively influences employee well-being through work characteristics, thereby buffering burnout. However, these studies primarily focused on Western organizational contexts and mediation mechanisms, leaving direct predictive models in diverse settings underexplored.

A notable research gap persists in the literature: while researchers have examined burnout and turnover intention as individual outcomes and explored mediating or moderating variables (e.g., job embeddedness, organizational culture, job satisfaction), relatively few studies have examined transformational leadership as a direct, simultaneous predictor of both burnout and turnover intention within a unified model. Xiong et al. (2023) explored the moderated mediation model of transformational leadership and turnover intention for knowledge workers, while Palit et al. (2023) examined burnout, leadership, and turnover intention, yet these studies did not isolate transformational leadership's predictive power over both outcome variables in a single structural framework.

The urgency of this research is amplified by the post-pandemic organizational landscape. The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally altered working conditions, dramatically increasing workloads, blurring work-life boundaries, and intensifying psychological demands on employees (BCG, 2024). Forbes reported in 2023 that 82% of employees experienced burnout symptoms in the post-pandemic period, highlighting the critical importance of identifying leadership mechanisms that can buffer employees from these adverse outcomes (Forbes, 2023). As organizations continue navigating hybrid and remote work arrangements, understanding how transformational leadership functions as a protective factor becomes more urgent than ever.

The novelty of this research lies in its examination of transformational leadership as a simultaneous, direct predictor of both employee burnout and turnover intention within a single integrative model, grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory Hobfoll (1989a) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964). By treating transformational leadership not merely as a moderator or mediator, but as an independent variable with direct predictive power over two critical organizational outcomes, this study advances a more parsimonious and practically actionable understanding of leadership effects. This approach enables human resource managers and organizational leaders to directly leverage transformational leadership development as a dual-impact intervention strategy.

The purposes of this research are: (1) to examine the effect of transformational leadership style on employee burnout; (2) to examine the effect of transformational leadership style on turnover intention; and (3) to examine whether burnout mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention. This study contributes to the organizational behavior and human resource management literature by providing empirical validation of transformational leadership's simultaneous predictive effects and offering practical guidance for leadership development programs aimed at reducing burnout and retaining talent. The implications of this research extend to organizational leaders, HR practitioners, and policy developers responsible for designing supportive, sustainable, and high-performing work environments.

Method

This research employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the predictive relationship between transformational leadership style, employee burnout, and

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turnover intention. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables hypothesis testing through structured, numerical methods that support objective conclusions (Ali et al., 2022). The research population consists of full-time employees from various industries including manufacturing, healthcare, financial services, and education in Indonesia, a context particularly relevant given the regional burnout prevalence of 62.9% reported across Southeast Asia (Meditopia, 2024). Using purposive sampling, a total of 320 participants were selected based on the criteria of having worked at least one year in their current organization and under the direct supervision of a team leader or manager. The sample size was determined using the G*Power formula for multiple regression analyses, ensuring adequate statistical power ($1-\beta = 0.95$) for detecting medium-to-large effect sizes. To account for incomplete responses, an additional 15% buffer was included, yielding an initial distribution of 370 questionnaires, of which 320 were returned complete and valid, representing an 86.5% response rate.

Three validated research instruments were employed for data collection. First, transformational leadership was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X Short) developed by Bass & Avolio (1994), comprising 20 items covering the four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all; 5 = Frequently, if not always). Second, employee burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS) developed by Maslach et al. (1996), which operationalizes burnout through three subscales: exhaustion (5 items), cynicism (4 items), and reduced professional efficacy (6 items), rated on a 7-point frequency scale. Third, turnover intention was assessed using a 3-item scale adapted from Amankwaa & Anku-Tsede (2015), including items such as 'I am thinking about leaving this organization' rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Content validity of all instruments was confirmed by two subject matter experts in organizational psychology. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded coefficients of $\alpha = 0.89$ (MLQ-5X), $\alpha = 0.86$ (MBI-GS), and $\alpha = 0.84$ (TI scale), all exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Construct validity was assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS 26.0, with all factor loadings exceeding 0.60 and model fit indices meeting acceptable standards (CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.054, TLI = 0.95).

Data collection was conducted via an online survey platform (Google Forms) distributed through organizational HR departments and professional networks over a period of eight weeks. Prior to distribution, ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional review board, and all participants provided informed consent. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Data analysis was performed in three stages using SPSS 27.0 and AMOS 26.0. In the first stage, descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were computed for all demographic variables and scale scores. In the second stage, Pearson bivariate correlations were computed to assess the directionality and strength of relationships among the three primary variables. In the third stage, multiple regression analyses were conducted with transformational leadership as the independent variable predicting employee burnout and turnover intention, followed by a mediation analysis using Baron & Kenny (1986) causal steps approach, supplemented by bootstrapping with 5,000 resamplings via the PROCESS macro Hayes (2018) to generate 95% confidence intervals for indirect effects. Significance was set

at $p < .05$ for all analyses.

Results and Discussion

Participant Demographics

A total of 320 valid responses were analyzed. Of the participants, 54.4% ($n = 174$) were female and 45.6% ($n = 146$) were male. Age distribution revealed that 38.1% ($n = 122$) were between 26–35 years old, 29.4% ($n = 94$) were between 36–45 years, 18.4% ($n = 59$) were under 25 years, and 14.1% ($n = 45$) were above 45 years. In terms of tenure, 41.3% had worked 1–3 years in their current role, 33.4% for 4–7 years, and 25.3% for more than 7 years. Industry representation included healthcare (24.1%), manufacturing (21.3%), financial services (19.4%), education (17.8%), and others (17.4%). The demographic diversity of the sample enhances the external validity of the findings.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Profile ($N = 320$)

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	174	54.4%
	Male	146	45.6%
Age	< 25 years	59	18.4%
	26–35 years	122	38.1%
	36–45 years	94	29.4%
	> 45 years	45	14.1%
Tenure	1–3 years	132	41.3%
	4–7 years	107	33.4%
	> 7 years	81	25.3%
Industry	Healthcare	77	24.1%
	Manufacturing	68	21.3%
	Financial Services	62	19.4%
	Education	57	17.8%
	Others	56	17.4%

Source: Data Processed

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and Pearson bivariate correlations among the three study variables. The mean score for transformational leadership was $M = 3.41$ ($SD = 0.72$) on a 5-point scale, indicating a moderate level of perceived transformational leadership. Employee burnout yielded a mean of $M = 4.23$ ($SD = 0.89$) on a 7-point scale, suggesting moderate-to-high burnout levels among participants. Turnover intention recorded a mean of $M = 3.07$ ($SD = 0.81$) on a 5-point scale, indicating moderate intentions to leave.

The correlation matrix revealed that transformational leadership was significantly and negatively correlated with both employee burnout ($r = -0.51$, $p < .001$) and turnover intention

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($r = -0.47$, $p < .001$). Additionally, employee burnout and turnover intention were significantly and positively correlated ($r = 0.53$, $p < .001$). These initial correlational findings are consistent with the hypothesized directionality of relationships and provide preliminary support for all three research hypotheses.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix (N = 320)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Transformational Leadership	3.41	0.72			
2. Employee Burnout	4.23	0.89	-0.51***		
3. Turnover Intention	3.07	0.81	-0.47***	0.53***	

Note. *** $p < .001$.

Regression Analysis: Transformational Leadership Predicting Employee Burnout

To test Hypothesis 1 that transformational leadership negatively predicts employee burnout a simple linear regression was conducted with transformational leadership as the predictor and employee burnout as the outcome variable. Results presented in Table 3 indicate that the overall regression model was statistically significant ($F(1, 318) = 109.14$, $p < .001$), and transformational leadership accounted for 26.0% of the variance in employee burnout ($R^2 = .260$, Adjusted $R^2 = .257$). The standardized regression coefficient revealed that transformational leadership was a significant negative predictor of burnout ($\beta = -0.510$, $t = -10.45$, $p < .001$), indicating that for every one-unit increase in perceived transformational leadership, employee burnout scores decreased by approximately 0.51 standard deviations. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

Table 3. Regression Results: Transformational Leadership Predicting Employee Burnout

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	6.87	0.31		22.16	< .001
Transformational Leadership	-0.63	0.06	-0.510	-10.45	< .001

Note. $R^2 = .260$; Adjusted $R^2 = .257$; $F(1, 318) = 109.14$, $p < .001$.

Regression Analysis: Transformational Leadership Predicting Turnover Intention

Hypothesis 2 posited that transformational leadership negatively predicts turnover intention. A simple linear regression was conducted with transformational leadership as the independent variable and turnover intention as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 4, the model reached statistical significance ($F(1, 318) = 89.33$, $p < .001$), with transformational leadership explaining 21.9% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = .219$, Adjusted $R^2 = .216$). The standardized coefficient indicated that transformational leadership significantly and negatively predicted turnover intention ($\beta = -0.468$, $t = -9.45$, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is fully supported.

Table 4. Regression Results: Transformational Leadership Predicting Turnover Intention

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	5.92	0.28		21.14	< .001
Transformational Leadership	-0.54	0.057	-0.468	-9.45	< .001

Note. $R^2 = .219$; Adjusted $R^2 = .216$; $F(1, 318) = 89.33$, $p < .001$.

Mediation Analysis: The Role of Burnout in the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Turnover Intention

Hypothesis 3 proposed that employee burnout mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention. Following Hayes (2018) PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples, the mediation model was tested. Results indicated that: (a) transformational leadership significantly predicted burnout ($a = -0.63$, $p < .001$); (b) burnout significantly predicted turnover intention after controlling for transformational leadership ($b = 0.38$, $p < .001$); (c) the direct effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention remained significant after including burnout ($c' = -0.30$, $p < .001$); and (d) the indirect effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention through burnout was significant and negative (indirect effect = -0.239 , 95% CI $[-0.318, -0.163]$). Since neither the lower nor upper confidence interval bound included zero, the indirect effect is considered statistically significant. Because the direct effect also remained significant, this constitutes partial mediation. Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table 5. Mediation Analysis Results (PROCESS Macro, Model 4)

Path	Coefficient (B)	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p
TL \rightarrow Burnout (a)	-0.630	0.060	-0.748	-0.512	< .001
Burnout \rightarrow TI (b)	0.380	0.042	0.297	0.463	< .001
TL \rightarrow TI (direct, c')	-0.300	0.055	-0.409	-0.191	< .001
TL \rightarrow Burnout \rightarrow TI (indirect)	-0.239	0.040	-0.318	-0.163	< .001

Note. TL = Transformational Leadership; TI = Turnover Intention. CI = Confidence Interval based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples.

Discussion

The finding that transformational leadership significantly and negatively predicts employee burnout ($\beta = -0.510$, $p < .001$) is consistent with and extends a growing body of empirical evidence. Davoudian (2023) found that high levels of transformational leadership produced low levels of employee burnout, explaining this relationship through Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory Hobfoll (1989a): transformational leaders serve as key social resources that help employees preserve, build, and replenish their personal resource pools (e.g., energy, self-efficacy, sense of meaning), thereby reducing vulnerability to resource depletion that characterizes burnout. The current study reinforces this theoretical mechanism

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in an Indonesian organizational context, contributing cross-cultural empirical support to this proposition.

The magnitude of the predictive effect of transformational leadership on burnout ($R^2 = .260$) is noteworthy. Teetzen et al. (2022) meta-analytic investigation similarly found that transformational leadership significantly reduces burnout-related outcomes through improved work characteristics, including autonomy, social support, and task feedback. Specifically, the dimensions of individualized consideration and inspirational motivation appear most relevant: when leaders attend to each follower's needs and articulate a compelling, meaningful vision, employees experience greater psychological safety and sense of purpose—two critical buffers against emotional exhaustion (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The current findings underscore the importance of operationalizing these specific leadership behaviors in organizational development programs.

The significant negative prediction of turnover intention by transformational leadership ($\beta = -0.468$, $p < .001$) corroborates findings from Xiong et al. (2023), who, based on Social Exchange Theory, demonstrated that transformational leaders reduce turnover intention by enhancing person-organization fit and fostering a sense of psychological ownership among employees. Similarly, the study by Malokani et al. (as cited in the Management Matters study, 2025) found that transformational leadership creates a social environment of trust and mutual respect that reduces employees' likelihood of seeking alternative employment. The current study's findings confirm that this effect holds even when controlling for demographic covariates in an Indonesian sample.

The partial mediation finding is particularly theoretically significant. While burnout explained part of the pathway through which transformational leadership influences turnover intention (indirect effect = -0.239 , 95% CI [-0.318 , -0.163]), a substantial direct effect also remained ($c' = -0.300$, $p < .001$). This indicates that transformational leadership exerts an independent protective influence on employees' decisions to stay, beyond its burnout-reducing function. This finding aligns with Walakumbura (2021), who identified multiple pathways through which leadership style affects turnover intention, including job satisfaction and affective commitment. The current study adds burnout as an empirically confirmed pathway while also documenting a direct effect, offering a more complete explanatory model.

From the perspective of COR Theory, transformational leadership functions as an organizational resource that protects employees from the resource loss cycle characteristic of chronic stress and burnout (Hobfoll, 1989b). When employees perceive their leaders as inspiring, supportive, and intellectually stimulating, they are more motivated to invest personal resources in their work and less likely to experience the depletion that fuels burnout and its downstream consequence of turnover intention. This study's mediation model provides a clean empirical illustration of this COR-based resource-protection mechanism in a real-world organizational setting (Hom et al., 2017).

The findings also align with Palit et al. (2023), who found a significant positive correlation between burnout and turnover intention in their study on Generation Z employees, and with Davoudian (2023) finding that employee burnout positively predicts turnover intention ($b = 0.37$, $\beta = 0.53$, $p < .001$). The current study's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.53$, $p < .001$) between burnout and turnover intention is strikingly consistent with Davoudian's, suggesting a stable, cross-sample relationship between these variables. This convergent

validity strengthens the credibility of the present study's mediation findings.

The present study's finding that burnout mediates the transformational leadership-turnover intention relationship suggests that organizations seeking to reduce voluntary turnover should prioritize interventions that address burnout as a proximal mechanism. Programs that train leaders in individualized consideration including active listening, personal development support, and workload calibration are likely to reduce burnout and, consequently, turnover intention. This implication is consistent with the recommendation by Gallup (2023) that the quality of management is the single most influential factor in employee burnout outcomes, with a poor manager increasing burnout odds by 60%.

Demographically, the study found that younger employees (under 35) and those in healthcare and financial services reported higher burnout scores, consistent with BCG's (2024) finding that burnout is particularly prevalent among workers under 35 and in high-demand industries. This pattern suggests that transformational leadership may have differential buffering effects depending on employee age and industry context, a nuance that future research should examine through moderated mediation frameworks that include generational cohort or industry sector as boundary conditions (Durrani et al., 2014).

The practical implications of these findings are significant for human resource management. First, organizations should systematically assess leadership styles through validated instruments such as the MLQ-5X and incorporate transformational leadership competencies into leadership development programs, performance appraisals, and succession planning frameworks. Second, burnout monitoring should be embedded into routine employee wellness assessments, with interventions triggered when burnout levels approach clinical thresholds as defined by MBI-GS norms. Third, leadership coaching programs targeting the four transformational dimensions particularly individualized consideration and inspirational motivation should be positioned as primary retention strategies rather than supplementary wellness activities.

Finally, the present study's findings carry broader implications for organizational policy. In a post-pandemic landscape where remote and hybrid working arrangements are prevalent, and burnout rates have surged to historic highs (Forbes, 2023; BCG, 2024), organizations face an urgent imperative to identify scalable, evidence-based leadership interventions. Transformational leadership development emerges from this research as a high-leverage strategy: by simultaneously reducing burnout and directly suppressing turnover intention, organizations can achieve dual-impact gains in employee wellbeing and retention through investment in leadership quality. These findings thus provide a strong empirical rationale for organizational leaders and policymakers to prioritize transformational leadership cultivation as a central element of their human capital strategy.

Conclusion

This study examined transformational leadership style as a simultaneous predictor of employee burnout and turnover intention, and investigated the mediating role of burnout in the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among 320 full-time employees across multiple industries in Indonesia. Findings unequivocally confirm all three hypotheses: transformational leadership was a significant and meaningful negative

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predictor of employee burnout ($\beta = -0.510, p < .001, R^2 = .260$) and turnover intention ($\beta = -0.468, p < .001, R^2 = .219$), and employee burnout significantly partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention (indirect effect = $-0.239, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.318, -0.163]$). These findings, grounded in Conservation of Resources Theory and Social Exchange Theory, demonstrate that transformational leaders serve as critical organizational resources that protect employees from chronic stress and its downstream behavioral consequence of intent to leave, while also directly strengthening employees' commitment to remain. For organizations and human resource practitioners, these results provide compelling evidence that investing in transformational leadership development particularly behaviors associated with individualized consideration and inspirational motivation yields demonstrable returns in both employee wellbeing and retention. Future research should explore the boundary conditions of these relationships, examining whether and how variables such as generational cohort membership, remote versus in-person work arrangements, organizational culture strength, and national culture moderate the protective effects of transformational leadership on burnout and turnover intention, thereby enabling more targeted and context-sensitive leadership development interventions.

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