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Integrating Indigenous Culture into Leadership: The Moderating Role of Pela Gandong in Enhancing Employee Motivation within the Construction Education Vocational Sector

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Abstract: This study investigates the moderating influence of the Pela Gandong cultural value system on the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation within the Education Vocational education segment of the construction industry. While transformational and transactional leadership theories have been widely examined, limited research has explored how indigenous cultural frameworks shape motivational dynamics, particularly in construction-related Education Vocational contexts. Grounded in the principles of mutual responsibility, solidarity, and collective identity, Pela Gandong is conceptualized as a moderating cultural factor that enhances organizational cohesion and leadership effectiveness. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from employees of construction firms affiliated with Education Vocational education programs and registered with ASPEKINDO Ambon. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), both direct and moderating effects were assessed. The findings demonstrate that Pela Gandong significantly strengthens the positive effects of transformational and transactional leadership on employee motivation, with moral support emerging as the most influential dimension. This research contributes a culturally contextualized leadership model that integrates indigenous values into modern management practices, offering theoretical and practical implications for leadership development in culturally diverse construction environments.

Keywords: Leadership, Pela Gandong, Motivation, Construction, Education Vocational Sector

A. Introduction

Human resources are one of the most important components in corporate success and achieving an organization's vision and goal. A corporation will not be able to exist long-term if its human resources are not efficiently managed and optimized. When it comes to companies, especially those engaged in construction, especially in Ambon City, there have been developments in terms of the number of companies in the last five years, namely from 2017 to 2021. Based on the summary results from the directory of construction companies in Maluku Province, 2017–2021, on the website of the Central Statistics Agency (2022), the number of construction companies with small, medium, and large qualifications is presented in Figure 1 (from Central Bureau

of Statistics, 2022).

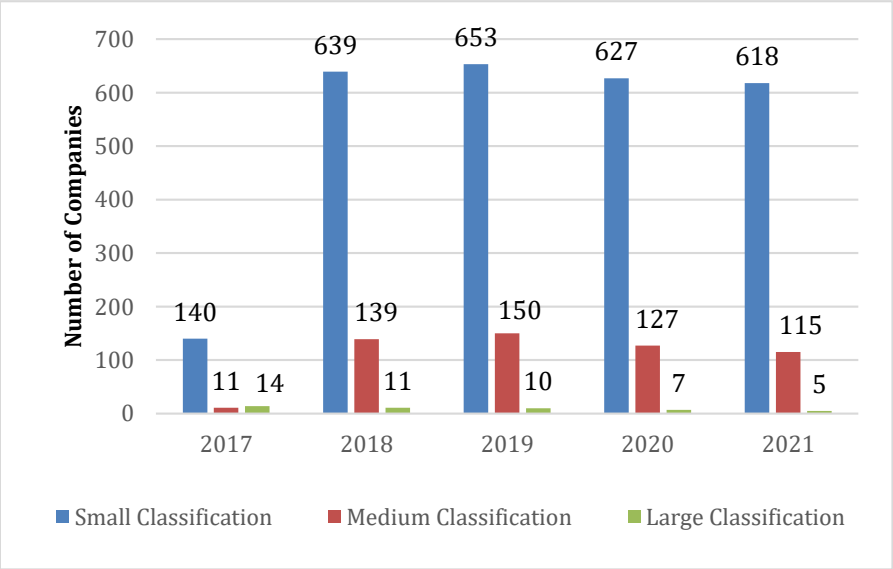


Figure 1. Classification Number of Ambon City Construction Companies in 2017–2021

In Hijriah (2019), optimizing human resources within an organization can be achieved by increasing employee work motivation, which encourages high enthusiasm and commitment to work. This high level of work motivation can be influenced by internal factors within the company, one of which is the leadership adopted by superiors. Bass and Riggio (2010) define and classify leadership into two main types: transformational leadership and transactional leadership. According to Ainanur and Tirtayasa (2018), Thomas (2016), for both leaderships, namely transactional and transformational are considered among the most effective leadership approaches in fostering efficient work processes for employees, both in office settings and in the field.

Several studies reveal that, organizational culture has an important influence on the development of the business world in Indonesia. According to Robbins & Judge (2014), culture is identified and included in one of the studies of organizational behavior that can form a company, one of which is the customary culture of the community. Indigenous culture is thought to describe products of local culture and influence personality values, ethics, attitudes, assumptions, and community expectations (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008).
Regarding customary culture, there is one culture from the community that is brought into the company as organizational behavior, namely the “Pela Gandong” culture (Aponno et al., 2017). Pela Gandong is a culture with strong values among the people of Ambon City because it has a close relationship with people from outside Ambon City and forms a common understanding. The "Pela Gandong" culture itself is considered one of the cultural contexts or organizational behaviors within the company that forms the identity of the company; one of these values can shape the nature and character of the company's employees.

Despite a lack of literature on cultural influences on organizational behavior, no studies have looked at the possibility that Pela Gandong culture in Ambon's culture acts as a moderating variable in the connection between styles of leadership and employee motivation. This underscores the significance of examining how Pela Gandong influences the correlation both styles of leadership and employee motivation within the construction

sector in Ambon, Indonesia.

This case study will look at the relationship between traditional Pela Gandong culture and leadership, as well as how these styles affect employee motivation in a construction company in Ambon City. The values of the Pela Gandong culture integrated into the organization are expected to play a positive role by fostering cooperation, enhancing workplace relationships, and promoting a team-oriented mindset. This includes the ability to respect others, easily build rapport with newcomers from outside the region, and instill strong family values ultimately ensuring the optimization of human resources. In this study, the "Pela Gandong" culture will be used as a moderating variable to examine whether it strengthens or weakens the influence of leadership on employee motivation especially in Construction company in Ambon City, Indonesia.

In the context of the construction Education Vocational sector, previous studies have emphasized the importance of transformational and transactional leadership styles in shaping employee motivation. However, most of these studies predominantly focus on modern leadership frameworks and have not sufficiently integrated elements of indigenous cultural values into organizational leadership models. This gap indicates that the incorporation of local wisdom particularly the Pela Gandong culture, which represents a social mechanism grounded in solidarity, harmony, and mutual moral obligation has not been examined as a moderating variable in strengthening the relationship between leadership and employee motivation.

The absence of research that embeds indigenous cultural values within formal leadership models underscores a significant scholarly urgency, especially for organizations operating in socially and culturally rich environments such as the Maluku region. Within the construction Education Vocational workplace, where close collaboration, discipline, and strong moral resilience are essential due to the physical demands of the job, the application of Pela Gandong has the potential to serve as a socio-cultural force that enhances employees' intrinsic motivation.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to explicitly analyze how integrating the cultural values of Pela Gandong can reinforce the influence of leadership on employee motivation. Specifically, this research seeks to:

1. Examine the relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation;
2. Identify the moderating role of Pela Gandong in this relationship; and
3. Develop a culturally grounded conceptual model applicable to the construction Education Vocational sector.

This study not only addresses a literature gap that has overlooked the potential of indigenous cultural wisdom within leadership models but also provides practical contributions for organizations seeking to implement leadership approaches that are more adaptive, contextual, and socio culturally aligned.

B. Methods

For this research, the research began by conducting a literature study first and selecting the research respondents to be examined, namely company employees registered as members of the Indonesian Construction Entrepreneurs Association (ASPEKINDO) in

Ambon City in 2022, as many as 96 companies with a total population of 823. Within the scope of the company, data collection includes the distribution of questionnaires and interviews. Before distributing the questionnaires, a pilot study or pre-test will be carried out on random respondents. After the questionnaire statements have been corrected, the process can be continued by distributing questionnaires to several construction companies in Ambon City that have been determined, namely as many as 270 samples using the Slovin formula. To obtain a sufficiently large number of samples, the researcher used the Slovin formula as shown in Eq. (1) (Sugiyono, 2009).

$$n = \frac{N}{(1+N_e{}^2)} \quad (1)$$

Description:
n = Number of respondents or samples
N = Total population
e = Margin of error tolerated due to sampling inaccuracy (e = 0.05)
The sample size in this study can be calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1+Ne^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{823}{(1+823\ (0{,}05)^2}$$

n = 269,174 ≈ 270 samples

Employees of construction companies at the middle and lower management levels were classified as research respondents. Middle management consists of marketing, sales, quantity surveyors, architects, structural engineers, office management, purchasing, project assistants, finance, and building service engineers. Lower management consists of apprentices, contract administrators, schedulers, estimators, surveyors, and field engineers.
Once responses are collected from participants, the subsequent step involves conducting data analysis through descriptive analysis of the respondents and research variables, along with multivariate analysis utilizing PLS-SEM via the SmartPLS software (Ghozali & Latan, 2012).

C. Data Analysis

Based on a total of 96 construction companies that ASPEKINDO visited in Ambon City, the number of construction companies that could be surveyed was 52, there was a reduction in the number of questionnaires received, with the percentage of distributing and returning questionnaires in Table 1a and characteristics of the respondents presented in Table 1b.

Table 1. Respondent Data (a) Classification of the Number of Companies for the Distribution of Questionnaires (b) Characteristics of Research Respondents on Construction Companies

Information	Number of Questionnaires	Percentage
Questionnaire distributed	96	100 %
Questionnaires that do not meet the criteria	44	45,83 %
Questionnaire that can be analyzed	52	54,17 %

(a)

Characteristics	Respondent Identity	Number of Samples	Percentage
Gender	Male	110	79,21 %
	Female	28	20,29 %
Education	D3	46	33,33 %
	S1	53	38,41 %
	S2	6	4,35 %
	S3	1	0,72 %
	Others	32	23,19 %
Age	< 30	23	16,67 %
	30 – 39	18	13,04 %
	40 – 49	51	36,96 %
	> 50	46	33,33 %
Leader Position	Supervisor	107	77,54 %
	Manager/Head Division	31	22,46 %
Respondent's Position	*Middle Level*	41	29,71 %
	Lower Level	97	70,29 %
Income	< 3.000.000	19	13,77 %
	3.000.000 – 5.000.000	48	34,78 %
	> 5.000.000	71	51,45 %
Length of Work	< 5 Year	17	12,32 %
	5-10 Year	46	33,33 %
	> 10 Year	75	59,80 %

(b)

Data on the characteristics of the respondents in Table 1b shows that the majority of employees at construction companies in Ambon City already have a lot of experience in the company. This is because employees have worked long enough and know the work environment and conditions of the company well. For descriptive analysis, research variables can be seen in Table 2a, Table 2b, Table 2c, and Table 2d.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Average Value on the Variable Indicator of (a) Transformational (b) Transactional (c) Employee Motivation (d) Pela Gandong

Variable Dimensions	Statement Indicator	Middle Level (Average)	Lower Level (Average)
Individualized Influence ($GKTF_1$)	Integrity ($GKTF_{1.1}$)	4,699	3,399
	Trust ($GKTF_{1.2}$)	4,642	4,512
	Respect ($GKTF_{1.3}$)	4,719	4,319
Inspirational Motivation ($GKTF_2$)	Enthusiasm ($GKTF_{2.1}$)	4,533	4,333
	Communication ($GKTF_{2.2}$)	4,563	3,214
	Optimism ($GKTF_{2.3}$)	4,541	3,341
Intellectual Stimulation ($GKTF_3$)	Mentoring listening ($GKTF_{3.1}$)	4,570	4,370
	Personal attention ($GKTF_{3.2}$)	4,793	3,290
Individual Consideration ($GKTF_4$)	Rationality ($GKTF_{4.1}$)	4,690	4,442
	Problem solving ($GKTF_{4.2}$)	4,757	3,457
Total Average		**4,651**	**3,868**

(a)

Variable Dimensions	Statement Indicator	Middle Level (Average)	Lower Level (Average)
Contingent Reward ($GKTS_1$)	Work guidelines ($GKTS_{1.1}$)	4,226	4,419
	Rewards ($GKTS_{1.2}$)	3,504	4,215
Management by Exception-Passive ($GKTS_2$)	Correction of errors ($GKTS_{2.1}$)	4,362	4,504
	Conduct supervision ($GKTS_{2.2}$)	3,528	4,662
Management by Exception-Active ($GKTS_3$)	Job evaluation ($GKTS_{3.1}$)	4,214	4,461
	Warnings and sanctions ($GKTS_{3.2}$)	4,022	4,342
Total Average		**3,976**	**4,434**

(b)

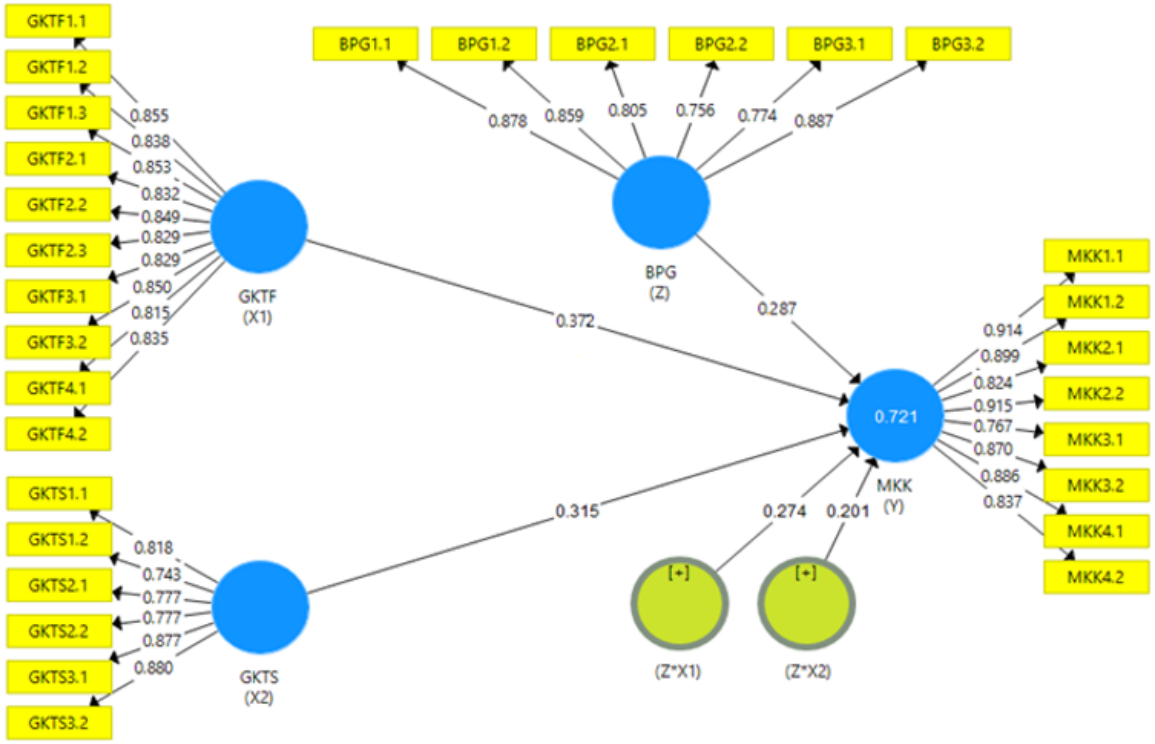
Variable Dimensions	Statement Indicator	Average
Self-actualization needs (MKK_1)	Interesting and challenging work ($MKK_{1.1}$)	4,425
	Discipline in work ($MKK_{1.2}$)	4,142
Love and Belongingness needs (MKK_2)	Employment relations ($MKK_{2.1}$)	4,329
	Actively organize ($MKK_{2.2}$)	4,341
Safety needs (MKK_3)	Work environment and facilities ($MKK_{3.1}$)	4,627
	Insurance and pension funds ($MKK_{3.2}$)	4,435
Esteem needs (MKK_4)	Confession ($MKK_{4.1}$)	4,499
	Job training ($MKK_{4.2}$)	4,318
Total Average		**4,389**

(c)

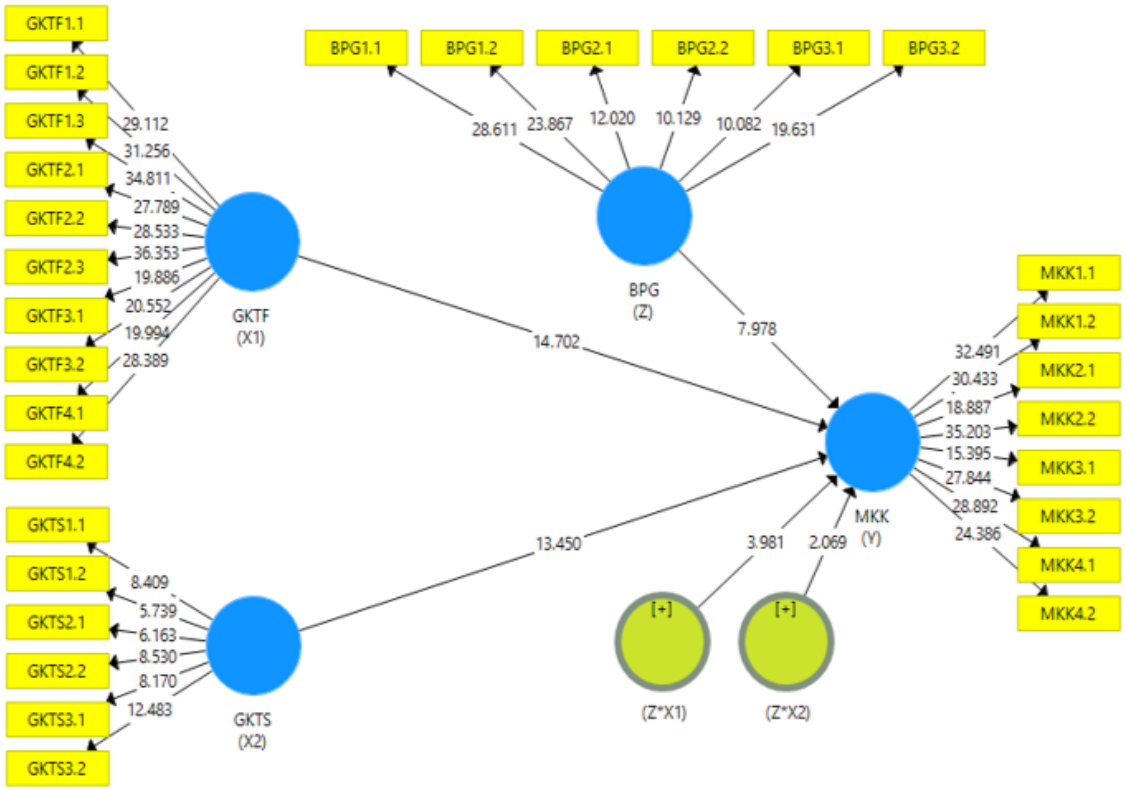
Variable Dimensions	Statement Indicator	Average
Common Sense of Belonging (BPG_1)	Moral support ($BPG_{1.1}$)	4,645
	Integrity towards customary values ($BPG_{1.2}$)	4,616
Common Sense of Unity (BPG_2)	Tolerance ($BPG_{2.1}$)	4,580
	Deliberation for consensus ($BPG_{2.2}$)	4,451
Common Sense of Responsibility (BPG_3)	Problems are shared ($BPG_{3.1}$)	4,667
	Empathy to others ($BPG_{3.2}$)	4,609
Total Mean		**4,595**

(d)

SmartPLS employs two primary techniques in its analysis: the PLS algorithm and bootstrapping. The PLS algorithm assesses the measurement (outer) model, which defines the relationships between observed indicators and their corresponding latent constructs, while bootstrapping is used to evaluate the structural (inner) model (Ghozali & Latan, 2012) and will using for this research. The bootstrapping procedure's hypothesis will be examined after the study to see whether the variables under evaluation are correlated. The evaluation of the model of measurement, sometimes referred to as the "outer" model, in the study model is shown in Figure 5a. As seen in Figure 5b below, the next step after looking at the "outer" model is to look at the bootstrapping analysis of the collected data.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5. Output Results (a) First Measurement Model from the PLS Algorithm (b) Bootstrapping

From the output results in Figure 5a, it can be seen that the first measurement model in the PLS Algorithm process for the research model already has a loading factor value higher than 0.7 for each variable indicator. And from Figure 8, it can be seen that the variables of transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, and "pela gandong" culture have a significant effect on employee motivation. This is because each value of the t-statistic meets the requirements for a value of more than 1.96. The complete output results from SmartPLS bootstrapping for hypothesis testing and looking at the level of significance of the relationship between variables (138 respondents), middle management (41 respondents), and lower management (97 respondents), as well as on variable indicators, are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Table 3. Results of Total Effects Analysis through the Bootstrapping Process for each Relationship Between Variables (138 Respondents)

Variable relationship	*Path Coefficient*	*t-statistics*	*p-values*
GKTF (X_1) -> MKK (Y)	0,372	14,702	**0,000**
GKTS (X_2) -> MKK (Y)	0,315	13,450	**0,001**
Moderating Effect 1 ($Z*X_1$) -> MKK (Y)	0,274	3,981	**0,000**
Moderating Effect 2 ($Z*X_2$) -> MKK (Y)	0,201	2,069	**0.002**

Table 4. Results of Total Effects Analysis through the Bootstrapping Process for the Relationship Between Variables at the Middle Management Level (41 Respondents)

Variable relationship	*Path Coefficient*	*t-statistics*	*p-values*
GKTF (X_1) -> MKK (Y)	0,312	7,413	**0,001**
GKTS (X_2) -> MKK (Y)	0,244	5,361	**0,000**
Moderating Effect 1 ($Z*X_1$) -> MKK (Y)	0,225	3,346	**0,001**
Moderating Effect 2 ($Z*X_2$) -> MKK (Y)	0,202	2,001	**0.003**

Table 5. Results of Total Effects Analysis through the Bootstrapping Process for the Relationship Between Variables at the Lower Management Level (97 Respondents)

Variable relationship	*Path Coefficient*	*t-statistics*	*p-values*
GKTF (X_1) -> MKK (Y)	0,263	7,851	**0,002**
GKTS (X_2) -> MKK (Y)	0,326	8,214	**0,001**
Moderating Effect 1 ($Z*X_1$) -> MKK (Y)	0,231	2,421	**0,000**
Moderating Effect 2 ($Z*X_2$) -> MKK (Y)	0,289	3,712	**0.001**

Table 6. Results of Bootstrapping Analysis for Outer Weight on Variable Indicators

Variable Indicator	*Path Coefficient*	*t-statistics*	*p-values*
$BPG_{1.1}$ <- BPG (Z)	0,492	4,835	**0,005**
$BPG_{1.2}$ <- BPG (Z)	0,447	4,285	**0,001**
$BPG_{2.1}$ <- BPG (Z)	0,356	3,637	**0,000**
$BPG_{2.2}$ <- BPG (Z)	0,341	3,590	**0,000**
$BPG_{3.1}$ <- BPG (Z)	0,329	3,012	**0,000**
$BPG_{3.2}$ <- BPG (Z)	0,372	3,835	**0,001**
$GKTF_{1.1}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,396	4,965	**0,000**
$GKTF_{1.2}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,425	5,112	**0,000**
$GKTF_{1.3}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,471	5,770	**0,000**
$GKTF_{2.1}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,359	4,483	**0,000**
$GKTF_{2.2}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,385	4,731	**0,000**
$GKTF_{2.3}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,482	5,937	**0,000**
$GKTF_{3.1}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,324	3,900	**0,000**
$GKTF_{3.2}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,319	3,733	**0,008**
$GKTF_{4.1}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,327	3,927	**0,000**
$GKTF_{4.2}$ <- GKTF (X_1)	0,370	4,668	**0,000**
GKTF (X_1) * BPG (Z) <- Moderating Effect 1 ($Z*X_1$)	1,000	-	-
$GKTS_{1.1}$ <- GKTS (X_2)	0,322	3,120	**0,017**
$GKTS_{1.2}$ <- GKTS (X_2)	0,257	2,409	**0,000**
$GKTS_{2.1}$ <- GKTS (X_2)	0,278	2,707	**0,000**
$GKTS_{2.2}$ <- GKTS (X_2)	0,479	3,993	**0,038**
$GKTS_{3.1}$ <- GKTS (X_2)	0,285	3,000	**0,043**
$GKTS_{3.2}$ <- GKTS (X_2)	0,343	3,290	**0,020**
GKTS (X_2) * BPG (Z) <- Moderating Effect 2 ($Z*X_2$)	1,000	-	-

D. Discussion and Implications

Results of bootstrapping in Table 3, the relationship between transformational leadership and employee motivation has p-values that meet the requirements of less than 0.05 for 0.000 and more than 1.96 for t-statistics of 14.702. This suggests that the factors that contribute to the relationship between transformational and employee motivation desire to work. And for the results of the path coefficients, a value of +0.372 is obtained, which means that the influence exerted by transformational on employee motivation is positive. So that the results of hypothesis 1 (H_1) which is decided for transformational leadership on employee motivation is Reject H_o.

In addition, based on the t-statistics values obtained through the bootstrapping process for the variable indicators of transformational leadership in Table 6, it is known that all indicators of transformational leadership have a significant influence with p-values less than 0.05. Transformational leadership indicator that has the greatest influence on employee motivation is the optimism indicator ($GKTF_{2.3}$) of the inspirational motivation dimension ($GKTF_2$) of 5.937. It is possible to deduce that the more optimistic the supervisors' outlook, the more motivated their employees are. And for the correlation transactional leadership and employee motivation, it has p-values that meet the requirements of less than 0.05, which is 0.001, and more than 1.96 for t-statistics, which

is 13,450.

This proves that the influence of transactional leadership variables on employee motivation is significant. And for the results of the path coefficients, a value of +0.315 is obtained, which means that the influence exerted by the transactional leadership on employee motivation is positive. So that the result of hypothesis 2 (H_2) which is decided for transactional leadership on work motivation is Reject H_o.

In addition, based on the t-statistics values obtained through the bootstrapping process for the transactional leadership variable indicators in Table 6, it is known that all indicators of the transactional leadership have a significant effect with p-values less than 0.05. The transactional leadership indicator that has the effect influence on employee motivation is the indicator of supervising ($GKTS_{2.2}$) from the management by exception-active dimension ($GKTS_2$) of 3.993. It can be concluded that the higher the supervision given by superiors to employees, the work motivation of their employees will be affected.

The results indicate that the p-value for the moderating role of the cultural variable "Pela Gandong" in the association between transformational leadership and employee motivation is 0.000. Given that this value is significantly below the standard alpha level of 0.05, it confirms the existence of a meaningful moderating effect. Moreover, the associated t-value is 3.981, which is higher than the critical benchmark of 1.96, further verifying that "Pela Gandong" significantly influences the strength of the relationship between transformational leadership and motivation among employees.

Furthermore, the path coefficient for this moderating relationship is calculated at +0.274. The positive sign of this coefficient reflects the reinforcing nature of the cultural factor "Pela Gandong" on the link between transformational leadership and employee motivation. Thus, Hypothesis 3 (H_3) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_0) is statistically rejected.

According to the data in Table 3, from a total of 138 respondents, the most dominant influence was observed in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee motivation, marked by the highest t-value of 14.702. This outcome suggests that, across all participants, there is a general perception leaning toward transactional leadership characteristics. However, within the middle management group (41 respondents) shown in Table 4, the leading t-value of 7.413 pertains to transformational leadership, indicating a stronger preference or impact of transformational behaviors at that managerial level.

Conversely, in Table 5, which focuses on lower-level management (97 respondents), the relationship between transactional leadership and employee motivation yielded the highest t-statistic of 8.214. This demonstrates that transactional leadership practices are more strongly recognized or influential among those in lower-tier management roles.

The cultural moderating variable "Pela Gandong" has a p-value of 0.002, which is less than 0.05, and influences the link between employee motivation and transactional leadership. Additionally, this demonstrates that the moderating variable has an impact on the link between employee motivation and the variable transactional leadership manner. The t-statistics value was 2.069 and higher than 1.96, indicating that the cultural variable "Pela Gandong" significantly affects the association between transactional leadership and

employee motivation. The moderating variable's influence on the link between employee motivation and transactional leadership is also indicated by path coefficients, which have a value of +0.201. Since the path coefficients value is positive, it can be concluded that the cultural moderation variable "Pela Gandong" also strengthens the relationship between employee motivation and transactional leadership. As a result, the results of hypothesis 4 (H_4) are Reject H_o.

Furthermore, the t-statistics values obtained through the bootstrapping process for the indicator variable culture "Pela Gandong" in Table 6 show that all indicators from the culture "Pela Gandong" have a significant influence with p-values less than 0.05 and a positive path coefficient. It might be argued that each sign of the "Pela Gandong" culture contributes to the strengthening of the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation. But the cultural indicator "Pela Gandong", the moral support indicator ($BPG_{1.1}$) from the common sense of belonging dimension (BPG_1) of 4.835 has the biggest impact on bolstering the connection between job motivation and leadership style.

The relationship between the value of moral support ($BPG_{1.1}$) in the "Pela Gandong" culture and the optimism indicator ($GKTF_{2.3}$) of the transformational leadership style in its implementation in construction companies in motivating their employees' work is that in addition to the optimistic attitude of superiors in motivating their employees, superiors also participate by helping employees directly to complete the work faced together.

While the relationship between the value of moral support ($BPG_{1.1}$) in the "Pela Gandong" culture with the indicator of supervising ($GKTS_{2.2}$) from the transactional leadership style in its implementation in construction companies in motivating the work of its employees, namely in addition to supervision given by superiors, superiors also provide work support and assistance to company employees especially for construction companies in Ambon City.

E. Conclusion

The results indicate that transformational leadership style exerts a greater impact on employee motivation compared to transactional leadership style, as evidenced by a higher path coefficient of +0.372, versus +0.315 for transactional leadership. Both leadership styles show a positive and significant influence on employee motivation. This suggests that an increase in the perception of either leadership style correlates with increased employee motivation.

For transformational leadership, a key contributing factor is the optimistic attitude of leaders ($GKTF_{2.3}$), which stems from the inspirational motivation dimension ($GKTF_2$). When leaders display higher levels of optimism, employees demonstrate greater motivation—particularly in fulfilling their social needs (MKK_2), such as being active participants within the organization ($MKK_{2.2}$).

Regarding transactional leadership, the most influential factor is supervisory behavior ($GKTS_{2.2}$) within the management by exception-active dimension ($GKTS_2$). The more frequent and structured the supervision from leaders, the more it encourages employees to stay engaged, again fulfilling their need to be active within the organization.

The role of "Pela Gandong" culture as a moderating variable is also found to be significant. This cultural aspect strengthens the relationship between both transformational and transactional leadership styles and employee motivation. The moderating effect of "pela gandong" is reflected in positive path coefficients of +0.274 (for transformational leadership) and +0.201 (for transactional leadership). The presence of moral support from leaders ($BPG_{1.1}$)**,** as a key indicator of this cultural value, enhances employees' perception of leadership, particularly in terms of fulfilling their social motivations ($MKK_{2.2}$)**.** In essence, the stronger the influence of " Pela Gandong," the more substantial the impact of leadership styles on motivating employees.

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