



# Engaging leadership and work engagement as moderated by “*diuwongke*”: an Indonesian study

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## ABSTRACT

The current study investigates engaging leadership and work engagement among Indonesian employees and the role of *diuwongke* (Javanese-Indonesian term for employees' perception of their leaders treating them with dignity and respect at work) plays in this relationship. We also included transformational leadership in order to show the added value of the novel concept of engaging leadership. Data were collected from 607 Indonesian employees working in one of the largest Indonesian state-owned companies in an agricultural industry. Both engaging and transformational leadership were positively related to work engagement and both types of leadership are similarly associated with work engagement without any of them has stronger association with work engagement than the other. Furthermore, the engaging leadership-work engagement relationship was moderated by *diuwongke*. That is, the engaging leadership-work engagement relationship was stronger at lower levels of *diuwongke*. In contrast, no moderating effect of *diuwongke* was observed for transformational leadership.

## KEYWORDS

Engaging leadership; transformational leadership; work engagement; *diuwongke*

## Introduction

Work engagement should be one of the organizational leaders' main priorities as it is critical for organizational effectiveness, innovation, and competitiveness, also in Indonesia (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). One of the antecedents that plays as a key role in increasing employees work engagement is leadership. Whereas transformational leadership might be the most appropriate leadership framework for understanding work engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012), transformational leadership was heavily criticized because of its lacking theoretical foundation (van

Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Hence, it seems important to develop an alternative, theory-based leadership framework for understanding work engagement. Schaufeli (2015) introduced a specific style of leadership to explain work engagement that is firmly rooted in Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which he dubbed engaging leadership.

The current research investigates engaging leadership and work engagement among employees in Indonesia and demonstrates its concurrent validity vis-à-vis transformational leadership. JD-R Model is used as the theoretical framework, and Self Determination Theory is used as the explanatory theory. Furthermore, a typical, local, Indonesian psychological phenomenon is included to qualify the relationship between leadership and work engagement: *diuwongke*. As will be explained in greater detail below, this is a Javanese-Indonesian concept that refers to treating people with dignity and respect.

In sum, the added value of this study is: (1) to illuminate the concurrent validity of engaging leadership and transformational leadership with regard to work engagement; (2) to introduce the indigenous concept of *diuwongke*, which is assumed to play a role in explaining the relationship between leadership and work engagement in Indonesia. Taken together the study will advance our knowledge of leadership and work engagement in a non-western, Indonesian context.

## Work engagement

Work engagement, which is used interchangeably with employee engagement, has become a popular topic in both business and academia because of its positive impact on employees as well as the organization they work for. It was first introduced in the 1980s by the management consulting firm Gallup (Wah, 1999). Later, (Kahn, 1990) introduced the concept in academia and described engaged employees as those who express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and mentally during role performance. Thus, when employees are engaged they bring all aspects of themselves—cognitive, emotional, and physical—to their performance. In their seminal, synthetic paper, Macey and Schneider (2008) define engagement as “... a desirable condition [that] has an organizational purpose and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy” (p. 4). However, this definition was criticized for being too broad and acting as an umbrella term for other, similar concepts (Saks, 2008). Similarly, Christian et al. (2011) described engagement as a broad construct that “involves a holistic investment of the entire self in terms of cognitive, emotional, and physical energies” (p. 97).

In contrast, Schaufeli et al. (2002), described engagement more specifically as “... a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (p. 74). Here, work engagement is defined as a concept in its own right (Schaufeli, 2013). Vigor refers to high levels of energy and perseverance, dedication to a sense of significance, inspiration, and involvement and absorption to being focused, fully concentrated and engrossed in one’s work. Compared with the previous broad definitions of employee engagement, Schaufeli (2013) argued that work engagement refers to the relationship of the employees with their work, whereas employee engagement may also include the relationship of the employees with their organization. As the consequence, by including the relationship with the organization, the distinction between engagement and traditional concepts such as organizational commitment and extra-role behavior becomes blurred. A recent review (Bailey et al., 2017) estimated that about 88% of all academic research on engagement use the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), a brief, valid and reliable questionnaire that is based on the definition of work engagement as a combination of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, 2012, 2013).

By employing engaged workers, organizations may increase not only the performance at the individual and team level, but also at the organization and business unit level (Salanova et al., 2014; Schaufeli, 2012; Schneider et al., 2009; Torrente et al., 2012). Employees who feel engaged will fully dedicate themselves to the organization and do their job with great enthusiasm (Markos & Sridevi, 2010); they are intrinsically motivated (Schaufeli, 2012), proactive (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008), and creative (Huhtala & Parzefall, 2007), and also more healthy and committed to the organization (Halbesleben, 2010). Work engagement is critically important for organizations’ competitive advantage in terms of labor productivity, job satisfaction, low turnover rates, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability (Bakker et al., 2008). In addition to that, research also found that engaged employees display innovative behaviors at work (Chang et al., 2013; Hakanen et al., 2008) and are more creative (Demerouti et al., 2015).

Furthermore, work engagement is positively related to high financial returns (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009), good service quality (Salanova et al., 2005), a superior business-unit performance (Harter et al., 2002), workplace safety (Nahrgang et al., 2011), and business growth (Gorgievski et al., 2014). Moreover, based on a meta-analysis that included over two-hundred studies, work engagement was shown to be related to performance outcomes over and above job attitudes such as job involvement and job satisfaction (Christian et al., 2011). So taken together, work

engagement is beneficial to employees as well as for the organizations they work for.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) integrated work engagement in the so-called Job Demands- Resources model that assumes that work engagement mediates the impact of job resources and personal resources on personal and organizational outcomes. According to JD-R model, job resources that are defined as “those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development” (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Job resources are assumed to have inherent motivational qualities (cf. Hackman & Oldham, 1980) and as such act as antecedents of work engagement. In its turn, as we have seen above, work engagement is associated with a myriad of positive individual and organizational outcomes. In other words, according to the JD-R model, work engagement plays a mediating role in the relationship between job resources and positive outcomes. This is called the motivational process that will be the focus of the current research. In a similar vein, burnout is mediating the relationship between job demands and negative outcomes, whereby job demands are defined as “those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs” (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501).

A resource that is studied in its own right as an antecedent of work engagement is leadership (Schaufeli, 2015). The reason for doing so is that leadership has an impact on other job resources, which, in their turn, drive work engagement. Hence, leaders may positively influence their employees’ work engagement, both directly through the relationship with their followers and indirectly through managing and allocating job resources (Breevaart et al., 2015; Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

### **Engaging leadership**

A recent, meta-analysis (DeCuyper & Schaufeli, 2017) shows that various leadership styles are positively related to work engagement, such as ethical leadership ( $k=9$ ;  $\rho = 0.58$ ), transformational leadership ( $k=36$ ;  $\rho = 0.46$ ), servant leadership ( $k=3$ ;  $\rho = 0.43$ ), authentic leadership ( $k=17$ ;  $\rho = 0.38$ ), and empowering leadership ( $k=4$ ;  $\rho = 0.35$ ). Notably, ethical leadership and transformational leadership have the highest correlations with work engagement. In addition, transformational leadership also appears to be the most often investigated leadership style; in fact, transformational leadership was used in over half of the studies

that were included in the meta-analysis. This is not surprising since transformational leadership is arguably the most popular leadership concept of the last decades (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Transformational leaders provide a favorable work environment to their followers (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006) by communicating meaning and vision which guides and motivates their followers (Carless et al., 2000). Furthermore, transformational leaders also support and empower followers and provide them with positive feedback and recognition (Carless et al., 2000), thereby initiating a motivational process that leads to work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2014). Finally, transformational leaders lead by example, presenting themselves as the role model to their followers, and inspire them with their charisma, and hence increase their motivation (Carless et al., 2000). Given the supportive work environment aforementioned before, it is likely that followers of these leaders feel invigorated and dedicated, and are immersed in their work; in short, that they are engaged.

However, the concept of transformational leadership has been heavily criticized, amongst others because it lacks theoretical underpinnings (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Because of the problems that surround the transformational leadership concept, some authors applied a similar, alternative leadership concept to work engagement and labeled it engaging (transformational) leadership (Breevaart et al., 2014; Alimo-Metcalfe et al., 2008). However, the theoretical basis of the underlying mechanism on how this leadership style affects work engagement remains unclear. Triggered by this unsatisfactory theoretical foundation of transformational leadership and by the view – particularly in business – that ‘leadership’ is crucial for work engagement, Schaufeli (2015) developed the concept of engaging leadership that is rooted in Self Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The basic tenet of engaging leadership is that engaging leaders fulfill employees’ basic psychological needs, which, in their turn, foster work engagement. According to SDT basic psychological needs are defined as “those nutriments that must be procured by a living entity to maintain its growth, integrity, and health” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 326). Three basic psychological needs are distinguished; the needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The need for autonomy is defined as the individuals’ desire to experience a sense of ownership over his or her own behavior. The need for relatedness is defined as the individuals’ desire to be member and part of a group and to feel connected with others. Finally, the need for competence is defined as the individuals’ inherent desire to be effective in dealing with environmental challenges and being capable of achieving desired outcomes. In addition, a fourth

basic psychological need was added namely the need for meaningfulness (Baumeister, 1991; Frankl, 1992), which is defined as the individuals' inherent desire to be engaged in activities that are useful, important, significant, and are in line with his or her personal values (Schaufeli, 2015).

As indicated above, the concept of engaging leadership is ingrained in SDT and supports that employees will thrive when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, competence, and meaningfulness are satisfied. Engaging leaders fulfill the basic psychological needs of their employees by performing certain leadership behaviors, namely strengthening, empowering, connecting, and inspiring (Schaufeli, 2015). By empowering employees, for instance by giving them voice, they will feel autonomous (I can make my own decisions). Thus, engaging leaders satisfy their follower's need for autonomy. By strengthening employees, for instance through delegating tasks and responsibilities and providing challenging jobs, they will feel more competent after fulfilling their tasks (I can do it). Thus, engaging leaders satisfy their follower's need for competence. By connecting employees with others in their team to encourage collaboration and interpersonal bonding, they will feel a strong sense of togetherness (I am part of this team and feel comfortable in this team). Thus, engaging leaders satisfy their follower's need for relatedness. And finally, by inspiring employees, engaging leaders acknowledge their personal contribution to the significant overall goal of the team or organization, they will feel that what they are doing is meaningful and important (I contribute to something important in this team). Hence, engaging leaders satisfy their follower's need for meaningfulness.

In sum, the key to moving employees towards full engagement is the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs by creating opportunities for need satisfaction (Meyer et al., 2012). Preliminary evidence from a study among 361 South African miners suggests that, indeed, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs mediates the relationship between engaging leadership and work engagement (De Beer & Schaufeli, 2018). In addition, the study of Schaufeli (2015) suggests that engaging leaders increase levels of job resources which, in their turn, are positively associated with work engagement.

To conclude this argument, the first objective of the present study is to relate the novel concept of engaging leadership to work engagement in an Indonesian sample and demonstrate its concurrent validity vis-à-vis the established notion of transformational leadership. Since engaging leadership is at the conceptually more intimately linked to work engagement than transformational leadership, we expect that the association with work engagement is stronger for the former type of leadership as compared to the latter. Hence we formulate:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Transformational leadership and engaging leadership are both positively related to work engagement.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Engaging leadership is stronger related to work engagement than transformational leadership.

## Diuwongke

Since the current study has been carried out in Indonesia, the moderating effect of *diuwongke* is investigated, a specific, indigenous interpersonal Javanese-Indonesian concept. This refers to being treated kind and humanly, meaning that the person feels respected, that his or her presence is recognized, opinion heard and contribution considered. In essence, it signifies that the person is allowed to participate in decision making even though (s)he has less power in the social interaction. The meaning of *diuwongke* can also be inferred linguistically. *Uwong* in Javanese language or *orang* in Bahasa Indonesia literally means *man/human*. Combined with passive voice *di-kan/ke* (Javanese/Bahasa Indonesia), *di-uwong-ke* literally means ‘to be treated as human’. In Javanese-Indonesian culture, people feel safe and happy when they experience a sense of humanness, that is, when they feel treated as human in society (*diuwongke*), as shown empirically by Prasetyo (2016).

Indonesian people want to be treated humanely (*diuwongke*), otherwise they lose their dignity and do not consider themselves a respectable person (Prasetyo, 2016). However, not all people receive appropriate respect and recognition, especially when they have low social status or lack power. Social status is important in the cultural context of Indonesia, which is characterized by high power-distance, where people accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1984). In the traditional, feudalistic and hierarchical social structure of Indonesia, people with low status and power (who are mostly poor) have to ask for approval from the authorities for any actions they want to initiate; for example, to solve work problems on their own or to change the way they of working. When authorities provide support to low-status persons, they feel *diuwongke* (treated as a human), as illustrated by Setiawan (1998). Moreover, such persons need a patron to provide security and support (Setiawan, 1998). A newspaper report might illustrate this point: a woman-farmer stated that when society or people with higher status and power make farmers feel *diuwongke*, they will be more daring to give their opinion, feel more confident, and it would increase their dignity (Gultom, 2015).

Tellingly, according to the website of one of Indonesia’s leading companies, PT Astra International Tbk., *diuwongke* is considered as one of



the core organizational values which translates into respect for employees and the promotion of teamwork (see: [www.astra.co.id](http://www.astra.co.id)).

Furthermore, Jacob Oetama, awarded the best Indonesian CEO of 2003, led his company by promoting *diuwongke* (Soelaeman, 2017). In interviews, his employees described him as a leader who always gave them attention and took care of them. For instance, when one of his employees' family members was very sick, he paid the family a visit. He also greeted all employees and had interaction with them, no matter their position in the organization. Another famous Indonesian leader who practices *diuwongke* is Jokowi, the current president of Indonesia. When leading the city of Solo as a mayor in his former job, he reached out to speak with his citizens, listened to their problems and discussed with them how the public services operated. He even invited street vendors for lunch at his house to talk with them, which made these people feel *diuwongke* (Yudha, 2014). It is said that Jokowi's leadership style is a breakthrough in public policy implementation by taking into account the essential aspects of humanity, or *diuwongke* (Sanusi, 2017).

Although clearly unique and embedded in Indonesian culture the concept of *diuwongke* shows some overlap with western concepts such as psychological safety, distributive justice and trust. For instance, psychological safety is defined as the shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 2003). In psychologically safe teams, team members feel accepted and respected because they feel free to speak up and take action without being judged by their team. In a similar vein, *diuwongke* refers to feeling accepted and respected as a result of being treated humanely and with courtesy. However, in *diuwongke* this is particularly linked with those higher in power and social status, whereas in psychological safety this status aspect does not play a significant role.

Distributive justice is defined as the perception of being accepted and fairly treated when it comes to the distribution of resources among group members (Tyler, 1994). The *diuwongke* concept seems more general and fundamental, as it goes beyond the mere distribution of resources and entails a more basic feeling of being treated according to deeply rooted values of humanness.

Another concept that seems closely related to, and yet distinct from, *diuwongke* is trust. This is defined as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party (Mayer et al., 1995). Trust only exists if leadership is aligned with organizational values, treats employees fairly, and does not exploit them (Mayer et al.,



1995). Based on this description, it seems that both in *diuwongke* and trust values lie at the core of employee-leaders interaction. However, trust is a more complex concept, which includes several dimensions, such as competence, ability, and character (benevolence, integrity). In order to be trusted leaders must be able to demonstrate their ability and competence to lead, and show integrity and benevolence toward employees (Bligh, 2017; Mayer et al., 1995).

In contrast, *diuwongke* is more straightforward as it refers to leaders who act according to the basic values of humanness. It is perhaps more similar to what scholars in social psychology mean by affective trust rather than cognitive or behavioral trust (Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Furthermore, it seems that in contrast to *diuwongke* trust implies reciprocity. Employees will experience affective trust in their leaders based on reciprocity or a mutual relationship (past and present time) and judge whether the superiors' behaviors can be trusted (in the future). In contrast, employees may feel *diuwongke* whenever leaders treat them humanely, irrespective of the presence of absence or a reciprocal relationship.

Taken together, psychological safety, distributive justice and trust, are psychological indicators of the quality of the relation of employees with their supervisor and the others in the organization. All these concepts are based on the employees' evaluation their leaders' and team members' behaviors. In contrast, *diuwongke* is more a basic indicator of relationship quality that is based on fundamental values of humanness. Hence, *diuwongke* is expected to play a key role in creating and maintaining positive relationships between employees and leaders in the Indonesian work context.

### ***Diuwongke* as moderator of engaging leadership and work engagement**

In the current study, we expect that the relation between engaging leadership and work engagement will differ with different levels of *diuwongke*, as experienced by employees. To the best of our knowledge, no studies exist on the role that leadership and *diuwongke* play in employee well-being. However, some studies show the importance of followers' feeling valued by their leader (Hamstra et al., 2014). Akin to *diuwongke*, this is can be seen as an indicator of a good quality relationship with the leader and is likely enhance employees' well-being and prevent stress.

When employees are treated with dignity and respect, and feel valued for their contributions, instead of merely being treated as a job holder, they are likely to feel a sense of self-worth and shall be more willing to

put an effort in their job and contribute to their organization. In combination with leaders' behaviors that are strengthening, connecting, empowering and inspiring, higher levels of *diuwongke* are likely to increase work engagement. Employees will feel energized and are willing to invest extra energy, attention, and time in their work when their supervisors fulfill their basic needs, and when they *simultaneously* treat them kind and humanely. Employee's levels of work engagement are boosted when their basic needs are fulfilled *and* when they feel valued as humans by their leaders. In contrast, when supervisors only focus on basic need satisfaction in an attempt to merely 'motivate' their employees but fail to treat them with a deeper sense of kindness and humanity, their impact on work engagement is likely be less strong.

A similar moderating effect as we expect for *diuwongke*, was found for psychological safety (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016), trust in the supervisor (Chughtai et al., 2015), and distributive justice (Rice et al., 2017). That is, leadership had a stronger effect on employee well-being when employees experienced safety, trust, and justice as compared to the situation where this was less or absent. In sum, the positive and secure relationship that the employees have with their leader (*diuwongke*) reinforces the effect of engaging leadership on work engagement. In contrast, the association between engaging leadership and work engagement will be less strong when a lower level of *diuwongke* is experienced. Hence we formulate:

**Hypothesis 2a:** *Diuwongke* moderates the relationship between engaging leadership and work engagement in the sense that higher levels of *diuwongke* strengthen this relationship.

Following the same reasoning as above, it is also expected that *diuwongke* moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. However, since it is assumed (Hypotheses 1b) that the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement is less strong than it is for engaging leadership, the moderator effect of *diuwongke* is also less likely to occur. As noted before, the rationale behind the weaker relationship of transformational leadership with work engagement is that at conceptual level engaging leadership is more intimately and inherently linked to work engagement than transformational leadership. So finally, we formulate:

**Hypothesis 2b:** *Diuwongke* moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement in the sense that higher levels of *diuwongke* strengthen this relationship, albeit that this effect will be less strong than in case of engaging leadership (Hypothesis 2a).

**Hypothesis 2c:** Engaging leadership adds incremental variance over and above transformational leadership in relation to *diuwongke* and work engagement.

## Method

### Procedure

Permission was officially granted by the company and 700 participants who worked at plantation sites in North Sumatra were joined the research based on their convenient accessibility. The surveys were handed in sealed envelopes and distributed to the participants. Participants received a written description of the study along with an informed consent of the survey. The surveys were completed during the working hours of the participants and they, then, gave the completed survey back in a sealed envelope to the HR Department collectively per unit, within maximum of two weeks. Participation in the study was voluntary, and the participants' responses were confidential. The whole data collection process took three months, from April to June 2017.

### Participants

Participants in this study were 607 employees from a state-owned agribusiness company in Indonesia, which operates in the cultivation of palm oil and rubber, and the production, sale, and export of palm oil and rubber products. From 700 selected employees, 611 returned the survey (response rate 87.3 percent); four surveys could not be used for further analyses because they were not filled-out completely. All participants were men; their mean age was 44.6 years ( $SD = 7.7$ ); 23.2 percent completed elementary education, 59.6 percent completed secondary education, .2 percent completed professional higher education, 16.5 percent completed a bachelor degree, and .5 percent completed a master degree; more than half of the participants (56.5 percent) had over twenty years of job tenure.

### Measurements

Four self-reported scales were used to measure work engagement, engaging leadership, transformational leadership, and *diuwongke*, respectively. All items were translated from English into Bahasa Indonesia following the double translation procedure as recommended by Brislin (1970).

### Work engagement

Work engagement was assessed with the 9-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES, Schaufeli et al., 2006). Previous studies carried out in other countries have shown that the UWES has satisfactory psychometric properties (Schaufeli, 2012). The UWES assesses the three core dimensions of work engagement, namely vigor, dedication,

and absorption. Each item of vigor (e.g. “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”), dedication (e.g. “I am proud of the work that I do”), and absorption (e.g. “I get carried away when I’m working”) is rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores indicating higher levels of employees’ work engagement.

A confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) on the data of the current study revealed a good fit of the hypothesized three-factor structure (vigor, dedication, and absorption);  $\chi^2 = 84.58$ ,  $df = 21$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .96, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = .95, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .97, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .07. However, the three factors correlated highly ( $.85 < r < .99$ ), and therefore, and following the recommendation of Schaufeli et al. (2006), a single composite work engagement score was used in the present study. The value of Cronbach’s alpha for the total scale was .87.

### ***Engaging leadership***

The 12-item Engaging Leadership scale assesses the four core dimensions of engaging leadership, namely strengthening, connecting, empowering, and inspiring with 3 items each. Each item of strengthening (e.g. “My supervisor delegates tasks and responsibilities to teammembers”), connecting (e.g. “My supervisor encourages collaboration among team members”), empowering (e.g. “My supervisor gives team members enough freedom and responsibility to complete their tasks”), and inspiring (e.g. “My supervisor is able to enthuse team members with his/her plans”) is rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores indicating higher levels of supervisor’s engaging leadership as perceived by their followers.

A confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) on the data of the current study revealed a good fit of the hypothesized four-factor structure;  $\chi^2 = 222.99$ ,  $df = 47$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .92, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = .91, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .94, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .08. However, the four factors were correlated highly ( $.63 < r < .83$ ), and therefore, and following the recommendation of Schaufeli (2015), a single composite engaging leadership score was used in the present study. The value of Cronbach’s alpha for the total scale was .86.

### ***Transformational leadership***

Transformational leadership was assessed with the 7-item Global Transformational Leadership (GTL) scale (Carless et al., 2000). Each item of the Global TFL scale (e.g. “My supervisor communicates a clear and positive

vision of the future”) is rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores indicating higher levels of supervisor’s transformational leadership perceived by the employees. A confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) on the data of the current study revealed a good fit of the single factor model;  $\chi^2 = 40.79$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .98, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = .98, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .99, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .05. Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was .89.

### ***Diuwongke***

Since the *diuwongke* scale was self-constructed and first tested in this study, an exploratory factor analysis was performed on the construct of *diuwongke* (maximum likelihood analysis, varimax rotation with extraction of factors with an eigenvalue higher than 1.00 and a cut-off criterion for factor loadings of .40) and showed one underlying component. Based upon the scree plot and communalities, it was chosen to retain one factor. The 10 items assessed a wide range of employee’s perceptions of being treated ‘as a human’ by his leader (for the 10 item details see [Table 1](#) below). Each item of *diuwongke*, is rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of employees’ *diuwongke*.

A confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) on the data of the current study revealed a good fit ( $\chi^2 = 152.76$ ,  $df = 33$ ,  $p < .01$ ; SRMR = .018, NFI = .93, TLI = .93, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .07) by allowing two errors for the items “My supervisor treats me with respect” and “I feel my presence is recognized”, “I feel my presence is recognized” and “My opinions are being heard by my supervisor” to correlate because of their overlapping item content. All of the 10 items had high factor loadings between .53 and .70. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was .87.

## **Results**

### ***Preliminary analysis***

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement model consisting of four correlated latent variables: engaging leadership (a second-order factor represented by its components of strengthening, connecting, empowering, and inspiring, which were each represented by their three corresponding items), transformational leadership (a first order factor represented by its seven corresponding items), work engagement (a second order factor represented by its components of vigor, dedication, and absorption, which were each represented by

**Table 1.** Items of the “*diuwongke*” scale.

Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	KMO MSA	Eigen values	PCA/ Varimax	CFA SFL > .5	Result
My supervisor treats me with respect.	4,24	.585	.858	.913 <sup>a</sup>	4.759	.638	.69	Valid
I feel included and involved by my supervisor.	4,21	.602	.857	.923 <sup>a</sup>	.896	.711	.70	Valid
I feel my presence is recognized and appreciated by my supervisor.	4,21	.637	.857	.922 <sup>a</sup>	.846	.693	.53	Valid
I feel I am being valued as a human being by my supervisor.	4,31	.634	.854	.907 <sup>a</sup>	.634	.745	.65	Valid
My supervisor cares about me as a person.	3,99	.831	.860	.905 <sup>a</sup>	.605	.752	.63	Valid
My opinions are being heard by my supervisor.	4,02	.608	.857	.932 <sup>a</sup>	.506	.492	.58	Valid
I like the way my supervisor greets me even though I am his/her subordinate	4,32	.620	.857	.925 <sup>a</sup>	.498	.795	.69	Valid
I can talk about my personal problem to my supervisor	3,78	.910	.867	.894 <sup>a</sup>	.452	.777	.64	Valid
My supervisor tends to ignore me (R)	4,31	.564	.855	.908 <sup>a</sup>	.410	.759	.68	Valid
When I made a mistake, my supervisor makes me feel stupid and useless (R)	4,16	.718	.852	.907 <sup>a</sup>	.393	.708	.66	Valid

their three corresponding items). The measurement model showed a good fit with the data ( $\chi^2 = 793.62$ ,  $df = 246$ ,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .02, CFI = .92; TLI = .91).

### Descriptive statistics

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 21. Table 1 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and correlations between the study variables. As expected, all the variables were positively correlated with one another.

As shown above, engaging leadership and transformational leadership were similarly positively correlated with work engagement. Moreover, *diuwongke* is higher correlated with engaging leadership than with transformational leadership.

### Testing of hypotheses

Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS was conducted in order to simultaneously investigate the associations of engaging and

transformational leadership with work engagement (Hypothesis 1a & 1b). Furthermore, Model 1 of the SPSS PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2017) was used to test the moderation effect of *diuwongke* in the relationship between engaging/transformational leadership and work engagement (Hypothesis 2a and 2b). Hierarchical Linear Regression with SPSS was used to test the hypothesized additional variance in *diuwongke* and work engagement that is explained by engaging leadership over and above transformational leadership (Hypothesis 2c).

A structural equation model was fitted to the data that assumed that a latent engaging leadership factor (with four indicators: strengthening, connecting, empowering and inspiring leadership) and a latent transformational leadership factor (with all items scale items as indicators) are simultaneously correlated with a latent work engagement factor (with three indicators: vigor, dedication, and absorption). This model showed a good fit with the data ( $\chi^2 = 244,1$ ,  $df = 74$ ,  $p < .001$ ; NFI = .94, TLI = .95, CFI = .96; RMSEA = .06). All three relative fit indices (NFI, TLI, and CFI) exceed their criterion of .90 (.94, .95, .96 respectively) and the value of RMSEA is .06, which is lower than the criterion .08.

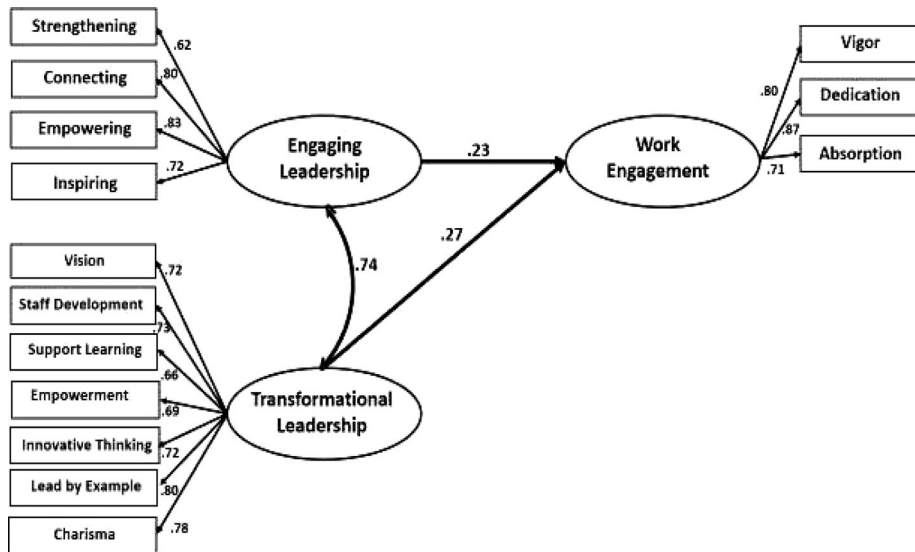
As can be seen from Figure 1, both engaging leadership and transformational leadership are positively and significantly correlated with work engagement (Hypothesis 1a confirmed). However, contrary to expectations engaging leadership ( $\gamma = .23$ ) is *not* stronger associated with work engagement than transformational leadership ( $\gamma = .27$ ). In fact, both leadership styles are similarly associated with work engagement, so that Hypotheses 1b is not confirmed. Furthermore, engaging leadership and transformational leadership show considerable overlap ( $r = .74$ ).

### ***Diuwongke* as moderator**

As shown in Table 2, two significant main effects of *diuwongke* and engaging leadership on work engagement were observed. A regression coefficient of .44 for *diuwongke*, means that for every 1 unit increase in *diuwongke*, there will be .44 unit increase in work engagement. Similarly, for every 1 unit increase in engaging leadership there will be .18 unit increase in work engagement. But more importantly, and as expected, *diuwongke* moderates the relationship between engaging leadership and work engagement, as indicated by the significant interaction term. Hence Hypothesis 2a is confirmed.

We then computed separate regression lines for employees with high *diuwongke* (1 SD above the mean), average *diuwongke*, and low *diuwongke* (1 SD below the mean) and plotted these (see Figure 2).





**Figure 1.** Structural equation model of the associations between engaging and transformational leadership with work engagement.

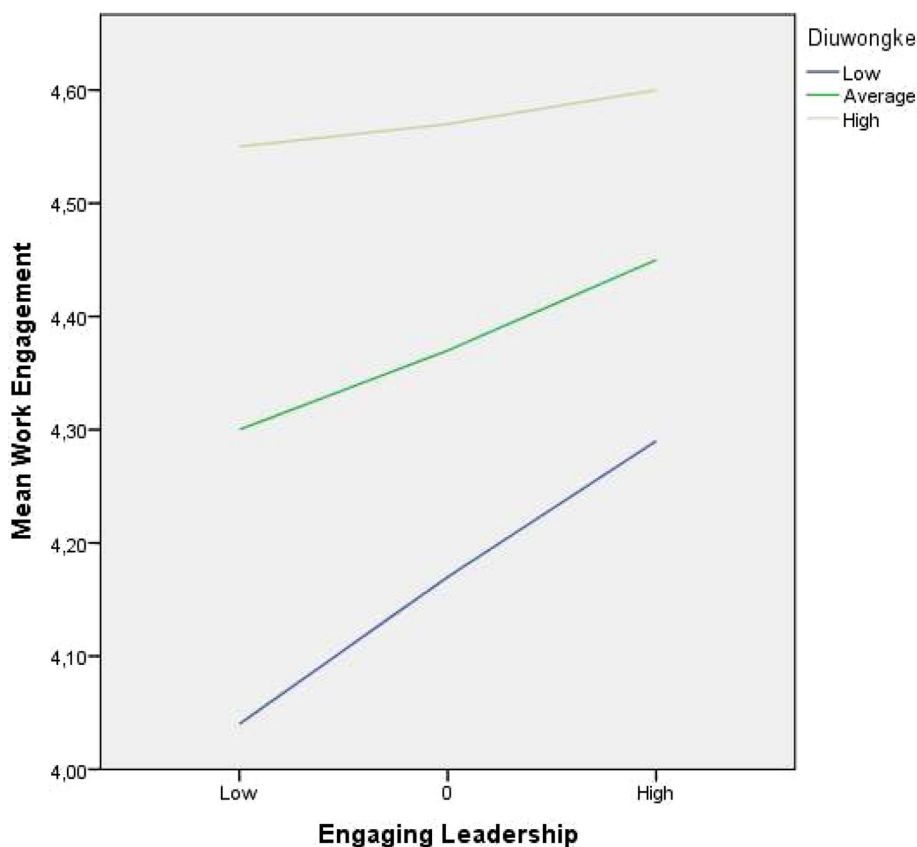
**Table 2.** Means (M), standard deviations (SD), correlation coefficients and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (diagonal) of the study variables ( $N = 607$ ).

Variables	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Engaging Leadership	4.19	.41	.86			
2. Transformational Leadership	4.35	.58	.64**	.89		
3. <i>Diuwongke</i>	4.19	.46	.71**	.49**	.87	
4. Work Engagement	4.34	.57	.39**	.38**	.46**	.87

\*\* $p < .01$ .

Figure 2 displays the interaction between engaging leadership in the prediction of work engagement. The figure illustrates that *diuwongke* moderates the association between engaging leadership and work engagement in such a way that engaging leadership is positively associated with work engagement for low and average levels of *diuwongke*, and it is not associated with engagement for a high level of *diuwongke*. This finding partly supports Hypothesis 2a. A similar moderation analyses was carried out for transformational leadership. However, the result of this analysis did not show a significant moderation effect of *diuwongke* (see Table 3);  $b = -.07$ ,  $t(603) = -.98$ ,  $p = .33$ . Hence it is concluded that the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement is *not* moderated by *diuwongke* (Hypothesis 2b not supported) (Table 4).

Finally, the results of the hierarchical regression from Table 5 show that indeed engaging leadership explained additional variance in *diuwongke* ( $R^2 = .51$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .27$ ) and work engagement ( $R^2 = .18$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ) over and above transformational leadership. Hence, Hypothesis 2c was supported.



**Figure 2.** Interaction plot of work engagement as a function of engaging leadership for low (−1SD), average, and high (+1SD) levels of *diuwongke*.

**Table 3.** Moderation of *diuwongke* of the relationship between engaging leadership and work engagement ( $N = 607$ ).

	B	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	4.34	.02	189.82	.00***
<i>Diuwongke</i>	.44	.08	5.47	.00***
Engaging Leadership	.18	.08	2.19	.03*
<i>Diuwongke</i> * Engaging Leadership	-.25	.09	−2.83	.00**
$R^2 = .23$				
$F(3,603) = 47.33$				

**Table 4.** Moderation of *diuwongke* of the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement ( $N = 607$ ).

	B	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	4.35	.02	180.66	.00***
<i>Diuwongke</i>	.45	.07	6.55	.00***
Transformational Leadership	.19	.05	4.35	.00***
<i>Diuwongke</i> * Transformational Leadership	-.07	.07	-.98	.33
$R^2 = .25$				
$F(3,603) = 65.29$				

**Table 5.** Incremental variance of *diuwongke* and work engagement explained by engaging leadership, after controlling for transformational leadership.

Predictors	<i>Diuwongke</i>		Work Engagement	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Step 1				
Transformational Leadership#	.49**		.38**	
$R^2$	.24**		.15**	
$F$	186.5**		104.83**	
Step 2				
Transformational Leadership#				
Engaging Leadership#		.72**		.43**
$R^2$		.51**		.18**
$F$		310.44**		67.99**
$\Delta R^2$		.27**		.04**
$\Delta F$		332.26**		26.69**

#Standardized regression coefficients.

\*\* $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

This study investigated the association, among Indonesian employees, between engaging and transformational leadership on the one hand, and work engagement on the other hand. Furthermore, the moderating effect of a specific indigenous Indonesian concept, called *diuwongke*, was examined. A structural equation modeling revealed that both engaging leadership and transformational leadership are positively and similarly correlated with work engagement with  $\gamma$ 's of .23 and .27, respectively, thereby confirming Hypothesis 1a. However, against expectations, engaging leadership is not stronger associated with work engagement than transformational leadership, so that Hypothesis 1b was not confirmed. Tellingly, both leadership styles were highly correlated, sharing 55% of their variance.

Our results are in line with previous research that showed that both transformational and engaging leadership have a positive correlation with work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2014; De Beer & Schaufeli, 2018; Tims et al., 2011). Both types of leadership promote a positive work environment by giving support and feedback, and by empowering and inspiring with a clear vision. This increases employee motivation and spurs work engagement. Also, a recent meta-analysis (DeCuyper & Schaufeli, 2017) shows that various positive leadership styles are positively related to work engagement, not only transformational leadership but also authentic, servant, ethical and empowering leadership.

However, our study was the first to include two different positive leadership styles *simultaneously*. Our results indicate that considerable overlap exists, but also that to some extent engaging and transformational leadership are complementary. Inspirational motivation and individualized consideration as elements of transformational leadership increase

engagement in ways that are similar to inspiring and strengthening as elements of engaging leadership (Soane, 2014). Seen from this perspective it is not surprising that we observed considerable overlap between transformational and engaging leadership; they include partly the same elements. However, both leadership styles also differ in the sense that transformational leadership does not include connecting employees, whereas engaging leadership does not include idealized influence (Schaufeli, 2015). Hence, each leadership style also includes a unique element, which explains that both styles contribute independently to explaining variance in work engagement.

Future studies could explore the unique contributions of other positive leadership styles such as *ethical* leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006, which focuses on normative behavior, *servant* leadership (Liden et al., 2014), which focuses on being altruistic as a leader and attuned to the needs and development of employees, *authentic* leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2010), which focuses on being self-aware and authentic, and *empowering* leadership (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), which focuses on empowering employees. Relating each of these leadership styles simultaneously with engaging leadership to work engagement would identify their unique contribution. Based on this information it can be concluded whether or not the novel concept of engaging leadership is worthwhile pursuing.

The second hypothesis of our study specifies under which circumstances leadership is associated with work engagement. In that context a specific, indigenous Javanese-Indonesian moderating variable is introduced, namely *diuwongke*. The hypothesized moderating role of *diuwongke* in the relationship between engaging leadership and work engagement (H2a) was partly supported. Against our expectations, only employees with average and low levels of *diuwongke* seem to benefit from engaging leadership in the sense that for them this is associated with higher levels of work engagement. In contrast, employees with high levels of *diuwongke* do not benefit from engaging leadership, their levels of engagement do not increase. Obviously, for employees low in *diuwongke*, who feel less valued and recognized by their supervisor, the leader's strengthening, inspiring, connecting and empowering behaviors are particularly important to enhance work engagement. It can be speculated that low *diuwongke* is 'compensated' by engaging leadership and vice versa. They might be a considerable overlap between engaging leadership and *diuwongke*.

On the other hand, for employees who experience high levels of *diuwongke*, engaging leadership is not associated with levels of work engagement. In this case, compensation is not necessary since a good relationship with one's supervisors enhances employees' motivation and work engagement, independently from the presence or absence of

engaging leadership. It can be speculated that this might be explained by the specific nature of our sample. Namely, our sample includes predominantly older employees (Mean age 44.6 years,  $SD = 7.7$ ) with long tenure (56.5 percent had over twenty years of job tenure), who perform operational, routine tasks. They can be considered resourceful employees who – over the years – accumulated job resources (Tims et al., 2011) and personal resources (Kim & Kang, 2017); they are skilled and know exactly how to perform the job. Thus, it can be speculated that most of them are in low need of leadership (Breevaart et al., 2014) as the leadership role is substituted by their long-standing experience on the job (Lajoie et al., 2017). So it seems that *diuwongke* plays a more fundamental role, presumably because it refers to basic human values – being treated with dignity and respect – rather than to particular, more ‘superficial’ engaging leadership behaviors. When employees feel valued by their supervisor (high *diuwongke*), their work engagement does not depend on their supervisor’s engaging leadership. When *diuwongke* is average or low, strengthening, connecting, empowering, and inspiring increases employee engagement.

Another possible explanation for the lack of interaction between engaging leadership and employee’s high levels of *diuwongke* is that it does not match the employees’ cultural value orientation. Cultural value orientation serves as a powerful facilitator or barrier to the effect of leadership behaviors (Kirkman et al., 2009). This present research was carried out in a typical long-established Indonesian company, in which the employees are socialized during a long period. Moreover, Indonesia has a high power distance national culture (Hofstede et al., 2010) where leaders are expected to act as a patron. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), power distance orientation refers to the extent to which an individual accepts the unequal distribution of power in an organization (Kirkman et al., 2009). Leaders are seen as the authority at a higher level that are entitled to control their employees. It is assumed that the participants of this present study reflect a high power distance cultural value orientation. When the quality of the relationship between leaders and employees is poor (low *diuwongke*), engaging leaders are perceived as patronizing leaders (that match with the employees’ high power distance cultural value orientation), so that leaders have a positive effect on employees’ work engagement. However, when *diuwongke* is high, employees will feel that they are more equal to their leaders. It can be speculated that in that case, engaging leaders are not perceived as a patronizing leaders (that do not match with the employees’ high power distance cultural value orientation). Hence, leader’s behaviors do not increase employees’ level of work engagement. However, this conclusion is rather tentative

and further research on the match of employees' cultural orientation with engaging leadership is needed.

Another alternative explanation may be found in the Uncertainty Management Theory. According to this theory, the relationship between context perceptions and performance will be stronger for low-quality supervisors-employees exchange relationships in which high levels of uncertainty are experienced (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002; Rosen et al., 2011), as this low quality relationship is comparable with low *diuwongke*. Employees with high *diuwongke* receive more support, information and rewards from their supervisors, thus, their feeling of uncertainty is lower, and they are therefore more certain about their current performance. In contrast, employees with low *diuwongke* receive less information from their supervisors that allow them to know how well they are performing. Because of their insecure relationship, and high uncertainty, employees will increase their efforts to meet the performance standards based on their past experiences. This implies that context perceptions (comparable to engaging leader behaviors) and performance (comparable to work engagement) are stronger for low-quality supervisor-employee exchange relationship (comparable to low *diuwongke*). However, again, it still needs further research and conclusion should be considered with caution.

Tellingly, while the combination of engaging leadership and average/low levels of *diuwongke* contributed to employees' work engagement, this interaction was not observed for transformational leadership (H2b not supported). It can be speculated that particularly the unique element of engaging leadership that is missing in transformational leadership (i.e. connecting) is responsible for producing the significant interaction effect. *Diuwongke* and engaging leadership both stress the benefit of building and maintaining good relationships (connecting), also between leaders and their followers. In contrast, the transformational leadership scale that we used in this study focuses on the promotion of employee's own and organization's goals. As a result, the interaction effect of *diuwongke* and transformational leadership on work engagement is less likely to occur.

Finally, it was found that engaging leadership added a significant proportion of explained variance in both *diuwongke* and work engagement after controlling for transformational leadership (Hypothesis 2c was confirmed). So it seems that despite their considerable overlap, transformational and engaging leadership each explain roughly a similar proportion of unique variance in work engagement. Moreover, in a similar vein engaging leadership also explains a sizeable proportion of variance in *diuwongke* over and above transformational leadership. Hence, engaging leadership matters for both work engagement *diuwongke*, also after controlling for transformational leadership.

## Strengths and limitations

We believe that this study increases our knowledge on the role of leaders in enhancing employees' work engagement, and more specifically on the role of a specific type of leadership, namely engaging leadership. Even though the result is not fully supported that engaging leadership is stronger related to work engagement than transformational leadership, the former type of leadership has a stronger theoretical foundation than the later. Our research opens new perspectives for research regarding the conditions influencing the impact of engaging leadership (and transformational) leadership on work engagement.

This study answers the call from cross-cultural organizational behavior and psychology research for assessing the impact of cultural values on individual employees (Gelfand et al., 2007; Kirkman et al., 2006; Tsui et al., 2007). In order to do so, this study included a local value-based phenomenon in Javanese- Indonesian culture, which adds to our limited knowledge on work engagement in non-western countries. The variable that is used in this study may be somewhat unique to the local Indonesian culture, however, the results might also be generalized to other countries with similar cultures. For instance, other countries with high power distance where leaders are perceived as patrons, such as Malaysia, Phillipines, and China. Furthermore, it is might be interesting to investigate the relevance of *diuwongke* in a cross- cultural context or to test the impact of *diuwongke* in other (western) cultures

However, several limitations with regard to the study should also be considered. First, this present study is cross-sectional in nature, so that conclusions regarding the directions of causality among variables cannot be drawn. For instance, it cannot be concluded that engaged employees perceive their leaders as being more engaged or transformational. Second, our results may be influenced by common method variance (CMV) because self-report scales were used to measure the variables. Like most studies in the field, our study also relies on self-reports to assess subjective perceptions of employees. In order to assess the presence of possible CMV, we used Harman's Single Factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) which is based on confirmatory factor analysis. It appeared that the fit to the data of a single latent factor model was rather poor ( $\chi^2=3459.11$ ,  $df = 434$ ,  $GFI = .64$ ,  $AGFI = .58$ ,  $CFI = .64$ ,  $TLI = .61$ ,  $RMSEA = .11$ ). This suggests that it is unlikely that CMV might have biased the results. Nevertheless, in future research, leader behaviors might also be assessed by expert ratings and *diuwongke* might be assessed by interviews.

Third, even though we have examined the measurement model consisting of four correlated latent variables which yielded a good fit with the data,



some caution is warranted since possible multicollinearity issues might exist considering the high observed correlations among the study variables. Fourth, another caution is warranted concerning a possible response style bias, as high mean scores of all scales were observed. Although cultural characteristics were not measured in the current study, it can be speculated that a particular response style (i.e. positivity bias) might have been used by the study participants. They live in an Indonesian culture that is high in collectivism and power distance (Hofstede et al., 2010), that is therefore likely to foster agreeableness, submissiveness and defensiveness. Furthermore, Indonesian respondents are likely to avoid confrontation and maintain harmony, thus, they tend to respond to survey questions mildly and positively (Harzing et al., 2012; Smith, 2004). Fifth limitation is that the measure of *diuwongke* was self-constructed and used for the first time in this study. Although the internal consistency of the measure was sufficient and it played the expected moderating role; its validity should be further examined in future research.

### **Practical implication and conclusion**

The key role of engaging leadership in increasing work engagement is supported by this study. Hence, organizations may promote this specific type of leadership through coaching or training programs. This study also emphasizes the role of *diuwongke* for work engagement. Treating employees with dignity and respect is associated with work engagement, thus, organizations may build a culture of respect among their employees. It is important to consider cultural aspects in leading employees, in our case, making the followers feel valued. Leaders who wish to foster work engagement should focus more on employees who feel less valued/*diuwongke*. On the other hand, they could focus less on employees who highly feel valued as this seems to substitute engaging leadership.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### **Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [VGR], upon reasonable request.

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