

## Empowering Leadership's Effect to Employee Task Performance: A Mediating Role of Work Engagement

Fetty Fajriati Anwar<sup>a</sup>, Muchlis R. Luddin<sup>b</sup>, Maruf Akbar<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Doctoral program student of the State University of Jakarta, <sup>b</sup> Professor of Sociology of the State University of Jakarta (1<sup>st</sup> Promotor), <sup>c</sup> Professor of Statistics at the State University of Jakarta (2<sup>nd</sup> Promotor).

Jl. Rawamangun Muka, Jakarta, Indonesia <sup>a,b,c</sup>

Corresponding email author email: FettyFajriatiAnwar\_7647157980@mhs.unj.ac.id

### Abstract

In Indonesian telecommunication sector, a convergence services for voice, data, and video in one single network product is on high demand. An Indonesian state-owned telecom company, become one of telecom industries that provides its customers this kind of service consisting of internet, fixed-telephone and IPTV. In order to gain more customers for the service, the company need to support its technicians to complete their tasks related to working with technical devices of telecommunication. There are two form of tasks that the technicians should be well performed namely installing and maintaining the telecommunication networks. To fulfil the tasks related to their performance, the employees need leaders to empower them. A new style of empowering leadership becomes an important style of leadership to activate employee task performance. Further, empowering leadership can translate the employee motivation engaging in their work into required task performance. This study is aimed at checking the role of work engagement as mediator in the relationship of empowering leadership and employee task performance. A total of 132 technicians from the Indonesian state-owned telecom company were used to be analysed by using structural equation model (SEM). It was indicated that empowering leadership behaviours became important drivers to enhance employee task performance. Further, it study found that work engagement could only partly mediate the relationship of empowering leadership and employee task performance.

**Keywords:** Empowering leadership, Work engagement, Task performance.

### 1. Introduction

Telecom industry is recently becoming the central point of technological innovation and proliferation of many services. Many telecom companies enhance their business performance by providing services related to broadband services such as data transmission, video conferencing and many others. Now, these services can be provided in a convergence form where people at home can enjoy using telephone, high quality internet, and internet protocol television (IPTV) in one package. The largest Indonesian state-owned telecom company is one of the telecom companies that provides the package of broadband service which is delivered through the penetration of fibre optics.

The demand of this innovative service is increasing each year, in particular in big city like Jakarta where the majority customers from. Along with the high demand of the service, a knowledge up-to-date and skills are needed for those who work to this field to respond to the challenge of new technology. Thus, a highly skilled workers are needed the tasks of providing the service in any service areas. (Brook et al., 2018). It is because of the service is deployed by installing telecommunication lines, such as fibre optic lines. However, the highly skilled employees in working with fibre optics are not sufficiently provided in global market to fulfil the market demands (Zyl, et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, those who works for installing as well as maintaining the telecommunication lines (herein after is called technicians) are mainly obtained high school diploma. In order to become proficient at working with the complex telecommunication equipment, the company put the technicians on the job training program (Telkom Akses, 2019). They have to obtain both soft skills and technical skills in which those skill come into play for their jobs (Brooks, et al., 2018). Tasks are expected to performed faster and better if the technicians know what they are doing.

Since the last one decade, the competition among telecom companies in Indonesia has been severely increasing. Thunnissen et al., see that the lack of highly skilled workers has created a certain situation in which the technical telecom workers can seamlessly make transition from one opportunity to another (Zyl et al., 2019). This

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transition has triggered employees turnover in telecommunication sectors. In some countries, employees turnover becomes serious problems in telecom companies. In Bangladesh, for example, low salary, marginal supervision, lack of competence have become significant factors that increase employee turnover during 2019 (**Islam et al., 2019**).

In Indonesia, the employee turnover in telecom companies reached at 20% on annual basis. The high turnover rate was more related to the expiration of annual working period for technicians project based. Most of the employee who works in technical division are non-permanent employees. Thus, the employee can move to other telecom companies as their employment contracts are specified. As a result, the employees do not long enough to stay in on company, and do not become proficient in performing their tasks. Getting talents or high skilled workers who can work with the telecommunication equipment become a severe competition among telecom companies.

In order to provide its own skilled technicians, Indonesian state-owned telecom company change its talent retention program to maximize technicians' task performance returns. Thus, the company increase the performance targets. Started in 2019, the technicians should fulfil 5 service point targets per day for new installation and 3 service point targets for repairment (**Telkom Akses, 2019**). Although the technician always work in pairs, but the new performance targets has created high time pressure for technicians to complete. Chasing the target with lack of supervisor supports will decrease technicians' task performance.

The technicians need to be supported by their leader namely site manager, in order to make decision related to the tasks for installing or repairing. However, technicians cannot always give a quick solution because sometimes any defects cannot be quickly identified. Thus, the technicians have to wait for the leader instructions. As a result, the customers file complaints to the company because they don't feel satisfy with technician work result.

Although the complaints on technicians task performance was not the dominant factor, but it still could affect customer loyalty index. In 2019, The percentage of customer loyalty index in Jakarta became the lowest percentage compared to the index from other six regional service areas. And, the complaints about technicians' works, contributed to 10% of total complaints coming from customers in Jakarta (**Telkom Akses, 2019**). The complaints mostly referred to the technician's slowness of work in installing new service or repairing any technical problems at their first visits.

Customers expected the technicians to be able to fix the problems at their first visit. However, the technician could not always fulfil customers' expectation. They were required to come within the following day to completing the tasks after getting clues from their leaders. Sometimes, the defect was caused by natural condition like heavy rain or flood that can cause a serious problem to the telecommunication lines. The technician was, indeed, expected to be able to make decision after they found diagnostic problems, so they could directly fix the problem without going back to the office. To enable to do this, the technicians need to be empowered by their leader. A conducive situation can be possessed by a leader who has capability in empowering his subordinates (**Jin et al., 2016**).

The company admitted that the technicians have yet reached the targets as expected. The technicians were only able to fulfil 4 target points for new service installations and 2 target points for repairing the defects. During the 2019, there were two service areas in Jakarta where the technicians have not yet achieved their task performance, namely in Central Jakarta and West Jakarta. This two service areas were called as the Opportunity For Improvement (OFI) areas. In these two areas, the technicians need to be empowered to be able to achieve the targets set by the company (**Telkom Akses, 2019**). Soliman mentions that nowadays, telecom companies are dealing with two essential challenges, the first is to fulfil customer demand for shortening time of the services; secondly is to meet the employees need (**Soliman, 2020**).

Leadership empowerment is one important factor to meet the employees need in order to complete their tasks. A certain leadership style has been identified as an important antecedent for employees task performance. Empowering leadership has emerged as a new leadership style that is different from transformational and transactional leadership (**Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014**). Recent study has suggested that empowering leadership has a positive influence to enhance employee task performance (**Hao et al., 2017**). The term task performance has gained a wide acceptance in literature as one of dimensions of performance developed by Borman and Motowidlo (**Griffin et al., 2000**). For this study, we use the concept of task performance articulated by Motowidlo and colleagues. There are few studies that explore task performance with the effect of empowering leadership, in particular for the telecom technicians.

Arnold mentioned that the rapid change in information technology and telecommunications has led organizations to adopt a different approach to management systems. The role of empowering leadership in putting the management into a new systems is pivotal (**Arnold et al., 2000**). The authors were interested in the result of the study conducted by Arnold and colleagues, in a large telecom corporation. Their study have succeeded to contribute empowerment to the degree which effect individuals and team to completing the tasks (**Arnold et al., 2000**). Thus, the authors want to test the theory that link the empowering leadership to task performance. Lynne

McFarland et al., affirm that empowering leadership model is known as leadership style that share power to employees so they can contribute to their fullest capacity (**Maxwell, 2015**). The term of leader in this study is used for the site managers who becomes the leader for technicians.

We are also interested in examining the influence of empowering leadership to task performance through a mediating factor. We chose work engagement as the mediator. We believe, there are many studies that have been developing through the role of work engagement as mediator. In the competitive world today, engaged workers are seen as a good asset for both organizations and academicians. Initially, Kahn proposed the concept of work engagement because he wanted to see how employee bringing themselves into their work (**Christian & Slaughter, 2011**). Other researchers found work engagement as an antecedent that positively associated to employee task performance marked by managers or supervisors (**Bakker and Bal, 2010; Yongx ing et al, 2017**). After three decades of Kahn's construct on work engagement was firstly introduced, many researches have been continuously conducting researches, and they find positive relationships between work engagement to numerous concept of task performance (**Shuck, 2011**).

There is evidence that work engagement can be a motivational factors that emerge as employees' active personal resources (physical, intellectual, social and psychological) when they perform their task performances (**Rich et al., 2010**). When the technicians work with telecommunication lines, they have to feel connected to their tasks physically, cognitively and emotionally. They touch the cables, lay the cables underground and pull the cables to customers' homes. They have to follow the process until the installation end. And, they should enjoy all the work process. If employees feel happily engaged with their works, the employees work harder and are better at completing their work related tasks (**Mazetti, et al., 2019**).

Sack found a unique relationship between work engagement and task performance. He mentions that when leaders in organization treat the employees with respects and think about their welfare, and the employee may feel obligated to reciprocate their works with greater vigour, dedication and absorption to the organization (**Chughtai and Buckley, 2011**). With the support of researcher's theories, we took a study in the state-owned telecom company to examine the influence of empowering leadership to task performance (H1); the influence of empowering leadership to work engagement (H2). We, primary, examined the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship of empowering leadership and task performance (H3).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2. 1. Empowering leadership and task performance

As one of components of job performance, task performance plays an important part of achieving competitive advantage for organization (**Bilal, 2018**). Borman and Motowidlo (**Rotundo and Sackett, 2002**) define task performance as formal activities that contribute to the technical core of the organization that involves two activities. The first is work activity that transform raw material into goods and services produced by organization. The second is work activity that maintain the technical core to enable it to function efficiently and effectively (**Borman & Kell, 2012**).

A technical core of telecom organization, in particular for broadband services, commonly takes two kind of activities that relates to new network installation and maintenance. The first task involves activities that services are provided through the installation of fibre optic lines to the service area or homes. Second task involves activities in which the telecommunication lines should be maintained to avoid any technical defects. Thus, the technicians tasks are installing the new lines of telecommunication for the service (fixed telephone, internet and IPTV) and maintaining the lines from any technical problems and repairing them if there are any defects.

Working with telecommunication equipment requires knowledge and skills. Campbell assumes that task performance involves not only cognitive abilities, but also technical abilities (**Sonnentag & Frese, 2005**). Task performance refers to how employee can be proficient at performing central job tasks (**Koopmans et al., 2014**). In order to gain the knowledge and skill in fulfilling their task performance, technicians need to be empowered. Forrester mention that in order to empower employee, leaders need to minimize bureaucratic hurdles that can slow down employees responsiveness. This can be done by enhancing employees motivation and allow them to be more adaptive and receptive to their work environment (**Hakimi et al., 2010**). Manz and Sims describes empowering leadership as a leadership style that can encourage employee task performance in an empowered work environment (**Raub & Robert, 2010**). In an empowering work environment, leaders can motivate the technicians to control and completing their work tasks.

Empowering leadership has been seen by researchers as a new form of leadership that enable leaders to give autonomy in decision making through leaders empowering behaviours to enhance their meaningfulness of work (**Hao et al., 2017**). When employees feel that their works are meaningful, they will be motivated intrinsically. Thus, they espouse organization goals through their works. Thomas and Velthouse mention that intrinsic task motivation as a form of empowerment, can be shaped on an ongoing basis in work environment (**Amundsen & Martinsen,**

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2015). The empowering leadership behaviours can encourage employees to complete their tasks. There are 5 relevant task performance indicators to the technicians jobs, namely *planning and organizing, administration, oral and written communication, decision making, and solving problems* (Koopmans et al., 2014). These five indicators may differ on the basis the nature of jobs.

For empowering leadership, we adopted the construct of empowering leadership which was developed by Arnold and colleagues. In Arnold et al. construct, the empowering leadership demonstrates behaviours that facilitate employee task performance such as *leading by example, coaching, informing, showing concern, and participative decision-making* (Arnold et al., 2000). The reason we chose this concept was because many researchers agreed that leaders would demonstrate these empowering behaviours to motivate employees to complete their routine tasks regarding to products, service and procedures in works (Hao et al., 2017).

For examples, technicians need a model from the empowering leader in order to complete their work-related tasks. One of leader behaviours namely *leading by example* provides an appropriate behavioural model for employees to emulate (Raub & Robert, 2010). *Coaching* can encourage employee to provide feedback how mistakes can be a learning opportunity and to increase the competence component in empowerment (Hughes et al., 2009). Further, technicians need to get information from their leaders to operate a complex telecommunication equipment, to solve the problems and to achieve the targets. In order to empower employees, leaders or managers are required to share information (Namasivayam et al., 2012).

With these various behaviours obtained by leaders, logically, empowering leadership should give the most clear impact for employees to gain competence in order to fulfil their tasks. However, the influence of empowering leadership to task performance may depend on situational factors. Ahearne and colleagues found that empowering leadership behaviours only effect on task performance of the in-experience of sales persons. For the experienced sales persons, they are not affected by empowering leadership (Ahearne et. al, 2005).

It cannot be denied that the in-experienced of technicians need empowering leadership to assist them in making decisions, as they always work outside the office. For employees, is important to have the feelings of competence as well as feelings of autonomy to increase intrinsic motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Hence, empowering leadership is a chemical for the technicians to nurture their motivations. The empowering leadership style, whether obtaining by the top leader or the site managers, can drive employee task performance (Humborstad et al., 2014). This can be considered as a substance to study the influence of empowering leadership towards task performance.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Empowering leadership has a direct influence on task performance*

### 2. 2. Empowering leadership and work engagement

Recent researches indicate that different styles of leadership are related to work engagement. Empowering leadership is a leadership style that can play an important role in fostering motivation to encourage employee work engagement (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2016). Empowering leadership has been illustrated by researchers as a significant factor that can expand employees motivation and engagement in their work (Hao et al., 2017). Our study chose the construct of work engagement, articulated by Schaufeli and his colleagues that referring to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by *vigour, dedication, and absorption* (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Leader's motivational character such as sharing autonomy is likely associated with work engagement (Christian & Slaughter, 2011).

Empowering leadership can encourage psychological state on both individual and team through the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Tuckey & Dollar, 2012). Leaders' behaviours of encouraging employees to make their own decisions have developed an intrinsic motivation since their leader has satisfied employees' self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Being intrinsically motivated, employees will produce desire to engage in their works for their own sake. Meanwhile, the extrinsic motivation can be obtained by employees from the leader behaviour that systematically increase the ability of employees to successfully complete their work tasks (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

By having the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from the leader, employees feel their work more meaningful which in turn can positively drive to their work engagement (Tuckey & Dollar, 2012). Therefore, it is important for the leader to look at the work engagement put into practice. Kirkman and Rosen as cited in Cai et al., mentioned that empowering leadership, as a one of social authority patterns, shared autonomy with employees which could increase employee motivation and work engagement in their work (Cai et al., 2018). Engaged employees are lively and passionate to fulfil their assigned tasks (Bilal, 2018). A worker who feels engaged to the works will present a high level of energy and a strong enthusiastic to the work (Bakker & Demerouti., 2008). Thus, this study also reviews the positive direct influence of empowering leadership to work engagement.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Empowering leadership has a direct influence on work engagement.*

### 2.3. The mediating role of work engagement

Nowadays, organizations tend to make employees work hard to increase organization performance because of the severe competition among them. Therefore, many organizations put much interested in taking any programs that can enhance their employee work engagements. Managers in the organizations become the party that takes the responsibilities on increasing employee work engagement in order to achieve organizational goals. By having the engaged employees, the company believes that engaged employees will fulfil duties according to the job description in order to accomplish their performance (Rich et al., 2010). Therefore, many company are willing to take a survey to help managers improving employee task performance.

The three elements of work engagement developed by Schaufeli are similar to psychological state articulated by Kahn. These conditions are signed by physically, cognitively, and emotionally when employees perform their tasks related to their works (Christian & Slaughter, 2011). Accordingly, when employees are engaged, they express themselves and get involved in works mentally, intellectually and physically to exercise their work (Xanthopoulou, et al., 2008). In telecommunication industry, the manager expected their technicians to be engaged to their tasks. When employees are engaged to their jobs, it make them capable of doing their jobs better to complete their task performances (Aryee et al. 2012).

Installing, maintaining and repairing telecommunication networks are complicated tasks. The technicians have to employ themselves into physical, cognitive, and emotionally states during fulfilling task performances. They have to move electricity from the poles to customers' home, and work with high voltage electricity (Telkom Akes, 2019). Positive emotions such as happy, enthusiasm, and *vigour* can make employees more creative and attached to their works. Hence, happy workers are more sensitive and cautious at work as they as more helpful to others, confident and optimistic (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). These positive emotions are useful for the technicians when they have to work outdoor. Employees with positive emotions are considered to be engaged to their works. Engaged workers shows better performance comparing to non-engaged workers (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Work engagement is an advantageous factor for both workers and organizations since the engaged employees are appeared to be way better execution work tasks (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). Since organization seeks motivated and engaged employee to enhance its performance, leadership plays a vital role in organizational performance. Leaders are always connecting with employees and are capable to make employees motivated and engaged to their works. Tuckey and his colleagues have investigated the important part of empowering leadership in encouraging the motivational forms that support the employee work engagement (Tuckey et al., 2012). Some research in the past, have also illustrated that work engagement is emphatically related to task performance (Rich et al., 2010).

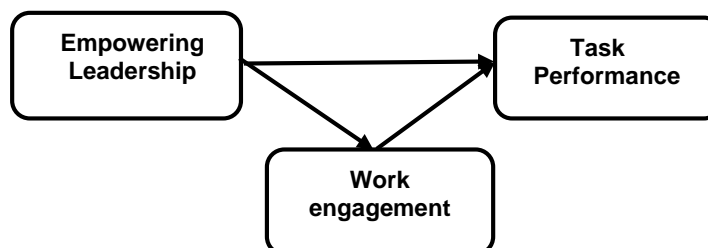
Numerous scholars reinforce work engagement as a mediator for the relationship of certain leadership style and employees' task performance. Srivastava et al., (2006) conducted research on the influence of empowering leadership to task performance mediated by motivation or efficacy, as antecedents for work engagement. The motivation or the sense of viability can be improved by employees through engaging the empowering leadership behaviours (Ahearne et al., 2005).

When empowering leadership employ behaviours that empower employees, it will encourage employee motivation intrinsically and extrinsically which will affect employee work engagement so that they can take independent steps to adjust their strategy for achieving their performances (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016). In motivational concept, work engagement relates to the perseverance and concentrated with the work which employees seek in performing their task performance (Rich et al., 2010). Thus, this study assumes that work engagement can be a mediator on the relationship of empowering leadership and task performance:

*H<sub>3</sub> : The work engagement can be a mediator between empowering leadership and task performance*

The hypothesis of this study can be illustrated through the model in figure 1.:

**Figure 1.** The mediation model of wok engagement



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## 3. Population and Sample

The primary data was collected from the technicians of the Indonesian state-owned telecom company. The population was the technician of telecom company who conducted tasks in the opportunity for improvement (OFI) service areas in Jakarta and performed their main tasks of installing and repairing the telecom networks. To get the sample, we adopted a proportional random sampling technique to select small group of sample from the population who worked offsite. Data were gathered from 132 ( $n = 132$ ) technicians who became the respondents who were 100% men. Most of women technicians' tasks were in supporting units inside the telecom company.

For the respondents, we sent on-line questionnaire which directly link to individual mobile number of the respondents. A structured questionnaires for research instruments have been used to measure empowering leadership, work engagement and task performance. We obtained all response from the respondents resulting that the majority of the respondent (72.7%) was in the group age of 21 to 30 years. Most of the respondents were high school graduates (93.2%) and the predominant period of employment of the respondents was 1 to 5 years (89.4%).

## 4. Measuring instruments

Three self-report instruments were used for the study. For Empowering leadership, we used 10 items from Empowering Leadership Questionnaires (ELQ) developed by **Arnold et al., (2000)**. All items were scored on a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 ('never') to 5 ('always'). The Cronbach's Alpha for the reliability of this scale was 0.876. For work engagement, we used 9-item scale of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) from **Schaufeli and Bakker (2003)**.

Responses were made through a 5-point scale that range from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The Cronbach's Alpha for the reliability of this scale was 0.866. Task performance was measured by using a-10 generic questionnaires of task performance, developed by the author referring to the indicators developed by **Koopmans et al. (2014)**. All items were scored on a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 ('never') to 5 ('always'). The Cronbach Alpha for the reliability of this scale was 0.891. The construct validity for the three instruments for the construct were valid ( $r$  value  $> r$  table = 0.41)

## 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data was processed by using SPSS to calculate the descriptive statistics (as presented in Table 1). From the SPSS program, the result can be displayed in Table.1 for the means, standard deviations and positive correlations of each variable within all the study variables.

**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviation and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	X1	X2	Y
Empowering Leadership (X1)	4.437	0.428			
Work Engagement (X2)	4.405	0.414	0.375**		
Task Performance (Y)	4.133	0.542	0.503**	0.529**	

From table 1, we can see that the mean for variable X1 is 4.437, variable X2 is 4.405 and variable Y is 4.133. The Pearson correlation statistically has shown a significant positive relationship between all variables ( $p < 0.01$ ).

The evaluation of the measurement model of SEM, carried out through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the validity and reliability of the constructs. We examined the discriminant validity of the constructs by using the square root of AVE (**Hair, et al., 2010**). Furthermore, we also conducted the validity and reliability tests on each indicators.

Then, the authors utilized the testing conveyance of Goodness of Fit in order to see how well and significance the overall model into a set of perception. GOF lists are utilized to summarize the disparity between the observed values and the values anticipated under a statistical model (**Olivares and Forero, 2010**). The model fit can be determined through: 1) Absolute Fit Indices such as Chi-square, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA:  $< 0.08$ ) and the Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR:  $< 0.08$ ); 2) Incremental Fit Indices such as Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI  $> 0.90$ ) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI  $> 0.90$ ).

**Table 2.** Validity and Reliability

Variable	Manifest Variables	$\lambda$	CR	AVE
<b>X1</b>	X1.1	0.88	0.87	0.58
	X1.2	0.86		
	X1.3	0.76		
	X1.4	0.69		
	X1.5	0.59		
<b>X2</b>	X2.1	0.71	0.77	0.52
	X2.2	0.75		
	X2.3	0.71		
<b>Y</b>	Y1	0.93	0.95	0.80
	Y2	0.90		
	Y3	0.92		
	Y4	0.83		
	Y5	0.88		

From Table 2, We found that all the constructs were valid (the Average Variance Extracted values were  $\geq 0.50$  and the Construct Reliability was  $> 0.70$ ). It can be seen that the first dimension of leading by example is the factor that dominantly describe the variable of Empowering leadership with its highest value of 0.88. The dominant factor to describe the variable of work engagement (X2) is dedication (X2.2) with the value of 0.75, and the dominant factor to describe the variable of task performance is planning and organizing (Y1) with its value of 0.93, the highest value for the other indicators.

**Table 3.** Goodness of Fit (GOF)

GOF Index	Cut off Value	Measurement Result	Remark
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2$	1.588	Fit
TLI	$> 0.90$	0.902	Fit
CFI	$> 0.90$	0.915	Fit
RMSEA	$< 0.08$	0.067	Fit
SRMR	$< 0.08$	0.065	Fit

From table 3, we can see that the measurement model of all variables are acceptable fit to the data. The value of  $\chi^2/df=1.588$ , RMSEA = .067, CFI = .915, TLI = .902 and SRMR = 0.065. So it can be said that the data is fit to the model. The values that is shown in Table 3 tells that the model is a good fit for the three factors (variables) for this study. It can be seen in table 3.

After measuring the model, we (authors) applied a structural equation model to verify hypotheses for the influence among the three variables. Figure 2 shows the results of a structural equation model. The model is utilized as a multivariate strategy to clarify the relationship among the different variables (Kaplan, 2009). In this study, we assessed the relationship between empowering leadership, work engagement, and task performance. Before we tested the mediating effect, first we assessed the relationship of empowering leadership and task performance.

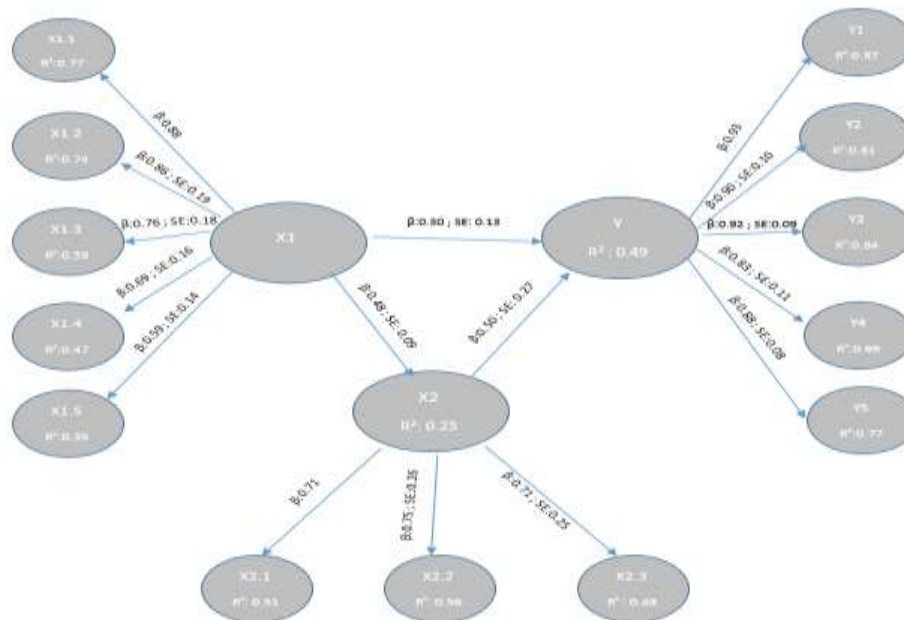
The study found that the path between empowering leadership and task performance was positive and significant ( $\beta : 0.30$ ; S:E :0.13 ;  $p < 0.05$  ). Our Hypothesis 1 has proved that empowering leadership influence employee task performance. Secondly, we assessed the relationship between the variables of empowering leadership

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and work engagement. The study found that the path between empowering leadership and work engagement was positive and significant ( $\beta : 0.48$ ; S:E :0.09 ;  $p < 0.05$  ). This finding supported our Hypothesis 2 that empowering leadership significantly influenced work engagement.

We conducted a calculation by using Sobel test to see the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship of empowering leadership and task performance (Sobel, 1982) with significant z-value is  $2.488 > 1.960$  (higher than z-table). The standard errors (STERRS) for the mediating effect assessment was at the 95% confidence limit. Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported. However, the coefficient score of total mediating (indirect) effect of empowering leadership to task performance ( $0.48 \times 0.50 = 0.24$ ) was lower than the score of direct effect of empowering leadership to task performance (0.30). Thus, work engagement could only act as partial mediator. The Structural model can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 2.** Structural model developed for the research



Note: X1 = Empowering Leadership, X2 = Work Engagement, Y = Task Performance

## 6. Discussion

The result of this study has shown that empowering leadership significantly influenced employee task performance. The primary reason of the present study was to look at the potential mediating role of work engagement in the relationship of empowering leadership and task performance. Our findings have shown that the empowering leadership has a greater effect on the direct relationship towards task performance rather than on the indirect relationship mediated by work engagement.

Our study finds that the biggest influence of empowering leadership to the technicians is more to knowledge and competence rather than making decisions. The leader's behaviours, indicated by *leading by example* and *coaching*, obtained higher coefficient values, than other behaviour indicators. They accounted for 0.88 and 0.86 respectively. **Raub and Robert (2010)** mention that empowering leadership behaviours can empower the employees task (in-role) performance by reinforcing their instrumental skills, abilities and efficacy. Other researchers have given further suggestion that empowering leadership can support a particular aspect of employee's task (in-role) performance (**Hao et al., 2017**).

In our research, the indicator of *participative decision making* was not a dominant behaviour of the empowering leadership. Conversely, it became the indicator with the lowest coefficient value (0.59). Arad and Drasgow (**Arnold et al., 2000b**) draw a concept of empowerment as a process of enhancing employee's feeling of self-efficacy and self-control such as participative in decision making and removing the traditional managerial practices of bureaucracy.

In arrange to perform their work roles independently, the technicians need to rely on external motivation from their leaders, especially in making decision at critical situation. There must be a source of autonomous motivation which make employee experience making decision as a form of their needs for competence and



autonomy (Sheldon et al., 2003). However, in empowered work context, effective leadership may include behaviours that do not fundamentally increase employee self-control in decision making as a form of empowerment (Raub and Robert, 2010). Coaching is appropriate behavioural model that employees can emulate (Ahearne et al., 2005). Coaching behaviour educates individuals and team to be capable of performing autonomously and informing behaviour relates positively to raise employee efficacy (Srivastava et al., 2006).

The reason of conducting the research in a state-owned telecom company is to learn how the leaders, namely site managers, in the company can minimize the practice of bureaucracy in their leadership style. From the magnitude coefficient of the five indicators, we see that adopting an empowering leadership style in the company can be interpreted by applying the empowering behaviours starting from 1) Leading the technicians by examples or become the model, 2) Coaching them, 3) Sharing information, 4) Showing concern for their problems and, 5) Inviting technicians to participate in decision making.

From the demographic profile, we can tell that most of technician are high school graduates and are dominantly in the period work below 5 years. It is related to the statement made by the company former CEO, that the leaders must be a model for employees to strengthen their motivation in order to complete their work tasks (Arwin Rasyid, 2015). Leadership can facilitate empowerment to employees in a number of ways. Through leaders empowering behaviours, employees can create adequate assets to handle job demands which have positive impacts on employee work engagement (Tuckey et al., 2012).

Srivastava et al. (2006) propose that empowering leadership persuade employee with a more prominent collaborative endeavour to assist one another. The motivation given by leaders can raise the employee recognitions of empowerment and self-efficacy which in turn will make employee engaged to their works (Shuck, 2011). The technicians work engagement in this study was dominantly depicted by the indicator of dedication in their works rather than the two other indicators namely vigour and absorption. This means that the technicians fulfil their task performances with dedications amid their statuses of non-permanent employees in the company.

Dedication refers to being unequivocally attached to one's work and encountering a sense of centrality, excitement, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007). The technician may feel enthusiasm and challenged because they work with the latest technology in telecommunication sector. They feel proud because they work with a large state-owned telecom company in Indonesia. Spreitzer, as cited by Moura, states that when workers feel happy and proud in carrying out their duties and their capacity affect their work results, it means that leaders have empowered their employees (Moura et al., 2015). Empowering leadership can empower the technicians by implementing behaviours in giving example, coaching, informing, concerning to their problems, and taking them to participate in decision making.

## 7. Recommendations

Manz and Sims argued that the unique of leaders of empowering followers, lied in the philosophy that the empowered environment should be characterized by leadership rather than management behaviours (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). Herewith our recommendations. Firstly, it is the leader behaviours that has the effect of empowering the subordinates, and create an empowering environment in the organization. to enable technicians to make decision in a certain situation, the site manager should create the environment where the technician can learn more about making decision from the situation given by the leader as a part of coaching. If the leaders want to empower employees in a form of participative decision making, then, the employee must be equipped with adequate knowledge and the necessary facilities (Grissom, 2012).

Secondly, the site manager who wants to adopt the empowering leadership behaviours may need elementally changing their leadership style. He needs to know how to lead technicians by example in taking important decision. Site manager has to endure tolerance of employee mistakes when the make wrong decision. Therefore, leaders have to provide more coaching, and give more access to information so the employees can exert their personal power to make decision. Once the followers start to develop their skills, knowledge and experience to make wise decision, employee can find ways to increase their task performance.

Basically, the application of autonomy in carrying out their tasks and making decisions depend on the extent to which employees understand work procedures, goals and work priorities of the employees themselves (O'Neill & Arendt, 2008). Leaders must gradually extend the degree of latitude and give more autonomy to followers (employees) to make decisions (Hughes et al., 2009). Vecchio (2010b) argued that, in general, leaders who shared power and autonomy with followers can make them contribute to a better performance.

Thirdly, For technicians whose dedication are shown during their work, the site manager should give appreciations. The form of appreciation can be a formal training for dedicated technicians to improve their technical skills. Technicians' strong dedication need to be maintained by the leader in order to enhance technicians task performances. Furthermore, site manager can put dedication as one of considerations in the recruitment process for permanent employees. Because the changing status of permanent employees are very awaited by technicians.

## 8. Conclusion and Limitations

This study concludes that work engagement can partly mediate the relationship of empowering leadership to employee task performance. However, empowering leadership have positively both direct effect and indirect effect (partially) on task performance. This means the state-owned telecom need leaders with empowering leadership behaviour in enhancing technicians competence to complete their task performance. The site managers need to be in the sites, lead the technicians by example, coach them to work with telecommunication equipment, inform the technicians about the standard and procedures, concern about their problems and give a chance to participate in decision making.

The empowering leadership behaviours are predicted to share power and autonomy to employees in decision making. In any case, in this study, the indicator of *participative decision making* does not dominantly depict the empowering leadership behaviours. It is *leading by example* which illustrates the nature of empowering leadership. To what degree is the employee obtain skills on decision making, depending on the degree of scope and autonomy the leaders give to employee. The leader behaviours to share autonomy and authority in making decision amid a critical situation, enable employee to develop skills, knowledge and responsibilities in the endeavour of improving task performance. *Participative decision making* can be shown through assignment execution to see whether employees obediently fulfilling their job tasks (Srivastava et al., 2006).

Empowering leadership plays an important role in facilitating the affective motivation to employees in the process of increasing employee engagement towards their works (Tuckey et al., 2012). Motivated employees tend to involve themselves in extra discretionary efforts in task performance either directly or mediated by work attachments. Having a great extent of engaged employees in organization may lead to noteworthy organizational outcomes (Shuck, 2011). Engaged workers may perform better than non-engaged employees, because they experience positive emotions like joys, interest and they are open to new experiences (Bakker et al., 2012).

This study has several limitations. First, our respondents for this research were particularly selected from a state-owned telecom companies in which we restrictedly analyse for three variables namely empowering leadership, work engagement and task performance. Since the data utilized in this study was collected from one source, this may cause potential procedure discrepancy. Thus, the result of this study cannot be identified generally among other telecom industries in our country. A further research may extended to analyse a diverse company either in telecommunication sector or from other sectors.

Secondly, our study did not control other leadership styles to confirm the expanded deviation that can be described by empowering leadership. We suggest to the future research to consider other leadership styles to be analysed together to find out the distinctive variance which may well be ascribed to certain leadership style. Finally, our findings are constrained to one result of the major aspect of performance namely task performance. The next research could be incorporate with other criterion measure of performance such as contextual performance.

## ORCID iD

Fetty Anwar <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3223-0292>

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