

## Exploring The Pseudo-Transformational Leadership Style That Causes The Decline of Companies in Indonesia

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Companies in Indonesia experience high pressure from the government and society who at all times use strict control over organizers. The government uses control tools in the form of supervision with its regulations, while the public uses social media to monitor the behavior of company administrators, both state-owned and private-owned enterprises in Indonesia. This research focuses on the pseudo-transformational leadership style, which they (organizers) claim to be transformational, the difference in claims between the organizers and the government and society is proven by the final results received by the organizers as a result of their actions towards individuals and companies. Research approach/design and methods: An exploratory sequential method research design was used in this research. Qualitative research, data from BUMN annual reports and unstructured interviews with 6 human resource (HR) managers selected purposively. Main findings: This study reveals that the setbacks experienced by state-owned and private enterprises are caused by unethical behavior of leaders, despotic leaders, leaders who are explorative towards employees, greedy nature, acting on personal goals and high moral abandonment.

**Keywords:** Pseudotransformational; Leadership Style; Moral Disengagement; State-Owned Enterprises; Unethical Behavior; Private Companies

## INTRODUCTION

The progress or decline of a company cannot be separated from the role of the leader as the main person responsible for the company. Good leaders are able to develop and embrace employees for sustainable and disruptive change (Storm, Desvaux De Marigny, & Thakhathi, 2022). The actions decided by the leader are effective actions at the individual, organizational and societal levels ([Adler et al., 2022](#)). The modern era of leaders who are able to direct companies to progress are called transformational leaders ([Giang & Dung, 2021](#)), digital leadership (Senadjki et al., 2024; [Malik, Raziq, Sarwar, & Gohar, 2024](#)), has a creation-oriented attitude so that transformation is sustainable (Schiuma, Schettini, Santarsiero, & Carlucci, 2022) However, on the contrary, leaders cause setbacks for the company because the actions taken are not in line with the company's goals. Such leaders in academic research are called pseudotransformational ([Burns, 2021](#)).

Pseudotransformational leadership is included in destructive leadership. ([Burns, 2021](#)) states that destructive leadership is divided into three Pseudotransformational, Laissez-Faire, and Unethical. The way to identify destructive leadership according to ([Camgoz & Karapinar, 2021](#)), is the actions used by leaders, namely using a dangerous leadership scale, such as; violent, tyrannical, and toxic scale with personal goals. ([Almeida et al., 2023](#)) classified Pseudotransformational leaders into four situations – abusive supervision, exploitative leadership, organization-directed behavior, and laissez-faire. The commonality found in all Pseudotransformational leadership is the long-term devastating impact on individuals and companies, carrying out unethical behavior (Shakil Adnan Malik, Nawab, & Shafi, 2023). Carrying out fraud together in the form of unethical, pro-organizational behavior ([Dadaboyev et al., 2024](#)). Employees are willing to let go morals to follow the leader's unethical behavior ([Abbasi, Amran, Sahar, & Lim, 2024](#)).

Pseudotransformational leadership is a negative form of transformational leadership. Barling & Turner, (2014) ([Astuti, Shodikin, & Ud-Din, 2020](#)) call it pseudo-transformational leadership. The actions taken by Pseudotransformational leaders appear to be to improve and advance the company but are fake, there are bad intentions to take personal advantage. Employees do not dare to directly resist the pseudo-transformational leader, but employees of the pseudo-transformational leader respond with avoidance of interaction and indirect aggression (Syed, Naseer, Nawaz, Zulfiqar, & Shah, 2024). Pseudo-transformational leadership is also mentioned in research by ([Barling et al., 2008](#)) as an unethical aspect of transformational leadership, carrying out unethical behavior (Shakil Adnan Malik et al., 2023).

Unethical behavior includes corruption ([Amoah & Steyn, 2023](#); Tafolli & Grabner-Kräuter, 2020). Manipulating financial report data (Nguyen, O'Connell, Kend, Thi Pham, & Vesty, 2021), exerting pressure on employees ([Khan et al., 2023](#)), intimidation towards employees and detrimental to well-being ([Ahmad, Sohal, & Wolfram Cox, 2020](#)), forcing employees to engage in moral disengagement (Wan, Zivnuska, & Valle, 2020). At the company level, pseudotransformational leadership benefits the company, such as; sales increase, However, this relationship becomes negative when salespeople are emotionally and cognitively involved with their work (Lyngdoh, Chefor, & Lussier, 2023), a violation of information hiding by leaders ([Cheng & Ho, 2019](#)).

The long-term effects of pseudotransformational leadership are that companies experience bankruptcy because people do not trust them, as happened with Lehman Brothers bank ([Azadinamin, 2017](#)), the case of the Volkswagen emissions scandal (Fan, Leard, & Fan, 2021), which caused a decline in sales of up to 34.6%. Accounting fraud at Luckin Coffee Inc (Mehta, 2022) led to a sharp decline in stock prices of more than

80%. It is impossible to commit unethical acts alone without anyone helping, because the effect of pseudotransformational leaders is that this behavior will be followed by employees, in the form of unethical pro-organizational behavior ([Dadaboyev et al., 2024](#)). Financial reporting fraud by unethical leaders assisted by auditors accounts for 77.4% (Mandal & S, 2023), but the negative relationship between female accountants is financial reporting fraud (Maulidi, Shonhadji, Sari, Nuswantara, & Widuri, 2023). Popa et al., (2024) stated that there was an increase Financial fraud is caused by low corporate governance. If unethical behavior continues without automatic improvement, it will erode public trust (Tavanti & Tait, 2021).

#### Orientation

Indonesian state-owned enterprises (BUMN) and the private sector experienced setbacks due to the actions of transformational leaders. The latest case in April 2024 is corruption in business administration at PT Timah Tbk. (TINS), causing losses to the state of up to IDR 271 trillion. Total State Losses in Corruption Cases within BUMN 2016—2021 (Total Losses: IDR 47.9 Trillion) (Watch, 2022). Those who loudly say "I am Indonesia, I am Pancasila" seem to reflect transformational leaders, but in their behavior they show the most unethical behavior, causing huge losses to the country. Their leadership is pseudo-transformational or psudotransformational.

Unethical behavior was carried out by Indonesia's close neighbor, Malaysia. The Malaysian prime minister was involved in the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) Scandal (Tan, Tan, Reader, & Downing, 2021), the same fate followed by the next prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin (Oxford Analytica., 2021), recorded at least 11 of the biggest corruption scandals as a reflection of unethical behavior exhibited by psudotransformational leaders in Asian countries such as India, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. This research is important to carry out because it is anticipated in selecting leaders of state-owned and private enterprises who reflect real, not pseudo-transformational. So that the losses incurred can be minimized, the behavior of leaders is ethical, employees do not easily abandon their morals, the sustainability of the company can be maintained and gain public trust.

In particular, we discuss the process of psudotransformational leadership behavior and its long-term impact on state-owned and private companies, theoretically and empirically. Research aims and objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore psudotransformational leadership that hides behind the transformational mask of the State for personal interests. Understanding the moral disengagement carried out by employees is caused by the reciprocal benefits they receive. Explain theoretically and practically the long-term consequences of psudotransformational leadership. Therefore, the aim of this research is to:

1. Exploring the reasons why the selection committee chooses a person to be the leader of a state-owned and private enterprise
2. Identify the reasons a person changes from transformational to psudotransformational leadership
3. Evaluate and limit leadership within a certain period of time to reduce the occurrence of unethical behavior
4. Provide recommendations regarding leadership sustainability strategies to gain public trust

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Psudotransformational leadership and unethical behavior

Pseudotransformational leadership is a negative form of transformational leadership. Barling & Turner, (2014) call it pseudo-transformational leadership. ([Christie et al., 2011](#)) define pseudo-transformational leadership by leadership behavior that is self-serving, but very inspirational, unwillingness to encourage independent thinking in subordinates, and lack of attention to subordinates in general. Although pseudotransformational leadership can resemble transformational leadership in its ability to inspire followers, pseudotransformational leadership does not have transformational qualities ([Christie et al., 2011](#)). Tian et al., (2023) characterize pseudotransformational leadership as individuals who have personal interests and cannot be trusted. In the long term, pseudotransformational leadership is detrimental to the company (Syed et al., 2024).

Pseudotransformational leadership is characterized by unethical leader behavior. unethical leadership, leader behavior that is detrimental to interpersonal relationships (Guedes et al., 2022). As individuals appointed as leaders in BUMN or private companies, they should work for the interests of the company, because BUMN or private companies appoint them with high trust and are seen as capable of advancing the company. The occurrence of fraud, financial manipulation and unethical actions for personal gain results in the loss of ethics as a person ([Dill, Triki, & Westin, 2022](#)). The workplace being led by a pseudotransformational leader is the main factor in unethical behavior carried out collectively. The results of research by ([Coppins & Weststar, 2023](#)) state that the workplace can cause individuals to engage in unethical pro-organization behavior.

Recent research by ([Dadaboyev et al., 2024](#)) states that unethical pro-organization behavior is more often carried out by men. The results are the same as previous research conducted by Maulidi et al., (2023). That 77.4% of unethical leader financial report fraud was carried out by male auditors. Throughout 2016-2021, unethical behavior in the form of corruption was the highest in the BUMN environment (PT Pertamina, PT Waskita Karya, Persero TBK, PT PLN, Persero, PT Angkasa Pura II, Persero, PT Wijaya Karya, Persero, TBK), the result was 80% done by men. Official government website [www.bpkp.go](http://www.bpkp.go). Explains that there were 16 state-owned companies suspected of corruption in 2005. It is easy to conclude that pseudotransformational leadership and unethical behavior are closely related. Pseudotransformational leadership acts out of personal interest without thinking about the employees it leads which is followed by unethical behavior as a way to achieve personal goals. Pseudotransformational leadership forces unethical behavior to be followed by employees as justification that what is done is right is proven by unethical pro-organizational behavior. Pseudotransformational leadership and corporate decline

Actions taken by pseudotransformational leadership endanger the company. The short term benefits the company but in an unethical way, namely carrying out unethical pro-organizational behavior / UPB ([Coppins & Weststar, 2023](#)). For example, the Apple scandal slowed down old devices to increase sales of new devices (Sarwar & Song, 2023). Unethical behavior, namely pro-self, lack of autonomy, pro-organization, systemic and negligence. Triggers for unethical behavior, such as bottom-line mentality, profit-seeking behavior of government officials, changing ethical study culture ([Jha & Singh, 2023](#)). Zhang, (2020) added that ostracized individuals are more likely to be involved in UPB. However, what is surprising is the research finding of Verma & Mohapatra, (2020) that a strong ethical organizational culture actually facilitates unethical behavior.

Pro-self is an individual who is selfish in doing work, has personal goals. Recent evidence found that, self-interest may play a greater role in motivating UPB (Steele, Rees, & Berry, 2023). This happens because performance measures only use goal achievement so they only focus on final results, which in turn will encourage pro-ego and

unethical behavior (Mawritz et al., 2023). Findings Shakil Adnan Malik, (2023) that employees' desired or undesired behavior towards leaders depends on their role-related perceptions. However, pro-self unethical behavior that is intended to benefit the organization, can paradoxically harm the employees themselves (Tian et al., 2023). Lack of autonomy, job autonomy has been conceptualized as a job characteristic that produces positive outcomes. Research findings by Lu et al., (2017) state that work autonomy positively predicts unethical behavior. Wei, Li, & Zhu, (2022) stated that the difference in autonomy given by superiors to subordinates triggers unethical behavior. pro-organization is unethical behavior that covers up all the bad things about the company. The research results of Verma & Mohapatra, (2020) show that individuals who have strong organizational identification and a high ethical ideology of relativism can practice unethical behavior. pro-organization. The high prevalence of unethical leadership by direct superiors and decreased trust in leaders (Ok, Göncü-Köse, & Toker-Gültaş, 2021). The final factor, psudotransformational leadership, causes the decline of BUMN is systemic and negligence.

Systemic and negligence is work that has been carried out for a long time and there has never been an update to the system to keep up with the novelty so that negligence has occurred but it is not realized. ([Boda & Zsolnai, 2016](#)) tried to break up unethical behavior with good business ethics but failed to make it happen. Unethical behavior does not only occur in toxic environments, however, ethical cultural environments are also fertile ground for unethical behavior because they protect each other 's mistakes. A simple explanation is that if psudotransformational leadership behaves unethically and forces employees to behave the same way, in the short term state-owned or private companies will gain personal benefits, but in the long term, public trust will be destroyed and the company will decline

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method used in this research is an exploratory qualitative method ([Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)). This method has the advantage of exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups in responding to social or human problems. An exploratory design was used as the chosen research design. The reason for using this design is research that wants to explore something new, which is not widely known by the public, so it wants to be studied in more depth. Exploratory research is used to develop initial ideas and insights (Swaraj, 2019), and exploring an area about which little is known ([Makri & Neely, 2021](#)).

Data was collected from 11 State-Owned and Private Enterprises which are known for being profitable (generating large amounts of money). The reason, BUMN and private wetlands for carrying out unethical behavior in the form of corruption. Data was collected in the form of official government documents, news in the media, reputable international journals, binding court decision documents and news releases on the relevant ministry's website and then analyzed. To avoid errors in data collection, researchers first synchronize one source with another source, if there are similarities in the information then the data is valid.

Ethical statement

To maintain the good name of BUMN and the individuals involved in this research, we have disguised the names of BUMN and private companies, using initials and using the business sector they manage. However, if you want to know more about this research, readers can search for citations in articles, journals, news or official reports issued.

These citations will direct us to obtain complete and comprehensive information in the bibliography

## **RESULTS**

The research aims to explore psudotransformational leadership which causes the decline of state-owned and private companies. BUMN and the private sector were researched together because the results of the documents showed that corruption involving the private sector as an actor often occurred in the sector, 90 actors with private backgrounds were involved in corruption within the BUMN environment (Watch, 2022 ; Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), 2023) . Corruption is a form of unethical behavior that is detrimental to society and the country. Psudotransformational leadership behaves unethically focusing on forms of negative and detrimental interpersonal behavior ([Juliana Guedes Almeida, Hartog, De Hoogh, Franco, & Porto, 2022](#)) .

Researchers focus on the psudotransformational leadership perspective and do not discuss further the positive legal problems currently being experienced by the leaders as samples in this research. Corruption is identified as unethical, negative and detrimental behavior carried out by a leader, negative behavior of people who occupy leadership positions ([Karabati, 2021](#)) , 51 corruption actors have director positions in BUMN (Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), 2023) , in collaboration with the private sector, 90 actors with private backgrounds (Watch, 2022)

## **DISCUSSION**

The research results are explained in four stages that we have previously outlined in the aims and objectives of the research.

The first stage, explores the reasons why the selection committee chooses someone to be the leader of state-owned and private enterprises.

The main purpose of choosing a leader is the need to occupy a position where there is still no leader. This is then followed by the second need, namely how to choose a leader who suits the abilities required for the position, then carry out selection ([Erkal, Gangadharan, & Xiao, 2022](#)). However, this process is difficult to obtain a director who has the ideal skills expected, because the function of the board in Indonesian BUMN is unclear and occurs in a situation where a transparent and accountable nomination and selection process is difficult to carry out (Synthia A. Sari, 2016). The political interests of each selection team have a negative impact before a candidate is appointed as director of a BUMN. Unethical behavior was established from the beginning of the selection, there were 10 (ten) parties involved in initiating unethical behavior, namely the government, parties close to the authorities, political parties, members of the DPR, the media, law enforcement, non-profit organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Regional Governments, BUMN business competitors, and foreign parties (Syaifuddin, 2016).

The main reason for the selection team to elect BUMN leaders (directors) is political interests. The selection process is too long, starting from collecting files, written tests and interviews, however, after the interview process there is a break between announcements and seeking political support to influence the team. The selection team and candidates taking part in the selection process wait for each other and engage in political lobbying. This situation is vulnerable to the influence of political interests and the process itself can even turn into a situation of political interference (Synthia A. Sari, 2016).

The second stage, identify the reasons why someone changes from transformational to pseudotransformational leadership.

The pinnacle of an individual's career is becoming a leader or director in a BUMN or private sector, which is a source of pride, increases social status, increases income and is followed by an increase in lifestyle. However, this pride demands greater responsibility. Before they became directors of BUMN or private companies, they had extraordinary track records from academics, experience in international companies, but after becoming directors of BUMN their behavior changed. Missal, director of the BUMN energy sector, has a brilliant record of leading Mobil Oil Indonesia, Halliburton, to the list of Asia's 50 Power Businesswomen. However, at the end of his term of office he was caught in a case of unethical corruption (Harlina & Riyadi, 2020). BUMN that focuses on insurance services commits unethical acts of corruption using the mode of paying commissions for fictitious activities, the director orders his subordinates to act fraudulently <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/3364665/mantan-dirut-jasindo-dijadi-cepat-gratification-and-money-laundering>. Corporate governance in BUMN has good rules, but unethical behavior (corruption) occurs when corporate governance is not good. The pitfalls of transformational leadership and what if it doesn't continue, starting to change and masquerade as a selfish dictator in transformational leadership (Merriweather, 2021).

Ethical egoism emphasizes the leader's greatest interests, not the interests of the people (Merriweather, 2021). Personal and selfish interests are the starting point for leaders to experience changes in behavior from transformational to all transformational (pseudotransformational). The director's greed will eliminate the objectivity and reality of what is happening in the company. Directors who previously had a transformational style slowly turned pseudotransformational without realizing it due to personal greed, (i.e. pretending to be stupid, hiding the evasive, and hiding the rationalized) ([Enwereuzor, 2023](#)). Political pressure of interests from superiors becomes the next factor for a BUMN director to change towards pseudotransformation (Syaifuddin, 2016). The case of BUMN in the energy sector, insurance services, shipping, infrastructure sector and BUMN and the private sector in their recognition that the policies taken are based on orders from above and have a link in politics.

The third stage, evaluating and limiting leadership within a certain period of time to reduce the occurrence of unethical behavior

Restrictions on power as directors in BUMN and private companies have an important position. Periodic evaluations every quarter must be carried out. Article 16 (4) The term of office of members of the Board of Directors is set at 5 (five) years and they can be reappointed for 1 (one) term of office (INDONESIA & 2003, 2003). Organs and Human Resources of State-Owned Enterprises (PER-3/MBU/03/2023, 2023). However, in practice, changes in behavior experienced by BUMN directors are caused by external factors related to the Sawasta company. The finding that the private sector is the party most involved as corruption actors is not new (Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), 2023). A term of office of five years and re-election is a long duration and can be used to abuse power. Three years and re-election may be an ideal time to minimize the potential for unethical behavior.

The fourth stage, provides recommendations regarding sustainable leadership strategies to gain public trust

The high number of corruption cases as unethical acts carried out by BUMN directors (Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), 2023), since starting from selection (transparency international, 2020; Watch, 2022). Collaboration with private parties (Hiariej, 2020), political pressure (Syaifuddin, 2016) and the director's own egoism (Merriweather, 2021), due to being trapped in pseudotransformational leadership are explored ([Barling et al., 2008](#); Steinmann 2023 ;Syed, Naseer, Nawaz, & Shah, 2021). So, in the long term, BUMN and the private sector, public trust will decline, as happened in the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) Scandal (Tan et al., 2021), The Bankruptcy of Lehman

Brothers ([Azadinamin, 2017](#)), A Case of Automobile Emissions (Lee, Veloso, Hounshell, & Rubin, 2010), Volkswagen Emissions Scandal (Fan et al., 2021).

The recommendation approach regarding sustainability strategies used by researchers is based on human resources and behavior which according to state administration may not yet be commonly used in other cases. First, before becoming a BUMN or private director, the entire family up to the third degree is introduced to society, their social media and wealth reports. Family is an important factor regarding self-esteem, if someone in the family commits unethical behavior (corruption) the community will automatically be expelled from the social community. Social communities in society consist of in groups and out groups (Shah & Tee, 2019). Individuals who engage in unethical behavior are grouped in out groups (Vlas, Nguyen, & Vlas, 2022), which means they do not conform to the habits of their group, and are shunned (Yue Lu, Wang, Yang, & Kakuda, 2022)

## **CONCLUSION**

Pseudotransformational leadership originates from dynamic environmental conditions and transformational leadership. Changes occur due to strong political pressure factors so that directors engage in unethical behavior (corruption), starting at the beginning of selection as director candidates. Open and wide opportunities while in office and selfish personal interests. It is as if the unethical behavior carried out by the director is ignored by officials above him or who supervise and are supported by the majority of employees carrying out unethical behavior pro-organization because of the beneficial returns.

The recommendation for this research is to focus on preventing human resources and the sustainability of BUMN and the private sector. First, the selection process for director candidates is to narrow down the involvement of political lobbying before the candidate is appointed as definitive director by means of not allowing the director candidate to meet with the selection team, political figures, BUMN officials and policy makers, the time period between the fit and proper test and the announcement of the candidate passing selection is not less than 24 hours. Second, siblings of prospective directors up to the upper and lower third degrees must report their assets before the candidate is inaugurated, reporting their respective social media accounts. Third, the term of office is five (5) years and cannot be re-elected. Fourth, the director is not permitted to meet with businessmen, delegates and relatives without an official official event.

## **LIMITATION (OPTIONAL)**

This research is a cross-sectional and limited process and was only carried out in the top ten BUMNs in Indonesia whose cases were popular in public discussion, based on the 6 sectors with the highest corruption cases within BUMNs that were investigated throughout 2016-2021. The research was carried out carefully because it involves the names of directors, their families and the institutions that oversee them, which have a broad impact on the sustainability of BUMN.

Future research needs to include motivation and exposure variables to find out more about the impact of unethical behavior carried out by directors. Motivation is associated with egoism, what is the motivation behind unethical behavior, whether it is encouragement from family, children and wife, superiors or to carry out the act, or egoism to show power and accumulate wealth. The exposure is intended to find out more about what indicators the director is exposed to unethical behavior.

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The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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