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The Role of Leadership in Improving Employee Competence (Case Study at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. Serpong Unit - South Tangerang City)



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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the role of leadership in improving employee competency at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. Serpong Unit, South Tangerang City. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. Serpong Unit to explore the role of leadership in improving employee competency through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Data were collected, analyzed with data reduction, and presented in narrative form and a conceptual model to understand the relationship between leadership and employee competency development. Data validity and reliability were guaranteed through triangulation and member checks, ensuring strong and accurate conclusions regarding the contribution of leaders to HR development. The results of this work show that leadership plays an important role in improving employee competency at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk., but challenges such as lack of training, non-innovative leadership styles, poor communication, and minimal appreciation are major obstacles. Transactional leadership styles that focus on short-term results hinder employee development as a whole. To remain competitive, companies must adopt transformational leadership and provide full support for employee competency development through ongoing training. Competent employees will be better prepared to face industry changes and drive company growth.

KEYWORDS: Employee Competence, Leadership Role, PT. Surya Toto Indonesia

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee competency improvement is a key element that determines a company's success in facing global competition (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019; Nwabueze & Mileski, 2018). In the rapidly developing digital era, employees' ability to continuously adapt to technological changes and market demands is becoming increasingly important. In this context, the role of company leaders is not only focused on achieving operational targets, but also in encouraging the development of employee skills and knowledge. This study aims to analyze the role of leaders in improving employee competency in order to understand how leadership style and company policies affect human resource development in the work environment.

Employee competency development is one of the important factors that determine the success of a company in facing increasingly tight competition in the era of globalization and digitalization (Munirah et al., 2024; Witjaksana et al., 2024). Employee competency includes the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to carry out their duties effectively. In many organizations, training and development programs are often key to ensuring that employees continue to develop according to the needs of the company. Through continuous training, employees can improve their technical skills, learn new technologies, and adapt to changes in the workplace. In addition, employee competency development is also closely related to the role of leadership in the organization. Leaders who are able to identify employee development needs, provide motivation, and provide the resources needed for training will be more successful in creating a productive and innovative work environment. Thus, proactive leadership in employee development will increase employee loyalty and engagement, which can ultimately contribute to increased productivity and efficiency of the organization as a whole (Blanka et al., 2022; Dachner et al., 2021). On the other hand, challenges in improving employee competency often come from a lack of management support, limited budget for training, and development programs that are not relevant to employee needs. Therefore, companies need to design development programs that are focused and based on the actual needs of employees so that competency development really has a positive impact. With the right

investment in employee development, organizations will not only enhance individual capabilities, but also strengthen the company's competitiveness in the long term.

PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. is one of the leading companies in the manufacturing of sanitary products and fittings in Indonesia. The company was established in 1977 and has grown into a widely known company, both in the domestic and international markets. With a focus on innovation and quality, PT. Surya Toto Indonesia continues to expand its business and increase production capacity to meet the increasing market needs. The Serpong Unit in South Tangerang City is one of PT. Surya Toto Indonesia's strategic production locations. In this unit, the company carries out the manufacturing process of various high-tech and environmentally friendly sanitary products. The company also prioritizes the use of modern technology in its production process, but still pays attention to the aspect of human resources as the main asset in maintaining productivity and product quality. In an effort to increase competitiveness in the global market, PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. is very aware of the importance of developing employee competencies. Therefore, the company is committed to continuing to provide ongoing training and development programs, with the aim of improving employee technical and managerial skills. However, the implementation of this program is still faced with several challenges that require further evaluation related to the role of leadership in supporting this development. In Indonesia, the main challenge faced in developing employee competencies is the lack of investment in training and continuing education. Many companies in Indonesia still view human resource development as a cost burden, not as a long-term investment. In addition, there is also the problem of uneven implementation of training policies across various industrial sectors, so that many employees do not get the opportunity to improve their skills.

According to Soerjono Soekanto (2009), role is a dynamic process of position (status). This role cannot be separated from a person's position in an organization or institution, because the role is a manifestation of the rights and obligations that must be carried out. In the context of leadership in a company, the role of a leader is very important in ensuring that employees can carry out their duties and obligations effectively through adequate competency development. Merton also defines a role as a pattern of behavior expected of a person according to their social status. Leaders in a company have a role to not only lead from a management perspective, but also as mentors who help employees develop their skills and knowledge. Leaders function as facilitators in the process of improving employee competency through the provision of ongoing training and development programs (Rusdiana, 2018).

George Terry emphasized that leadership is the overall activity of influencing others to achieve common goals. Effective leaders are those who are able to motivate employees to actively participate in self-development efforts, so that employee competencies can continue to be improved according to the needs of the company. Harold Koontz stated that leadership involves the process of influencing others to strive enthusiastically to achieve group goals. Leaders at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. must be able to direct employees not only to achieve production targets, but also to improve skills that are relevant to industrial developments (Taufiqurokhman et al., 2022). According to Handoko (2003), the main characteristics of a successful leader include intelligence, maturity, self-motivation, and the ability to empower others. In the context of competency development, a leader must be able to create an environment that supports employee learning and professional growth, while providing the guidance and support needed to overcome the challenges faced in training (Widiastuti, 2018).

Previous research conducted by Alhamidi, (2022) the results of the study showed that inspirational motivation, idealistic influence, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation all have a positive and significant impact on improving employee performance (Alhamidi, 2022). Effective leadership can act as a catalyst to improve the quality and productivity of human resources, forming a strong foundation for sustainable growth in modern organizations (Muktamar et al., 2024).

Initial observation results at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. Serpong Unit show that although there are several training programs that have been implemented, there are still challenges in terms of implementation and support from leaders. Employees acknowledge the company's efforts to improve their competence, but the existing programs are considered not fully relevant to their needs in the workplace.

Previous studies tend to focus on the role of leadership in increasing productivity, but few have specifically examined how the role of leadership can influence employee competency development in the context of the manufacturing industry such as PT. Surya Toto Indonesia. This gap indicates that more in-depth research is needed on the relationship between leadership style and competency development in the company. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on the relationship between the leadership style applied at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. with employee competency development. This study provides a new contribution by identifying leadership factors that directly influence the implementation of training and development programs in manufacturing companies, as well as offering relevant solutions for companies.

This study has significant relevance for companies in the manufacturing sector that seek to improve their employee competency through leadership roles. The results of this study can help other companies understand how leadership can be key

to maximizing the potential of their employees. In addition, this study also contributes to the literature on human resource management by deepening the understanding of the relationship between leadership and employee competency development. This study aims to analyze the role of leaders in improving employee competency at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. Serpong Unit, South Tangerang City.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method (L. Haven & Van Grootel, 2019; Lejeune, 2019). The qualitative approach was chosen because it provides flexibility to explore more comprehensively the phenomena that occur in the field. In this context, the study aims to understand how the role of leadership is carried out in improving employee competence, as well as how employees respond to policies and leadership styles implemented by the company.

The case study method was chosen because this study focuses on the specific context that occurs at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. Serpong Unit. This study attempts to explore the challenges faced by the company in developing employee competence and find out the role played by leaders in this regard. Case studies provide a suitable framework for investigating organizations in detail and comprehensively, especially regarding aspects of leadership in a unique context like this. The subjects of this study include leaders and employees at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. Serpong Unit. The selection of subjects was carried out using purposive sampling, which means that subjects were selected based on their involvement and relevance in the process of developing employees at various levels who had direct interaction with leadership policies related to competency development.

The data collection techniques in this study included three main methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to gain a deeper understanding of the role of leaders in employee competency development. These interviews allowed researchers to explore informants' views on the leadership style applied, challenges faced in competency development, and initiatives that had been implemented. Participatory observation was conducted by researchers being directly involved in the field, observing interactions between leaders and employees, and how competency development policies were implemented. By conducting this observation, researchers were able to see firsthand the dynamics in the work environment, such as how communication takes place between leaders and employees and how decisions are made regarding employee skill development. In addition, documentation studies were used to strengthen the results of interviews and observations. Company documents such as training policies, performance evaluation reports, and human resource development strategies were analyzed to obtain a more complete picture. These documents help in understanding the company's approach to employee development and also provide more objective data regarding the effectiveness of existing programs. For data analysis, several steps were taken. First, data reduction was carried out, where data from interviews, observations, and documentation were filtered and summarized to find the main themes that were relevant to the role of leadership in employee competency development. After that, the summarized data is presented in narrative form that describes the relationship between the role of leadership and competency development at PT. Surya Toto. This data presentation is followed by the creation of a diagram or conceptual model to visualize the dynamics that occur. The last step in data analysis is drawing conclusions. Based on the data that has been analyzed, the researcher draws conclusions about how the role of leadership contributes to the development of employee competencies in the company. These results are also used to provide practical recommendations for companies in increasing the effectiveness of employee development programs. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study uses triangulation techniques, namely comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation studies. This triangulation ensures that the findings obtained have a strong basis from various data sources. In addition, a member check was carried out, where the results of interviews and observations were confirmed to informants to ensure the accuracy of the data and the researcher's interpretation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the ever-evolving business world, employee competency is one of the key elements of a company's success. At PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk., leadership plays an important role in developing this competency. However, there are several challenges faced, including the lack of continuous training, minimal application of a transformational leadership style, ineffective communication, and low management support and employee motivation. Lack of Employee Training and Development is one of the main issues in the company. Many employees feel that they do not get enough opportunities to take part in training that is appropriate to their jobs. Existing training programs are sometimes not relevant to the demands of the era of globalization and digitalization, so that employees have difficulty developing the new skills they need. In addition, the lack of support from leaders in employee development is another obstacle. Company leaders are often too focused on achieving production targets and

operational efficiency, so that employee development aspects become less of a priority. An unclear vision regarding human resource development results in limited initiatives to create sustainable training programs. The leadership style applied is also in the spotlight. A less innovative leadership style, where leaders are more oriented towards achieving short-term results, makes employees lose their motivation to develop. The implementation of a transactional leadership style that is still dominant is less able to inspire employees to develop their competencies more broadly and innovate.

Furthermore, the company also faces problems with the lack of a reward system for employees who succeed in improving their competencies. Although there are employees who take the initiative to improve their skills through independent training, the company may not have an adequate system to appreciate these efforts. As a result, there is not a strong enough incentive for other employees to do the same, so that motivation to develop is low. No less important, ineffective communication between leaders and employees is a serious obstacle. Leaders who are unable to build an open dialogue with employees can miss the opportunity to understand their development needs. As a result, the training programs held do not always meet the expectations and needs of employees.

Budget constraints are also an important problem in employee development. The limited budget allocation for training programs means that the opportunity to take part in training is only available to a small number of employees. This limits the company's opportunities to bring in professional trainers or send employees to quality external training. Finally, in the context of digitalization, obstacles in implementing new technologies and innovations are also challenges. Employees at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. may not be fully ready to adopt the latest technology, due to the lack of relevant training. This can slow down the adoption of technology and potentially hamper the company's productivity, which in turn has a negative impact on the company's competitiveness in the global market. By facing and overcoming these challenges, PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. can strengthen its employees' competencies and increase productivity and innovation amidst increasingly fierce competition. Company leaders need to be aware of the importance of adequate training, communication, management support, and incentives in creating a work environment that supports the continuous development of employee competencies.

Soerjono Soekanto (2009:212-213) defines a role as "a dynamic process of status." According to him, when someone exercises their rights and obligations according to their position, they are playing a role. The difference between position and role is important for science, but the two cannot be separated, because they are interdependent (Rusdiana, 2018). Merton defines a role as a pattern of behavior that society expects from people who occupy a certain status. He also introduced the term "role-set", which refers to a set of roles that a person has because they occupy a special social status (Rusdiana, 2018). George Terry states that leadership is the whole activity of influencing the will of others to achieve common goals. According to Terry, leadership involves motivating people to work voluntarily to achieve mutually agreed goals (Taufiqurokhman et al., 2022). Harold Koontz describes leadership as the process of influencing others so that they are willing to work wholeheartedly and enthusiastically in achieving group goals (Pali'pangan, 2024). R.D. Agarwal emphasizes that leadership is the art of influencing others to direct their will, abilities, and efforts to achieve the leader's goals (Latifah & Kurniawan, 2023). Odway Tead argues that a leader must have several main characteristics, such as physical strength, high loyalty, clear goals and directions, good communication skills, and the ability to make decisions and develop technical skills (Basri et al., 2023). Handoko (2003) mentions ten main characteristics of a leader, including intelligence, maturity, broad social relationships, self-motivation, drive to achieve, strong influence, and the ability to empower (Sentosa, 2018; Wartono & Suyadi, 2020).

Putra et al. (2013) emphasized the importance of a leader's role in achieving the company's vision and mission. Leaders who are able to foster work enthusiasm, carry out good coordination, and create harmony in the work environment will help the company achieve common goals. Nawawi (2006) defines leadership style as behavior that reflects the feelings, attitudes, and actions of members of the organization or their subordinates. Each leader can have a better or worse leadership style than others (Indahsari & Manafe, 2022). Henry Mintzberg explains that the role of a leader consists of three main categories: (a) interpersonal roles, which involve interactions with subordinates and other leaders, (b) informational roles, where the leader acts as a monitor and distributor of information, and (c) decisional roles, which include making strategic decisions in the organization (NIM et al., 2019; Nurhayati, 2023; Sanusi, 2020). Sedarmayanti (2007) states that competence is a basic characteristic of a person that is closely related to the effectiveness of individual performance. Employees with high competence are easier to develop because they already have good abilities to carry out the tasks assigned (Liana et al., 2023). Spencer and Signe (1993) define competence as the characteristics that underlie skills and experience (Beram et al., 2020). Darmawan (2014) stated that an employee's basic skills and experience affect their effectiveness in carrying out tasks according to the standards set by the company (Arifin et al., 2019). Fadude et al. (2019) emphasized that competence includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support professional behavior in a profession (Juniawati & Tarmizi, 2021). Siagian (2018) mentions five main indicators for measuring employee competence,

namely knowledge, skills, self-concept, traits, and motives (Siagian, 2018). Wirata et al. (2021) emphasized that competency development efforts are an important part of human resource management, which is carried out through education and training led by organizational leaders (Wirata et al., 2021).

From the data and theory above, it is very suitable, namely Soerjono Soekanto's Theory (2009) about the role as a dynamic process of position is relevant to the situation at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, where leaders play an important role in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Company leaders act as directors for employees, ensuring that employee rights and obligations are met, especially in terms of competency development. Merton (Raho, 2007) stated that a role is a pattern of behavior expected of a person according to their social status. At PT. Surya Toto, the role of leaders is expected to not only focus on production targets, but also develop employee competencies to match the company's expectations in the era of globalization. George Terry considers leadership as an activity to influence others to achieve common goals. This is in accordance with field data at PT. Surya Toto, where leadership is expected to be able to motivate employees through continuous training and development programs. Harold Koontz identified leadership as the process of influencing others so that they are willing to try wholeheartedly. At PT. Surya Toto, the lack of motivation and support from leaders indicates challenges in implementing leadership that can motivate employees to continue to develop. R.D. Agarwal defines leadership as the art of directing the will and efforts of employees. In the context of PT. Surya Toto, leaders who lack innovation and focus too much on short-term results cause weak employee competency development.

Odway Tead emphasized the importance of leadership traits such as physical strength, good communication, and decisionmaking ability. Leaders at PT. Surya Toto who do not implement effective communication face difficulties in building relationships that support employee competency improvement. Handoko (2003) emphasized intelligence and interaction skills as important leadership traits. The lack of open interaction between leaders and employees at PT. Surya Toto indicates a deficiency in the role of communication which plays an important role in improving employee skills. Putra et al. (2013) emphasized the role of leaders in creating work enthusiasm and harmony. At PT. Surya Toto, leadership that focuses more on production than on employee welfare causes a decrease in employee enthusiasm and initiative to improve their skills.

Nawawi (2006) stated that leadership style reflects the behavior of leaders in directing subordinates. The transactional leadership style applied at PT. Surya Toto tends to inhibit innovation and employee skill development because it focuses more on short-term results. Henry Mintzberg divides the role of leaders into interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles. At PT. Surya Toto, interpersonal and informational roles are not fully implemented, resulting in obstacles in the distribution of relevant information for employee training and development. Sedarmayanti (2007) stated that competence is directly related to performance effectiveness. At PT. Surya Toto, the lack of continuous training causes a decrease in employee competence which ultimately impacts the company's productivity. Spencer and Signe (1993) define competence as the skills that underlie an employee's performance. Data at PT. Surya Toto shows that without relevant training, employee skills do not develop according to job demands in the digitalization era. Darmawan (2014) stated that basic skills and experience affect employee work effectiveness. At PT. Surya Toto, the lack of experience related to the latest technology is an obstacle for employees in facing industry changes. Fadude et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes in competence. Employees at PT. Surya Toto are poorly trained to develop the attitudes and skills needed to compete in an ever-changing global market.

Siagian (2018) mentioned five main indicators for measuring competence, namely knowledge, skills, self-concept, traits, and motives. These indicators have not been fully developed at PT. Surya Toto, especially in terms of employee motivation to improve their competence. Wirata et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of education and training as part of human resource management. At PT. Surya Toto, limited budget for training hampers efforts to develop employees comprehensively. Other leadership theories such as George Terry and Koontz suggest that leadership must be able to influence employees to achieve common goals. At PT. Surya Toto, excessive focus on production leads to failure in carrying out a holistic leadership role. Mintzberg emphasizes the importance of leaders as innovators and decision makers. At PT. Surya Toto, limitations in adopting new technologies indicate a lack of leadership as innovators who are able to lead change. Spencer and Signe (1993) are again relevant to the situation at PT. Surya Toto, where employee competence is highly dependent on the training provided by the company. Handoko (2003) states that leaders who are able to empower employees will achieve better results. At PT. Surya Toto, lack of employee empowerment through training and development hampers the company's ability to compete in the global market.

The results of the study show that PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. faces various challenges in improving employee competency. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of relevant and sustainable training programs. Many employees feel that the training provided does not match their needs, especially in facing the demands of technology and globalization. Lack of support from leaders in terms of employee development is also a major obstacle. Leaders focus too much on short-term results and production

targets, ignoring aspects of competency development. The dominant leadership style in this company tends to be transactional, which focuses on achieving targets without providing space for employee innovation and development. Although there are independent training initiatives from some employees, the lack of a reward system results in no incentive for other employees to do the same.

Communication between leaders and employees is also not going well, so that employee needs are not conveyed effectively. The limited budget for employee development worsens the situation, where only a small number of employees get the opportunity to take part in quality training. Digital competency development is also a major challenge. Employees are not fully ready to adopt new technologies due to the lack of adequate training. The data shows that companies have a great opportunity to increase their competitiveness if they are able to overcome these obstacles in employee development. Employees who have high competence are better able to face industry changes and make greater contributions to the company. However, without full support from the leadership, employee competence development efforts are difficult to implement effectively.

There is an urgent need to adopt a more transformational leadership style, where leaders focus not only on results but also on the development of individual employees. Rewards for employees who succeed in improving their competence are also important to implement, in order to encourage other employees to develop themselves. In addition, there needs to be an increase in communication between leaders and employees, so that employee development needs can be met properly. Investment in employee training and development is an important step for PT. Surya Toto to maintain its competitiveness in the global market.

Leaders must be able to adopt the role of innovators who are able to lead the company through changes that occur in the industry. Well-designed training programs, as well as more open communication between leaders and employees, will improve employee competence and productivity. The data also shows that companies have great potential to grow faster if they are able to improve employee competence as a whole. Technology-based training and innovation need to be widely adopted to prepare employees for future industry changes. The results of this study suggest that improvements in human resource management, especially in terms of competency development, will have a significant positive impact on the company.

This study implies that the importance of the role of leadership in improving employee competency should not be ignored. Leaders who play an active role in employee development will have a positive impact on productivity and innovation in the company. Improving the communication system and rewards for employees who succeed in improving their competency will also help in creating a more productive and competitive work environment.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that leadership plays a very important role in improving employee competency at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. However, the challenges faced, such as lack of relevant training, non-innovative leadership style, ineffective communication, and minimal reward system, are the main obstacles in developing employee competency. Transactional leadership style that is oriented towards short-term results hinders the overall development of employees. In order for the company to remain competitive, leaders must be able to adopt a more transformational approach and provide full support for employee competency development through relevant and ongoing training. Employees who have high competence are not only able to face the challenges of the ever-changing industry but also contribute more to the growth of the company. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of adopting a transformational leadership style and improving the employee training system at PT. Surya Toto Indonesia, Tbk. The recommendation for the company is to increase the allocation of training budget and develop a reward system that motivates employees. The limitation of this study is the lack of focus on the differences in the influence of leadership styles in various work units within the company.

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