



Does Destructive Leadership Drive Job Performance in the Public Sector? Exploration of Mental Health as a Mediator

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ABSTRACT

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Positive biases dominate much leadership research by focusing on the attributes of the desired leader. In reality, many leaders misbehave and cause significant harm to the organization. This study aims to determine the role of mental health mediation on the relationship between destructive leadership and job performance in public sector organizations, using the JD-R theory approach. The data collection used a questionnaire distributed online, with a total of 218 respondents. The hypothesis was tested using PLS-SEM. The results of this study show that destructive leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee mental health but does not affect job performance. Mental health does not mediate the relationship between destructive leadership and job performance. The practical implication of this research is for management to periodically evaluate the behavior of leaders in their organizations so that the organization's health is maintained, namely having high performance and the mental health of its employees is maintained.

Keywords:

destructive leadership, mental health, job performance, JD-R, public sector

1. INTRODUCTION

Every business organization must respond to changes and developments in a turbulent situation like today. Each organization's response rests on the top leadership because the leader is the most important framework in the organization compared to other elements of work, such as followers and situations (Hughes et al., 2019). A great leader has a fairly clear view of the relative importance of the leader and followers because the leadership process results from the interaction between leaders and followers (Hughes et al., 2019).

Many studies involve the role of leadership. However, most leadership research is dominated by positive bias, namely focusing too much on the desired attributes of leaders and ignoring the unpleasant reality (dark side) where many leaders behave badly and cause great harm to the organization (Hogan et al., 2021). According to a meta-analysis by Hogan et al. (2021), two-thirds of public and

private sector managers alienate their staff. Up to fifty percent of employees are eventually removed from their positions. According to the Gallup Organization, the average degree of employee engagement in the United States is 35% (Robinson, 2008), indicating that its leaders alienate 65% of the American workforce. But the report also reports that employee engagement levels increase with the implementation of work-from-home policies and avoidance of bad leadership. Corcoran (2019) shows that 97% of businesses are not visionary; vision statements fail to be realized, so leaders manage teams without clear guidelines, so the opportunities for deviation and the emergence of the dark side of leadership are greater.

Hogan et al. (2021) show a positive leadership bias; this is supported by the results of research by Tummers & Bakker (2021). They investigated the role of leadership through meta-analysis using the job demands-resources (JD-R) theoretical framework approach. The results of this study reveal that as many as 85 articles examine the role of leadership as job resources, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, and charismatic leadership, which have positive and supportive effects on the welfare of employees and organizations. However, only three articles positioned leadership as a job demand that harms employees and organizations. In the name of a coordination or supervisory function, leaders typically make job demands in

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the form of destructive behavior (destructive and constructive behavior frequently alternate) and substantially impact employees and the business (Dirican & Erdil, 2020).

Leaders play a key role in employee welfare through their behavior (Trépanier et al., 2019). The bad behavior of leaders implemented in destructive leadership greatly affects employees' physical and mental health. Little research still explains how this relationship's mechanism occurs (Skogstad et al., 2017). This destructive leadership refers to the systematic and repeated actions of leaders, supervisors, or managers that violate the organization's legitimate interests by sabotaging organizational goals, tasks, and resources, as well as the motivation, well-being, and job satisfaction of their subordinates (Einarsen et al., 2007). Previous research has shown that destructive leadership is costly and negatively affects performance, which is essential for an organization's effective functioning (Mackey et al., 2021). However, In Kazakhstan, destructive leadership has no significant effect on employee performance in the form of OCB (Gregory et al., 2013).

According to (Hofstede, 2022), Indonesia has a high score of power distance (score 78), higher than neighboring countries such as Thailand (64) and developed countries such as Canada (39) and New Zealand (22). Power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a society anticipate and accept unequal distribution of power. The score indicates that Indonesia has a hierarchical society, unequal rights between power holders and non-power holders, inaccessible superiors, and directive leaders. It becomes fertile ground for destructive leadership practices (Cahyono et al., 2020).

According to Cummings & Worley (2015), Asian countries, including Indonesia, also have an achievement-oriented culture. This culture is concerned with the degree to which culture facilitates the accumulation of power and resources. In this culture, organizations pursue aggressive objectives and may experience significant levels of stress and conflict. Because organizational performance is judged in size, growth, and velocity, leaders are more motivated to achieve organizational objectives in any way, even though their leadership authority over people. For example, organizations in the public sector are currently facing pressure due to budget refocusing.

Based on the inconsistency of the results of destructive leadership research and phenomena that exist in Indonesia, this study will answer research questions on how destructive leadership mechanisms affect employee job performance and to what extent mental health mediates the relationship between destructive leadership and employee job performance. This study uses the JD-R theoretical approach to provide a complete picture. This research is useful for practitioners, especially management, to periodically evaluate the behavior of leaders in their organizations so that the organization's health is maintained, namely having high

performance and the mental health of its employees is maintained.

II. LITERATUR REVIEW

The Relationship between Destructive Leadership and Performance

Job demands are aspects of work that consume energy, such as workload and complex tasks (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Job demand in this research is destructive leadership. Destructive leadership is a problem for organizations because of its detrimental effect on employee performance, absenteeism, and turnover (Tepper et al., 2006). Previous research has shown that destructive leadership is costly and negatively affects performance, which is essential for an organization's effective functioning (Mackey et al., 2021). Therefore, destructive leadership can be classified as a job demand that can drain employees.

Previous research on destructive leadership and job performance proves that the two are negatively correlated (Zellars et al., 2002). Employees tend to show low performance when treated roughly by their superiors. They usually spend their time relieving the stress they experience, which contributes to decreased performance, both in the role and different roles of the employees concerned. Other research consistently shows that destructive leadership harms organizations and their followers (Krasikova et al., 2013). Previous research has demonstrated that destructive leadership negatively impacts task performance (Tepper et al., 2011). In addition, due to excessive staff absenteeism and turnover, negative leadership can increase a company's expenses (Tepper, 2007).

Based on the meta-analytic research conducted by Mackey et al. (2021), destructive leadership motives for engaging in behaviors considered destructive (such as engaging in strategic expressions of hostility and intimidation with performance promotion motives) are caused by some perceptions of destructive leadership with constructive intentions. It can be seen from the absence of a strong relationship between the job performance of destructive leadership tasks and followers. The cause may be some level of destructive leadership which functions as a means of motivating followers if properly implemented. In the case of Kazakhstan, destructive leadership implemented in abusive supervision had a negative correlation with OCB, but the correlation was not significant (Gregory et al., 2013). Although abusive supervisory practices exist in Kazakhstan, employees have a higher tolerance, resulting in insignificant changes in OCB. Based on previous theory and research, the hypothesis proposed in this study is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Destructive leadership has a negative effect on performance

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The Relationship between Destructive Leadership and Mental Health

According to the JD-R theory, job demand and resource have unique and independent consequences on employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Long-term exposure to excessive work demands can deteriorate a person's physical health. In this case, job demands result in chronic weariness, which may eventually lead to physical (including cardiovascular disease) and mental health issues.

This study considers destructive leadership as job demands, namely aspects of work that drain employee energy, considering the existence of destructive leadership as a problem for organizations because of its very detrimental effect on employee performance, absenteeism, and turnover (Tepper et al., 2006).

Destructive leadership is characterized as leadership activity that violates organizational social norms or suggests violence towards subordinates, such as abusive supervision, authoritarianism, manipulative behavior, aggressiveness, and narcissism (Einarsen et al., 2007). Several scholars have described the deleterious impact of destructive leadership on followers, both in terms of employee and organizational health (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Employees who work for a destructive leader may endure a wide range of negative physical, mental, and emotional health effects, including but not limited to increased stress, anger, frustration, low self-esteem, and illness (Peltokorpi & Ramaswami, 2021).

Typically, destructive leadership tactics include anti-employee and pro-organizational conduct (Einarsen et al., 2007). This managerial strategy tries to achieve organizational objectives through rude and aggressive conduct, typically at the price of staff health. Destructive leadership is a propensity to humiliate, degrade, and manipulate colleagues to get work done, resulting in low employee motivation, satisfaction, and well-being (Dolce et al., 2020). Destructive leadership behaviors were also characterized by increased verbal and nonverbal aggressiveness; disrespectful, authoritarian, and punitive behavior was connected with more frequent affective symptoms, burnout, stress, and reduced psychological well-being and functioning levels. It reinforces destructive leadership's favorable effect on mental health problems (Montano et al., 2017). From the discussion that has been submitted, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis: Hypothesis 2: Destructive leadership has a positive effect on mental health

The Relationship between Mental Health and Job Performance

The JD-R theory places employee well-being at the core of the theoretical framework. However, an important goal of this theory is to predict employee behavior and organizational outcomes, such as absenteeism, productivity, employee performance, and customer satisfaction (Bakker &

Demerouti, 2018). According to the JD-R theory, motivation positively influences work. Motivation enables workers to be goal-oriented and focus all their physical and mental resources on their tasks. In contrast, job strain impairs performance by impairing the ability to concentrate; employees who are weary or stressed at work are more likely to make errors, damaging their performance.

According to research conducted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), stress is more prevalent in public sector industries such as education, health, social care, and public administration. Healthcare workers, educators, and public sector personnel reported higher stress levels than employees in other sectors. In the working-age population, mental health problems can affect productivity at work, disrupt relationships with co-workers, reduce physical strength, and disrupt a person's daily activities at work and home (Bubonya et al., 2017; OECD, 2021). If mental health is impaired, it can harm job performance in the form of lower quality of work, slower pace, more mistakes (Hennekam et al., 2020), and less professional work or services. In addition, employees who feel burnt out have poor mental health, which hinders their performance (Wang et al., 2020). From the discussion that has been submitted, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Mental health has a negative effect on employee performance

The mediating role of mental health on the relationship between destructive leadership and performance

JD-R theory explains that high job demands can result in job pressure, and in the end, it will have a negative effect on performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Negative work tension is caused by excessive job demands, such as the existence of destructive leadership that drains employee energy.

The leadership style of an organization has a significant impact on the mental health of its followers, which in turn has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of its workforce (Ford et al., 2011). Several scholars have described the detrimental effects of disruptive leadership on subordinates and organizations (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Worker stress, anger, frustration, low self-esteem, and even physical health problems have all been linked to toxic leadership (Peltokorpi & Ramaswami, 2021).

Problematic mental health conditions can affect productivity at work, prolonged sick leave, unemployment, impaired relationships with co-workers, reduced physical strength, and disruption of a person's daily activities at work and home (Bubonya et al., 2017). If mental health is impaired, it can harm performance in the form of lower quality of work, slower pace, and more errors (Hennekam et al., 2020).

In their meta-analysis results, Montano et al. (2017) show that mental health issues mediate the primary effect of leadership on performance. The mediating effect is

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substantial, particularly for occupational stress, psychological functioning, and well-being. The greater the partial mediating effect, the greater the importance of leadership as an indirect occupational health factor in reducing or amplifying the negative effects of affective symptoms, burnout, and job stress and increasing or decreasing the positive effects of well-being and well-being psychological functioning on performance. As a result, mental health as a psychological function and well-being is the most significant variable in terms of the mediating effect of leadership on performance. Based on the discussion that has been submitted, the researcher hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 4: Mental health has a mediating effect on the relationship between destructive leadership and performance.

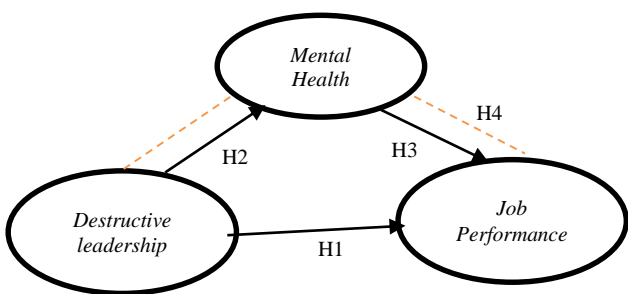


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

III. RESEARCH METHODS

Data Collection

Research about destructive leadership in Indonesia is rarely carried out (Cahyono et al., 2020). This research focuses on the context of public sector organizations in Indonesia. For the data collection sampling technique, we use the purposive sampling technique, with the sample criteria being employees who work in the statistics region. The questionnaire is distributed online using a google form. We also ensure the anonymity of respondents' identities and voluntary participation by guaranteeing never disclosing their information. In the end, 218 respondents filled in completely. And for data processing using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of Smart-PLS 3.3.9 software. The number of the sample exceeds the minimum sample size criteria proposed for SEM (Wolf et al., 2013). In addition, the sample size also meets the requirements for the '5 times rule' method of the number of indicators used in SEM (Hair et al., 2014).

Questionnaire development

The questionnaires were adapted from pre-existing literature, originally translated into English into Indonesian by trusted University language institutions for data collection purposes. Before use, the questionnaire was subjected to face validity by two leaders and five employees of public sector organizations. After that, a pilot survey was conducted with 60 respondents.

Destructive leadership is measured using 15 question items (Burns, 2017). The scale is a 5-point Likert (1= strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Examples of items used include my current supervisor Will only offering assistance to people who can help him/her get ahead, reminding subordinates of their past mistakes and failures, and publicly belittling subordinates. Cronbach's alpha for the adapted scale was 0.943.

Mental Health was measured using The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) 12 (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). GHQ consists of 12 question items. To measure the dimensions of anxiety and depression and loss of self-confidence using a 5-point Likert scale (1=never, 5= always). The social dysfunction dimension uses the positive expression and requires a score reversal. Examples of items used include. Have you recently lost much sleep over worry? Have you recently been unhappy or depressed? Have you recently felt that you were playing a useful part in things? Cronbach's alpha for the adapted scale was 0.860.

A questionnaire of ten question items measured performance (Fafaliou et al., 2020). The score was evaluated using when Likert 5 points (1 = strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Examples of question items include, Overall, I am a very good performer. I often expend extra effort in carrying out my job. I often perform better than what can be expected. Cronbach's alpha for the adapted scale was 0.866.

IV. RESULT

Descriptive Statistics

Respondents to this study were 43.12 % male and 56.88% female. When viewed from education, most respondents had D4/S1 education, which was 72.02 %. When viewed from marital status, as many as 80.28 % are married. For complete information, Table 1 provides detailed information about the respondent's demographics.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Question		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Man	94	43,12%
	Woman	124	56,88%
Education	Senior High School	3	1,38%
	Diploma/S2	157	72,02%
	S2/S3	58	26,61%
Marital Status	Unmarried	42	19,27%
	Married	176	80,73%

Source: Primary data processing, 2023

The PLS-SEM approach was used to analyze the data in this study. PLS-SEM is based on the measurement and structural models, which are estimated separately.

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Measurement models

Measurement model evaluated, it is necessary to test the validity and reliability of a construct. The first step to testing validity is to assess convergence validity, looking at the outer loading values (figure 2) and AVE. Hair et al. (2014) state that acceptable outer loading values are more than 0.7 and AVE is more than 0.5. He explains that indicators with outer loading between 0.40 and 0.70 can be considered for removal from the model only if removing the indicator increases the composite reliability or Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above the recommended threshold value. Meanwhile, indicators with very low outer loading (below 0.40) should be removed from the model. Eleven items were removed from the model for ineligible, each destructive leadership with six indicators, mental health with two indicators, and performance with three indicators. Then check the composite reliability. According should be above 0.7, and the AVE of each variable, more than 0.5, where in this study, the CR value ranged from 0.886 to 0.920 and the AVE ranged from 0.521 to 0.543 (Table 2).

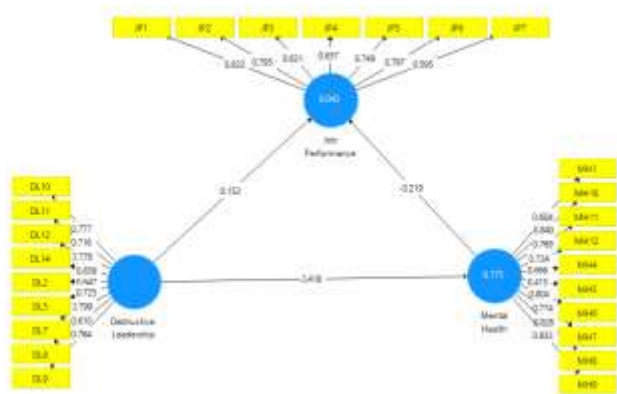


Figure 2. Model Measurement with outer loading
Source: output Smart-PLS 3.3.9

Table 2. Constructs validity and reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Destructive leadership	0,884	0,892	0,907	0,521
Performance	0,872	0,906	0,886	0,530
Mental Health	0,901	0,914	0,920	0,543

Source: Primary data processing, 2023.

The next step is to check the discriminant validity with the Fornell-Lacker criterion. The Fornell-Lacker criterion approach requires that the root value of the AVE square for each latent variable be more significant when compared to the correlation value between that latent variable and other latent variables (Hair et al., 2014). Research shows good discriminant validity (Table 3). Next is to test cross-loading, where the cross-loading value has met the expected criteria.

Structural models

When the results from the measurement model are good, the next step is to evaluate the structural model. The coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), path coefficients (β), and statistical significance are all often used criteria (Hair et al., 2014). R^2 describes the variance of exogenous constructs in endogenous constructs.

The value of f^2 indicates whether the exogenous construct greatly influences the endogenous construct. All R^2 , F^2 , Q^2 , and inner VIFs must be considered. Q^2 values greater than 0, the model can predict endogenous variables.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Destructive Leadership	Job Performance	Mental Health
Destructive Leadership	0,722		
Job Performance	0,060	0,728	
Mental Health	0,418	-0,156	0,737

Source: Primary data processing with smart.pls, 2023.

Table 4. Model structural measurements with R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 , and inner VIF value

R Square	Endogenous Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
	JP	0,043	0,034
	MH	0,175	0,171
Effect Size (F^2)	Exogenous Variables	JP	MH
	DL	0,020	0,212
	MH	0,042	
Collinearity (Inner VIF)	Exogenous Variables	JP	MH
	DL	1,212	1
	MH	1,212	
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)	Endogenous Variables	CCC	CCR
	JP	0,375	0,008
	MH	0,433	0,089

Description: CCC: Construct Communality, CCR: Construct Cross-validated Redundancy

Source: Primary data processing with smart.pls, 2023.

Hypothesis Testing

The research hypothesis was tested by running a bootstrapping procedure with a repeat of 5000 times. If the value of p-values is less or equal to 0.05 or t-statistics is greater than or equal to 1.96, then the hypothesis is supported. Table 6 shows that H1, destructive leadership has no significant influence on performance (H1 is rejected), seen from a p-value greater than 0.05 and a t-statistic value less

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than 1.96. For Hypothesis 2 (H2), destructive leadership had a positive and significant effect on mental health (p-value of 0.000 and t-statistic of 7.617). Hypothesis 3 (H3), mental health had no significant impact on performance (p-value 0.178 and t-statistic of 1.347). And for the mediating effect of mental health on the relationship between destructive leadership and performance has no significant impact.

Table 6. Path Analysis and Mediation effect result

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Stat-dev (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Destructive Leadership -> Job Performance	0,152	0,105	1,441	0,150
Destructive Leadership -> Mental Health	0,418	0,055	7,617	0,000
Mental Health -> Job Performance	-0,219	0,163	1,347	0,178
Destructive Leadership -> Mental health -> Job Performance	-0,092	0,072	1,269	0,205

Source: Primary data processing with smart.pls, 2023.

V. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze the mediating effects of mental health on the relationship between destructive leadership and employee job performance. The first hypothesis (H1) assumes destructive leadership negatively affects employee performance. The results of SEM analysts show that directly, destructive leadership has no positive but not significant effect on employee performance. It means that, in the context of public sector organizations, destructive behavior carried out by leaders that are carried out systematically and repeatedly does not affect employee job performance. It is not in line with the JD-R theory, which reveals that job demands, in this case, leadership are destructive and can harm employee job performance (are also not aligned with the research of Mackey et al., (2022) and Tepper et al. (2006).

It can be explained as follows, the motives of destructive leadership involved in behaviors that are considered destructive (such as belittling subordinates, wanting to be positioned higher, feeling more capable compared to others, not allowing subordinates to achieve goals in new ways, only offering help to people who give him advantages, allowing his mood to affect the tone and volume of his voice) caused by some perception of destructive leadership with constructive intentions. It is due to some destructive leadership that motivates employees if implemented correctly (Mackey et al., 2021). It is also in line with the results of the research of Gregory et al. (2013), which found that, in the case of Kazakhstan, destructive leadership, such as abusive supervision, does not significantly impact employee performance in the form of OCB. This right is because

employees in Kazakhstan have a higher tolerance for their leaders' good or destructive behavior.

Next is the second Hypothesis (H2), which is assumed that destructive leadership positively affects mental health. The results of the analysis show that hypothesis 2 is accepted. It means destructive leadership has a positive effect on employee mental health issues. The more often the leader commits destructive actions, the more disturbed the mental health of employees becomes. It follows the JD-R theory, where continuous job demands can result in decreased health if the exposure becomes excessive daily work demands over a long time (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Destructive leadership tends to humiliate, belittle, and manipulate employees to complete work to achieve organizational goals, resulting in poor employee motivation, satisfaction, and well-being (Aasland et al., 2014; Dolce et al., 2020). A higher level of verbal and non-verbal aggressiveness and disrespect also characterizes the practice of destructive leadership. Authoritarian behavior can cause employees to suffer social and psychological problems and psychosomatic symptoms, such as higher levels of stress, fatigue, feelings of anger, frustration, and lack of value, and even health problems (Montano et al., 2017; Peltokorpi & Ramaswami, 2021).

The third hypothesis, mental health negatively affects employee job performance. This study showed that mental health problems negatively influenced performance, but not significantly. Thus, H3 was rejected. The results of this study are not in line with previous studies (Bubonya et al., 2017; Guixia & Hui, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). However, Hennekam et al. (2020) can explain the results of this study. The employee experiencing mental health problems seeks to suppress and hide the symptoms he feels in several ways. Their strategies range from various processes, such as forcing themselves to keep working when they feel sick and compensatory systems, in which individuals try to do more than necessary when feeling good to become less productive when they feel unwell. According to Hennekam et al. (2020), employees used to suppress and hide their mental health symptoms by playing. They tried to look stable in front of others to maintain a professional image in the workplace. It can sustain their performance but is very detrimental to their well-being and negatively impacts job performance in the long run. They passed the day and performed usually. It tends to be a distraction and sometimes helps rule out their mental health for a while.

The latter examines the fourth hypothesis to test the role of mental health mediation on the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. The role of mental health mediation is seen from the results of bootstrapping. Judging by the indirect relationship results of destructive leadership and employee performance through mental health, it turns out that the relationship is not significant. This study's results differ from those of previous studies (Montano et al., 2017), where destructive leadership

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negatively affects performance through mental health as a mediator. The results of this study show that although destructive leadership can affect employees' mental health, employees' ability to suppress and mask their mental health symptoms is stronger, so it has no effect on their performance (Hennekam et al., 2020).

V. CONCLUSION

The study examines the underlying mechanisms by which destructive leadership impacts employee job performance. To this end, the study proposes an integrated model to investigate the impact of destructive leadership on employee performance through mental health within the framework of JD-R theory. The results of this study support the idea that destructive leadership affects employees' mental health. Despite this, destructive leadership has no direct effect on employee job performance. The study also explores the mediating effects of mental health to explain why destructive leadership is linked to employee performance in the context of public sector organizations in Indonesia. Specifically, the study examined mental health's indirect role in the relationship between destructive leadership and employee job performance.

Theoretical implications

This research made several new theoretical contributions, especially in developing the JD-R theory. Responding to calls for further investigation into various leadership processes as job demands (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Where previous research dominated positioning leadership as a job resource, this research explores the underlying mechanisms that destructive leadership relationships as job demands in mental health issues as job pressures, and their impact on performance in the context of public sector organizations across the country.

Practical implications

Firstly, the consistent relationship between destructive leadership behavior and poor mental health should encourage organizations to prevent all forms of aggressive or abusive leadership behavior, such as destructive leadership. Second, this harmful leadership scale includes verbal and nonverbal activities that can negatively impact employee relationships. Therefore, corporations have ethical and legal responsibilities to ensure a safe workplace that prevents supervisory misconduct and promotes employee health. Organizations should socialize with each employee to establish the standards for a safe work environment and to clarify each employee's responsibility to treat one another with respect and decency.

Future Research Limitations and Suggestions

First, the findings of this study cannot be generalized outside of public sector organizations in Indonesia. Future

research may adapt this research in the context of public sector organizations in other countries, especially developing countries, to ensure the generalization of our research model. Second, the study was conducted at one point to get an idea of how destructive leadership affects employees' mental health over time, and future research can be accomplished using longitudinal surveys.

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