

The Effectiveness of Transactional Leadership Style on Employee Performance at Boy Trenggalek Cigarette Company

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of transactional leadership style on employee performance at PT. Alfi Putra Cigarette Company in Trenggalek Regency. The background of this study is based on the company's ability to survive amid intense competition and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which demands adaptive and effective leadership in managing human resources. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through observations and interviews involving employees and management. The results indicate that transactional leadership has not been fully effective in enhancing employee performance, particularly regarding evaluation practices that remain focused on individual performance rather than team collaboration. Furthermore, the implementation of reward and punishment systems has not optimally improved collective performance or strengthened teamwork. These findings suggest that leadership practices still tend to emphasize short-term targets rather than long-term organizational development. This study contributes by highlighting the importance of a more collaborative and integrative evaluation system to enhance teamwork, productivity, and overall organizational performance. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for improving leadership strategies within similar organizational contexts.

Keywords:

Cigarette Boy Company, Leadership Style, Transactional Leadership

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Introduction

PT. Alfi Putra is the largest local cigarette manufacturer operating in Trenggalek Regency. PT. Alfi Putra Cigarette Company is a sole proprietorship managed by Mr. H. Latif Anwar. Established on July 13, 2003, the company began operations on a small scale with its flagship product known as the 'BOY' kretek cigarette. Alfi Putra Cigarette Company is a sole proprietorship whose operations are directly controlled by the company's owner and founder. The company is engaged in the processing of tobacco products into Sigaret Kretek Tangan (SKT). The company still maintains traditional methods by using a blend of natural tobacco and pure cloves without the addition of chemicals. Unlike most other cigarette companies, which generally use artificial flavorings in their production process, PR. Alfi Putra markets several cigarette brands, including BOY Alami, BOY Chocolate, BOY Natural, and YAHU.

Every company has a specific vision or goal it aims to achieve. Employees, as the company's primary asset, are expected to provide the best service to customers and demonstrate maximum performance so that customers feel well-served and satisfied. This underscores that the role of human resources is crucial to the company's success in achieving its goals. Human resources play a role in managing the company's various inputs optimally to produce outputs that align with the company's expectations (Supriadi et al., 2022) . Management theory explains that people need to be guided, led, and motivated by a strong sense of purpose so that they can fully utilize their potential to achieve optimal results.

Every company implements leadership strategies, which are carried out by the human resources involved. A leader is responsible for planning and coordinating all company activities to ensure that every individual plays a significant role within the organization and that every issue is properly resolved and optimally addressed, so that employees can work effectively and contribute to increasing the company's profits. This responsibility naturally falls under the authority of the company's leader. One of the most critical aspects within a company is the strength of a leader; leadership is the primary factor that significantly influences the improvement or decline in employee performance (Maqviroh et al., 2023) .

Performance is the result obtained by an individual from carrying out the tasks under their responsibility based on the skills, experience, and capacity. Employee performance is the work output achieved by individuals and teams in accordance with the responsibilities and authority granted to them. The tasks they perform support the achievement of organizational goals efficiently and effectively (Daniel, 2021). Employee performance can be assessed by the level of discipline of each employee; for example, arriving on time and helping employees manage their work time optimally to complete tasks, while irregular work hours can hinder productivity (Rahayu & Sutrischastini, 2022)

PT. Alfi Putra, a local cigarette company from Trenggalek, is unique because its kretek cigarette production is dominated by female workers, even though cigarettes are generally consumed by men. PT. Alfi Putra is the company that employs the most workers in the entire Trenggalek Regency. The company focuses on achieving profits through large-scale production and high product quality. To achieve this, PT. Alfi Putra requires employees to produce goods meeting the company's quality and quantity targets by implementing a work system for staff in the cigarette rolling and packaging departments to meet desired production goals. Amid intense competition and increasing regulatory pressure, PT. Alfi Putra has managed to maintain its operations. Meanwhile, many other companies face severe challenges such as plummeting sales, difficulties in paying employee salaries, and falling into debt, ultimately leading to bankruptcy. Many companies attempt to survive by reducing production capacity, streamlining operations, or seeking capital injections from new investors; however, these measures often fail to fully restore the company's overall condition. Amid these contrasting circumstances, the resilience of PT. Alfi Putra deserves recognition. The company's sustainability through 2025 demonstrates that PT. Alfi Putra possesses effective strategies, strong management, and likely the support of loyal customers. This is evident from the relatively high cigarette production targets with the launch of the new PR cigarette brand, Alfi Putra, as well as an increase in the number of employees with a balanced age distribution.

The ages of employees at this company vary, ranging from the youngest at 19 years old to the oldest at 58 years old. The 19–28 age group dominates among PT. Alfi Putra's production staff. In the 25–40 age range, individuals generally possess more progressive thinking, broader knowledge, and a higher level of curiosity. Meanwhile, in the 40–60 age range, individuals tend to be less interested in new things and more set in

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their ways when performing their work. The cigarette production target averages 9,000,000 sticks per month, with quality meeting company standards. This relatively high production target, combined with the diverse age range of employees, is believed to be one of the factors influencing productivity levels (Fatah, 2023) .

A quality leader plays a crucial role in an organization's success, as a good leader can maximize the company's resources, possesses the ability to guide and coordinate the activities of subordinates (Anthony & Vijay Govindarajan, n.d.) . According to Hasibuan, leadership quality plays a crucial role in determining an organization's success because a quality leader has the ability to manage and utilize the company's resources optimally, as well as the competence to coordinate and direct tasks performed by subordinates, anticipate sudden changes that allow for corrections to weaknesses that arise, and lead the organization to achieve the desired goals that have been planned within a specified timeframe (Damanik, 2021) .

A leader's role is crucial in managing a company. A leader must be able to apply the appropriate and effective leadership style to support the company's progress. A leader must understand the various challenges and opportunities that can be leveraged to drive the company's progress. Leaders need to serve as good role models, as employees—both directly and indirectly—will look to their leaders as examples in performing their duties (Hariyani, n.d.) . One such role is encouraging followers to demonstrate performance aligned with the leader's expectations, where employees also have the opportunity to receive recognition and rewards for their work.

Leaders also play a role in helping subordinates understand the responsibilities and goals that need to be achieved. Therefore, companies need leaders with a transactional leadership style that does not instill fear in their subordinates. This style is the art of leading, encompassing the ability to direct actions and the skills required to lead a group or organization . They possess the authority and power to set goals, influence and motivate colleagues and subordinates, and determine the allocation of company resources to ensure organizational sustainability (Sani, 2017) . Transactional leadership style within a leadership system can be observed in an effective leader, where goals are clearly defined, rewards are given for achievements, and corrective actions are implemented when necessary. This can create a structured work environment and motivate employees to achieve predetermined targets (Hendriani et al., 2024) .

PR. Alfi Putra, the largest local cigarette company operating as a sole proprietorship, runs its operations by prioritizing efficiency and the achievement of short-term targets to maintain competitiveness and business sustainability. To achieve the company's objectives, employees capable of producing products meeting the set quality and quantity targets are required, ensuring marketability. Therefore, a transactional leadership style is typically employed as the most appropriate and efficient approach to managing company operations, enhancing employee productivity through the implementation of a strict reward and punishment system, and enabling the sole owner to make swift decisions in response to competitive market changes.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the application of transactional leadership at PR. Alfi Putra. This study focuses on identifying the transactional leadership model applied at PR. Alfi Putra. It is hoped that this study will provide deeper insights into the application of transactional leadership, particularly in the context of PR. Alfi Putra.

Definition of Leadership

Leadership is an individual's ability to influence others to achieve predetermined goals. A leader must have a clear vision of the goals to be achieved, be able to make sound decisions, possess effective communication skills to motivate others, and have the ability to guide and inspire subordinates (Alfio Triana W, Irfan Hasim, 2025).

According to George Terry, leadership is an effort to influence individuals to voluntarily work toward achieving common goals within a group. According to Cyriel O'Donnell, leadership is a form of influence used to encourage others in achieving common goals. According to Wahjosumidjo, leadership means the ability to direct behavioral changes in others, carrying out the process of thinking and acting to formulate and realize organizational goals in accordance with the conditions of the situation faced (F. P. Lestari, 2022).

Leadership reflects a leader's ability to motivate subordinates to work efficiently toward achieving management objectives. Leadership is a crucial component of management. Therefore, a leader must be able to adapt to the subordinates they lead. This includes efforts to foster cooperation, provide guidance, and enhance work motivation among directly involved subordinates, as well as offering support to both individuals and

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groups. This forms the foundation of ethics and morals that influence a leader's management style. The actions taken by a manager and their impact can trigger diverse emotional reactions that influence how subordinates think. Some subordinates observe and emulate how a manager manages the business with goals aligned with their own desires (N. A. Lestari et al., 2025).

Transactional Leadership Style

According to Wendy, leadership style encompasses the personality, character, and unique traits that distinguish a leader from others, which is why a person is considered suitable to be a leader. Everyone has unique characteristics that set them apart from others (Luthfikahana, 2016).

According to Odumeru and Ifeanyi, transactional leadership style focuses on the interaction between leaders and employees based on a give and take relationship. This exchange involves an agreement regarding the setting of goals, performance standards, and the rewards provided. According to Italiani, Burn argues that transactional leadership is a style that emphasizes transactional relationships between leaders and subordinates. Leaders with a transactional leadership style are highly effective in motivating and influencing their subordinates through performance-based reward exchanges. In this transaction, subordinates are promised rewards if they complete tasks as agreed (Putri, 2023).

Transactional leadership is an approach that emphasizes exchange interactions between individuals, particularly between management and employees. These transactions are built on agreements regarding goal setting, performance standards, and task allocation. The transactional leadership style is known for implementing rewards and sanctions within the corporate environment.

According to Bass and Riggio, as cited in (Luthfikahana, 2016), transactional leadership is shaped by several factors, namely:

1. Contingent Reward is an element of transactional leadership, wherein the leader provides employees with instructions regarding the tasks and objectives that must be met.

2. Active Management by Exception is a leadership style where a leader directly monitors employee performance to ensure work processes align with established standards.
3. Passive Management by Exception is a transactional leadership style where a leader only intervenes when errors occur in employees' work execution.

We utilize the transactional leadership theory based on Bass and Riggio, as cited in (Luthfikahana, 2016), which states that transactional leadership consists of three key factors. As a local tobacco company, PR Alfi Putra requires leaders who can motivate employees to improve their performance. By rewarding employees for their achievements, this can improve their performance; leaders also issue reprimands or impose penalties on employees if they fail to meet set targets or make mistakes while working. By applying this theory, the study is expected to reveal the effectiveness of implementing transactional leadership at PR Alfi Putra.

Employee Performance

According to Fahmi, performance refers to the results achieved by an organization whether profit-oriented or not over a specified period. According to Yani, performance is the concrete behavior exhibited by an individual as a result of their work achievements (Ginting et al., 2019).

In short, Afandi explains that performance is the tangible behavior exhibited by each individual as a result of work performance consistent with their roles within the company. Employee performance is a crucial factor in helping a company achieve its goals. Based on the above explanation of the concept of performance, it can be concluded that performance is a process that takes place from start to finish, resulting in work output of high quality and quantity in accordance with established standards (Hariyani, n.d.).

Methodology

The research method used in this study is qualitative descriptive, which is an approach that describes, explains, and elaborates on actual conditions based on the situation and circumstances in the field. Based on this, the researcher decided to conduct a descriptive study using a qualitative approach (Nurrouhiyyah et al., 2025). This study uses this method to describe how effective leadership styles are at the Boy Trenggalek

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cigarette company. Our primary data was obtained through observation, while secondary data was obtained from literature such as books, journals, magazines, and the like. In this study, data were collected through interviews with a number of Boy Cigarette Company employees to obtain information and gather scientific publications related to the research topic. Meanwhile, the data analysis techniques we used include data presentation, inference, and verification (Cahyono et al., 2023) .

This study involved several informants consisting of production employees and management staff selected using purposive sampling. To ensure data validity, the researchers applied source triangulation by comparing interview data, observations, and documentation. Additionally, member checking was conducted to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

Result and Discussion

Alfi Putra Cigarette Factory is a cigarette company located in Trenggalek Regency, specifically in Gembleb Hamlet, RT 12 RW 4, Pogalan Subdistrict, Trenggalek, which is the location of the main branch established on July 13, 2003, and remains operational and growing to this day. This factory was founded by Mr. Latief Anwar (Rahmi, 2021) . The business began as a small enterprise engaged in the traditional processing of tobacco products used to make SKT (Hand-Rolled Kretek Cigarettes). Due to the large volume of production that needed to be distributed, PT Alfi Putra established a second cigarette factory located at RT 13 RW 04, Bendoagung Village, Kampak Subdistrict, Trenggalek Regency (Adolph, 2016) . PT Alfi Putra also has a branch in Blitar City, as evidenced by the presence of a production unit or office in Blitar City (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCJlBua3Ds4>, n.d.) . Alfi Putra produces several cigarette brands, including Boy Alami, Boy Chocolate, Boy Natural, and Yahu (Saputra et al., 2021) . The following table shows the production volume of Alfi Putra for the products Boy Alami, Boy Chocolate, Boy Natural, and Yahu:

Table 1
Sumarry table of production and PR targets. AlfiPutra

Category	Production Per Hour (Estimated)	Production Per Month	Production Per Year
Current Production	Approximately 16,364 packs	2,880,000 packages	34,560,000 packages
Production Target	About 30,000 packs	5,280,000 packages	63,360,000 packages

Source : (<https://radartulungagung.jawapos.com>, 2023).

The cigarettes produced are not only marketed in the 14 districts of Trenggalek Regency but have also expanded beyond that area, such as to Tulungagung (Rahmi, 2021). Due to the large production volume that needs to be marketed to several regions, PR Alfi Putra continues to strive to increase production to meet the ever-increasing market demand. The human resources at this company, which operates in the production sector, include cigarette rollers, cutters, grinders, packers, warehouse managers, as well as production managers and distributors. The production workflow of employees in the grinding, rolling, and cutting departments to meet production targets at PR Alfi Putra a Sigaret Kretek Tangan (SKT) factory located in Trenggalek, East Java demonstrates significant production performance with clear growth. Currently, its production capacity reaches 2.88 million packs per month, which, based on an assumption of an 8-hour workday and 22 working days per month, equates to approximately 16,364 packs of cigarettes per hour. Annually, this production volume amounts to 34.56 million packs.

PT Alfi Putra is not stopping there. They have set further targets to increase their production capacity. The target set is to reach 5.28 million packs per month. If this target is achieved, hourly production will surge to approximately 30,000 packs, resulting in 63.36 million packs per year. This increase in targets reflects the company's optimism

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regarding market demand and its ability to expand its operational scale. With this target, PR Alfi Putra is classified as one of the largest cigarette companies in Trenggalek Regency. Behind PR Alfi Putra's large cigarette production volume lies its reliance on human resources, as the production process heavily depends on its workforce. This is because PR Alfi Putra is an SKT (hand-rolled kretek) cigarette company where production volume is directly tied to the number of employees. The following table shows the number of employees at PR Alfi Putra from 2020 to 2025.

Table 1.2
Data on the number of PR employees. Alfi Putra
Periode 2020-2025

Year	Number of Employees
2020	551
2021	665
2022	787
2023	682
2024	914

Sources: (<https://radartulungagung.jawapos.com>, 2023).

The scale of production has a significant impact on employment in Trenggalek Regency, as the production process remains heavily reliant on human resources. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of employees at PT. Alfi Putra has continued to rise through the beginning of the fifth period; however, during the fourth period, the number of employees at PT. Alfi Putra decreased, whereas in the fifth period the number of employees increased rapidly and became the highest compared to previous years, making PR Alfi Putra the company with the largest number of employees in Trenggalek by early 2025, reaching 914 people. Looking ahead, PT Alfi Putra aims to

increase its workforce to 2,000 employees (<https://radartulungagung.jawapos.com>, 2023). The age group of workers hired by PT Alfi Putra differs from the regulations set by the Department of Industry and Labor (Disperinaker), which sets the maximum working age at 50 years. This is due to a work system that retains a family oriented atmosphere, where the company continues to employ workers over 50 years of age with the approval of Disperinaker, considering that they are still capable of working and need income to support their family's economy. The ages of employees at this company vary, ranging from the youngest at 19 years old to the oldest at 58 years old, with the majority of employees being women (Fatah, 2023). Meanwhile, to improve employee welfare, all employees have BPJS Health and BPJS Employment coverage. Employee salaries are in accordance with the Regional Minimum Wage (UMK) and are paid through a wholesale system (<https://radartulungagung.jawapos.com>, 2023) ..

To ensure the company can maintain its presence amid the tobacco industry's fierce competition where many businesses have folded and gone bankrupt due to the COVID-19 pandemic PR Alfi Putra stands as one of the companies that has continued to grow since 2003 to the present. PR Alfi Putra consistently enhances all efforts to further develop its business. PR Alfi Putra demonstrates that leadership style has a significant influence on employee performance and morale. The tobacco industry, including PR Alfi Putra, is generally highly focused on strict production targets. To achieve these goals, leaders are likely to implement reward systems (e.g., production bonuses) or penalties (e.g., reprimands or pay cuts for non-compliance) to motivate employees. Leaders actively monitor employee performance to identify errors or deviations from standards, in order to take corrective action on issues. Leaders do not merely act when problems arise or when standards are not met. Leaders strive to emphasize compliance with existing tasks, procedures, and regulations. The relationship between leaders and subordinates is more formal and structured.

The presence of PR. Alfi Putra with a transactional leadership style warrants discussion because transactional leadership at PR Alfi Putra likely has a significant influence on the development of the PR Alfi Putra company, which has grown to its current state, as evidenced by its clear systems focused on achieving production targets. Based on the discussion in this study, the researcher will identify the leadership style at

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PR. Alfi Putra. According to Bass and Riggio, as cited in (Luthfikahana, 2016) , transactional leadership is shaped by several factors, which can be identified as follows:

1. Contingent Rewards, where the leader provides employees with instructions regarding tasks and targets that must be achieved as the basis for rewards. Subsequently, employees will receive rewards if they successfully carry out their tasks and achieve the set targets. Based on the interview results, Boy Cigarette Company/PR. Alfi Putra explained that management provides rewards to employees who successfully meet production targets in accordance with the provisions of the employment agreement, namely the salaries of employees in the grinding, rolling, and cutting departments are adjusted based on each employee's output, corresponding to the number of rolls they successfully complete specifically, they receive a wage of Rp. 33,000 per 1,000 cigarettes, with this rate applying to multiples thereof. If overtime is worked, an additional wage of Rp. 2,000 per 1,000 cigarettes is paid, bringing the total wage to Rp. 35,000 per 1,000 cigarettes, and this also applies to multiples thereof. This wage system is paid every weekend, specifically on Saturdays. PR. Alfi Putra also provides benefits in the form of THR and Zakat fitrah to employees, thereby motivating them to strive to achieve these targets.
2. Active Management by Exception is a leadership style in which the leader directly supervises employees with the aim of providing direct and targeted oversight of the execution of employees' tasks. Leaders with a transactional leadership style do not hesitate to immediately evaluate and correct their employees' work. This aims to ensure employees perform their work in accordance with applicable standards and procedures, while reducing the likelihood of errors. Based on the interview results, it was explained that PR. Alfi Putra has a monitoring system that covers aspects of production quality and workplace safety. This involves the roles of foremen and production department heads, as well as daily inspections and the provision of occupational safety and health (OSH) facilities. Additionally, the leaders at Boy Cigarette Company/PR. Alfi Putra implement active exception management, reflected in a responsive and proactive leadership style when addressing issues faced by employees. Beyond resolving problems, leaders also

provide guidance to employees when they encounter obstacles, ensuring they understand the necessary steps to take.

3. Passive Management Based on Exceptions, where leaders with a transactional leadership style do not hesitate to issue warnings and impose sanctions on employees who make mistakes in the execution of work processes. Based on interview results, it was explained that Boy Cigarette Company/PR. AlfiPutra conducts evaluations on a monthly basis. During these evaluations, matters related to sick leave compensation and the achievement of targets by each employee are discussed. Employees who are absent for 5 days in a month or who fail to meet their targets will receive a reprimand. In implementing exception-based passive management, Boy Cigarette Company/PR. AlfiPutra also conducts evaluations to identify obstacles faced by employees. While evaluations are indeed important for identifying and addressing irregularities, they should ideally be accompanied by comprehensive, collaborative evaluations conducted on a regular basis. These evaluations do not focus solely on employees who have not met their targets but involve the entire team in reviewing collective achievements, analyzing collectively faced obstacles, and ensuring that each individual understands their role and contribution to the company's overall target achievement as reflected in the high production targets at PR. Alfi Putra. Thus, evaluations serve as a means of learning and team strengthening, not merely as a form of punishment, thereby supporting the achievement of targets more effectively through increased ownership and collaboration.

The results of this study indicate that transactional leadership style is not yet fully effective in improving employee performance. This aligns with Bass and Riggio's theory that transactional leadership tends to focus on achieving short-term goals. However, this study also found that the lack of collective evaluation leads to low team collaboration. This finding reinforces previous research stating that leadership effectiveness is not only determined by reward and punishment systems but also by a leader's ability to foster team collaboration.

This study has several limitations, including its focus on a single company, meaning the results cannot be widely generalized. Additionally, the use of qualitative methods makes the research findings highly dependent on the

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informants' subjectivity. Limited data and a short research period also limit the depth of the analysis.

The findings indicate that transactional leadership is not entirely effective in improving employee performance. This aligns with Bass and Riggio's theory, which states that transactional leadership tends to focus on short-term goals. However, this study also reveals that the lack of collective evaluation reduces the effectiveness of teamwork. Therefore, leadership effectiveness is not only determined by reward and punishment systems but also by the leader's ability to foster collaboration among employees.

Conclusion

Based on the results of a study of Boy Cigarette Company, also known as PR. Alfi Putra, it can be concluded that the application of transactional leadership has proven to be not entirely effective in managing company operations and increasing employee productivity. This effectiveness is reflected in the application of the three main components of transactional leadership according to Bass and Riggio, as cited in (Luth, 2016). One of these components is Contingent Reward, where company leaders provide rewards to employees who successfully meet established production targets, thereby encouraging employees to deliver their best performance. Additionally, in the implementation of Active Management by Exception, the leaders at PR. Alfi Putra also conduct direct and proactive supervision. Leaders rigorously evaluate and immediately correct employees' work to ensure it meets standards, reduce the potential for errors, and provide guidance when obstacles arise. Finally, through the implementation of Passive Management by Exception, the company routinely conducts monthly evaluations discussing target achievement and employee attendance rates. Management issues warnings or sanctions to employees who fail to meet targets or are absent without permission. Additionally, the company reviews various obstacles faced by employees. The implementation of this transactional leadership style supports PR. Alfi Putra as the largest local cigarette company and a privately owned firm that prioritizes efficiency and achievement, as well as short-term targets in maintaining competitiveness and business sustainability. However, this approach has weaknesses because evaluations still focus primarily on individuals who fail to meet targets or make mistakes. Although it effectively identifies issues, the Passive Exception Management approach currently in use has not

yet maximized the full potential of all employees. Although PT. Alfi Putra PR Cigarettes has high production targets, requiring optimal contributions from every individual, it is therefore necessary to implement a comprehensive collective evaluation concept. This involves holding regular meetings involving all employees to review shared achievements, collectively identify obstacles, share effective strategies with one another, and strengthen each individual's understanding of their role in achieving the company's goals. This approach is believed to foster increased motivation, teamwork, and a sense of shared responsibility, rather than focusing solely on individual mistakes.

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