

Gaya Kepemimpinan Transformasional dalam Bisnis Komersial Virtual Youtuber: Studi Psikobiografi Motoaki “Yagoo” Tanigo

Transformational Leader in Virtual Youtuber Commercial Business: Psychobiography of Motoaki “Yagoo” Tanigo

Rahmadina Syarafina Wibowo^(1*) & Mirra Noor Milla⁽²⁾

Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

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*Corresponding author: fina.wibowo@gmail.com

Abstrak

Psikobiografi merupakan studi yang mendalami momen-momen signifikan dalam kehidupan individu untuk dianalisis menggunakan teori psikologi yang relevan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa mekanisme dibalik gaya kepemimpinan Yagoo sebagai CEO dari Cover Corporation. Gaya kepemimpinan transformasional memiliki kepribadian unik yang cenderung direndahkan oleh pemimpin wirausahawan dengan basis kebutuhan atas kekuasaan dan pencapaian. Mekanisme gaya kepemimpinan transformasional dibahas menggunakan lensa teori determinasi diri dan orientasi kewirausahaan individual. Analisis data menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan menggunakan sumber data sekunder seperti wawancara tertulis dan rekaman. Triangulasi data dilakukan untuk menjaga kredibilitas data. Hasil dari analisis tematik deduktif menunjukkan otentisitas dari gaya kepemimpinan transformasional Yagoo membantu pengembangan karyawan dan komunitas. Hal ini dapat dicapai dengan memenuhi kebutuhan psikologis dasar, seperti kebutuhan atas otonomi, kompetensi, dan keterhubungan. Ciri kepribadian dalam berbisnis, seperti ciri inovatif, proaktif, dan berani mengambil risiko, nampak dalam perjalanan professional Yagoo dari permulaan karier hingga kesuksesannya dalam bidang bisnis komersial. Bagian diskusi menjelaskan bagaimana pemahaman terkait kepemimpinan yang humanis membantu aktivitas bisnis komersial.

Kata Kunci: Motoaki Tanigo; Orientasi Kewirausahaan Individual; Psikobiografi; Teori Determinasi Diri; Gaya Kepemimpinan Transformasional.

Abstract

Psychobiography is widely known for a significant life-span study of an individual interpreted through the lens of relevant theories of psychology. This study aimed to examine the underlying mechanism of Yagoo's transformational leadership as the CEO of Cover Corporation. Transformational leaders encompassed unique personalities that may be condemned by other competitive entrepreneurial leaders who are driven by the need for power and achievement. The underlying mechanism of transformational leadership was explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory and Individual Entrepreneurship Orientation. The analysis was conducted using a qualitative approach and used secondary data sources such as written and recorded interviews. Triangulated data was utilized in terms of data credibility. Deductive thematic analysis showed Yagoo as a transformational leader established a sense of authenticity in developing his followers and community. This was achieved by fulfilling psychological basic needs, such as the need for autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Business dispositions, particularly innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk taking were present in Yagoo's professional journey from the pioneering period towards the success in commercial business. The implication highlighted an understanding of the nature of a humanistic leader who engages in digital commercial activities.

Keywords: Motoaki Tanigo; Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation; Psychobiography; Self-Determination Theory; Transformational Leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Engagement is an essential key that must be acquired in order to attract viewers and stakeholders, especially in digital commercial business (Habib et al., 2022). CEO of Cover Corporation, a virtual reality and virtual youtuber company, is renowned for doing a different strategy compared to most of the conventional CEO. Motoaki Tanigo, also known as Yagoo, actively partakes in building community, creating an intimate relationship with fans, collaborating with idols, appreciating the hardships— these show a remarkable appeal as a CEO (Baillet et al., 2023). Worldwide fans worship Yagoo as the best girl and the best idol due to his unique forte of his personality, for instance humbleness, openness to experience, and social connectedness with the community (Hololive Vtuber Group, 2022). His successive accomplishments led to Yagoo being recognized as one of Japan's Top 20 Entrepreneurs by Forbes Japan 2022, 3rd biggest Entrepreneur in Forbes Japan 2023, and Runner-up Award in Project category of Cool Japan Public-Private Partnership Platform Awards 2024.

Motoaki Taniago, known by the name Yagoo, is a Japanese entrepreneur born on December 10, 1973. He graduated from the Faculty of Science and Technology of Keio University (Ito, 2021). His parents' feat in creative art had honed Yagoo spirit to follow the same path (Tanigo, 2019). In childhood, Yagoo dreamed of achieving Nobel prize at which shares the same date as his birthday (Noun, 2023). Upon reaching adulthood, Yagoo looked forwards to Elon Musk who brought about marvelous achievements and solved global issue (Noun, 2023). Moreover, Yagoo is

eager to advance the bright aspects of Japan's economy towards global markets, such as Sony Group Corporation and Honda Motor Company (Tanigo, 2019).

Yagoo was appointed as CEO in 30min. Inc, a leading technology corporation that developed mobile GPS and created a community-based information portal (Ito, 2021; Tokyo XR Startups, 2019). However, Yagoo perceived his forte in creativity and human resources management, hadn't been well-developed ever since (Ito, 2021). The shareholders didn't entrust Yagoo's future business plan regarding the prospect of VR and AR development (Tokyo XR Startups, 2019). Despite these circumstances, Yagoo strived for his aspiration by establishing Cover Corporation in 2016. Recognizing the new prospect in virtual youtuber, Yagoo decided to create a virtual youtuber agency named Hololive Production.

It piques an interest because Yagoo's personality contrasts with that of McClelland's human motivation theory (Carvalho et al., 2024), which argues that the success of leadership is rooted in higher need for power and is expected less for affiliation. This may bring an impact on the underlying personality. The need for power is associated with narcissism, leading to a fierce rivalry and an excessive pride to trump others (Grapsas et al., 2022). Despite this, it is a great force towards material success (Rybnicek et al., 2019) and rapid performance (Palmer et al., 2020).

Technology-based corporations are highly sought and accumulate demands from successive years. Consequently, it is imperative to ensure proper management of human resources. The engagement

created by a CEO through livestreaming has the potential to increase consumer trust (Wei et al., 2023). A Psychobiography of Steve Jobs as an entrepreneurial CEO indicated that personality traits and leadership style are closely linked to business success (Ndoro et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aims to illuminate the underlying factors that influence the leadership style of entrepreneurial CEO. The eminent personality of Yagoo has been a motivation to conduct this psychobiography, which seeks to delve further into transformational leadership that fosters psychological fulfillment among followers. The finding is expected to provide insight into how employees and community perceive their role as meaningful, thereby sustaining commercial activities.

Transformational leaders share aspirations with their followers, create a safe space for the followers to spark innovation, personal development, and performance (Peng et al., 2021). Transformational leaders are expected to perform these four behaviors: (1) inspirational behaviors with shared visions that motivate and inspire the followers; (2) exhibit idealized influences which serve as an appropriate role model that are consistent with the shared vision; (3) actively engage in intellectual stimulation by challenging the followers towards ideation; (4) individualized consideration allow the leaders to attend to the personal needs of their followers, thus fostering trust and satisfaction with the leaders (Adhyke et al., 2023; Peng et al., 2021).

It is important to expand the study by examining the leader and follower

interaction (Ding et al., 2022). Previous findings proposed that transformational leaders increased followers' self-efficacy (Salanova et al., 2022), value internalization (Salanova et al., 2022), work engagement (Santoso et al., 2022), and normative belief (Kim et al., 2021). By providing idealized role model, it influences the follower to adhere their action and belief to the leaders (Adhyke et al., 2023). Transformational leaders would be known with their motivational aspect that can work as psychological resource for the followers (Adhyke et al., 2023). Therefore, follower changes are attributed to the characteristics of the leader (Ding et al., 2022).

It should be discerned that leader is not only "being" in the position but rather emphasizes the "becoming" characteristic of identity in contributing to the surroundings (McCarron et al., 2023). Proactive personality in leader promoted positive influences on the followers' service performance and coordinated works effectively (Yang et al., 2020). Transformational leaders with proactive tendency may work their way to boost morale, ideals, interests, and values of the followers (Ashfaq et al., 2023). In the emergence of transformational leaders, big five personality factors strengthened the idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration (Adhyke et al., 2023).

Being a leader frames a unique personality (Carton et al., 2022). That said, developing a leadership style is not solely about imitating successful business role model (Feist et al., 2021). It requires a leader to reflect on their own motives and goals to sustain both personal and

professional activities. In the current research, the authors propose that an entrepreneurial CEO with a transformational leadership tendency is underpinned by individual entrepreneurial orientation. Individual entrepreneurial orientation consists of three traits that support the role of leader as an actor who brings success to the venture, for instance innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking (Hassan et al., 2021).

It is noteworthy that there are yet an inadequate number of studies examining transformational leadership in the lens of self-determination theory (Ryan et al., 2024). Self-determination theory conceptualizes that the three innate psychological needs ought to be balanced to strive for optimal growth. This reflects a different approach with McClelland's theory of motivation, which highlights the domination of one need as a strength to gain desired results. In the current framework, self-determined theory empowers transformational leadership style by setting the CEO as the main motivation to engage others in seeking and solving challenges as part of development. Thus, nurturing the satisfaction of internal needs, well-being, and work meaning-making process.

The personality of Yagoo has inspired the current study to examine how a transformational leader driven by intrinsic motivation fulfillment can support the venture and their follower. This aim is addressed with the main research question, "How does transformational leader with a humanistic motive create a successful venture?". The following sub research questions are (1) "how is the motivation to succeed related to the

fulfillment of the intrinsic needs, such as autonomy, competency, and relatedness?", (2) "How does individual entrepreneurial orientation drives the leader to develop themselves and their followers?".

RESEARCH METHOD

Psychobiography is considered a part of qualitative approach designed to gain an understanding of an individual's life and the motivations behind their actions through the use of relevant theoretical frameworks (Bulut et al., 2021). The research procedure was conducted based on the deductive thematic analysis (Bulut et al., 2021). First, select the subject and gain a general understanding of the subject life course. Yagoo was purposefully chosen as a subject of research based on the intricacy of venture switching. This would provide the dynamic view including the early career phase, transition phase from previous companies, and the debut of the new venture phase. The subject made a successful venture switch despite the social rejection and other challenges he received. This discovery gave a light to further identify theories related to psychology, leadership, and business. Second, dissecting the theory used for this study, which are individual entrepreneurial orientation (Hassan et al., 2021), self-determination theory (Ryan et al., 2024), and transformational leadership (Peng et al., 2021).

Third, deliberately collecting and writing a critical review of obtained data. This included the coherency, consistency, and the validity of the interview content that matched with the actual subject condition. The second and third steps were progressing simultaneously to reach the

final problem formulation and hypothesis. Fourth, conducting a thematic coding based on the relevant theories. Lastly, research data were reviewed to check the narrative logic's rationality (Bulut et al., 2021).

The data were gathered from secondary sources. In this study, the main sources included indirect interviews, both in the form of written news and video recordings. Other secondary sources included: (1) data triangulation, which is used to obtain data from various perspectives, especially from individuals connected to the subject, and (2) video clips translated by fans. Since the original video were in Japanese, these video clips were used to help the author understand the context of the original videos.

The importance of inclusion criteria is needed to ensure the data were relevant to the research aims (Bulut et al., 2021). The inclusion criteria applied were: (1) the main source of the verbal interviews have a duration of 30 minutes to two hours, and (2) data triangulation in the form of video clips must have a maximum duration of 10 minutes and must cite the source in the original video in the description. Triangulated data and theories are applied to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, and confirmability (Mayer et al., 2022).

The researcher ensured that no information would tarnish the reputation of the subject or other parties in the process of data collection (Ponterotto et al., 2021). The data used in the study was gathered from accessible public sources and with undue respect is interpreted objectively.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis identified the fulfillment of intrinsic motivation in Yagoo's life trajectory. Four key themes emerged: (1) autonomy, (2) competence, (3) relatedness, and (4) shared intrinsic motivation and its internalization by followers. These themes play a critical role in shaping a transformational leadership style that fosters positive change among followers, including internal staff, idol members, and the fan community.

The first theme was autonomy. Yagoo's early career experience, from being a video game developer and e-commerce manager, has significantly strengthened his competencies and autonomy. Later on, this forte enabled him to actualize his internal aspirations and progress toward his personal development goals. Reflecting on his journey, Yagoo noted, "I joined a Japanese gaming enterprise immediately after graduation... dedicating over 10,000 hours to content creation. A particularly memorable experience involved incurring substantial losses, which ultimately contributed to my growth. With such extensive experience, this capability has become almost instinctive for me" (Ito, 2021).

In 2014, Yagoo positioned in the role of CEO at 30min. Inc. In the meantime, he advocated for the exploration of emerging opportunities in digital business, particularly in ventures related to AR and VR technologies. Despite his vision, investors dismissed the proposal, considering the shift toward VR to be rash. Yagoo expressed his resolve by stating, "I decided to pursue my own vision rather than conforming to conventional approaches" (Tokyo XR Startups, 2019).

Based on Yagoo's experience, the prior failure in endeavoring new venture is relying on the baseless assumption that "such a technology venture appears to be a favorable market success" (Ito, 2021). Expecting a high return by deciding mainstream and stable market may reflects a desire influenced by external motivational factors. Thus, Yagoo claimed the most common pitfall is overestimating the outcome (Ito, 2021). This indicates that Yagoo understood that there is a two-sided coin, opportunity collides with the uncertain risk, comes when pursuing niche market. By working according to one's volition, leaders should have a self-knowledge about themselves, including strength and weakness, competitor competency, and others to better take measure of the situation (Al-Mamary et al., 2022).

"My previous company exemplified a business driven by an unclear vision. Despite the merits of the vision, I ultimately failed to recognize whether I was the most suitable person to actualize it" (Ito, 2021). Consequently, internal aspirations bolster the belief that individuals lead authentic lives and possess the capacity to evaluate their goals with greater objectivity.

The second theme was competency and innovation. Yagoo proposed three essential characteristics that are vital for entrepreneurial CEO: "The ability to maintain an authentic and realistic vision", "do battle based on what you are good at", and "never throw the towel in" (Ito, 2021).

Yagoo believed the idea and innovation should resonate their strong suit, thus, would social impact that create real value. "My belief is that being useful to

the world comes as a result of giving back to the world the things that you are really good at. We should all take a hard and deep look about the meaning of what we do, and not just because it is a good-sounding cause." (Ito, 2021).

Objective evaluation of oneself and the surrounding is deemed necessary, as it illuminates the blindspot that require exploration to take measured risks. An authentic leader demonstrates a readiness to acknowledge their own weaknesses in order to identify opportunities that align with their true self. "Even though the vision was an excellent one, I failed to recognize whether I was truly the best person to bring such a vision to reality. In the end I decided to sell the business because it would function better if it was led by someone more qualified and more appropriate... This gave me a real sense that unless you have the power to realize your vision, ultimately your plans and efforts are of little use to the world." (Ito, 2021).

Switching ventures took a measure of holding personal value and ability to convey those value to concrete action-steps and viable strategies. A valuable insight when venturing into a niche market is the importance of gauging perceived competency and innovation to align with actual conditions, rather than relying on mindless idealism [10]. "With the second company [Cover Corporation], I really wanted to make sure it was something I was familiar with, that it was something I had expertise with like VR and AR technology. That's really what led me to found COVER Corp- so I could create content in the field I knew I was good at" (Kiara, 2022).

Another highlight was understanding the competitor strength and how to fill the gap with one's competency and innovation. "Vtubing wasn't really a thing yet. There, of course, was Hatsune Miku, that was really successful and kind of the iconic User-Generated Content community that was out there. With my expertise in my particular field, I wanted to create something similar." (Kiara, 2022). "But really, other than Hatsune Miku, There wasn't really much competition and I thought it wouldn't be crazy to say that it's possible to get as famous as her. And that's when I started to get into this "Vtuber" (Virtual Youtuber) thing, having various creators that could work like virtual talents, similar to Hatsune Miku. And I thoughts fans around the world would enjoy it. And this was when I decided to create "Hololive" Company"" (Kerryii, 2024).

Yagoo played a pivotal role in developing the initial marketing strategy for Hololive Production at the Summer Comic Market 2019. He adeptly recognized a new opportunity by composing a group theme song that resonated with the youth. Such a clear vision evidently inspired Yagoo to embrace the innovation, as he stated, "It instilled confidence in me, or more accurately, it confirmed that I was set on the right path" (Hololive VTuber Group, 2022).

The third theme was relatedness. During the venture switching, Yagoo made the best use of his potential along with his relationship. This is signifying the need to create a meaningful social group and co-creation. Yagoo's follower testified that, "Even after he first started taking the role of the central figure, he didn't have many

employees yet. In order to do the things he wanted to achieve, he involved his friends or rather his acquaintances, telling them, "hey let's do this together" (Coco, 2021)

Mistakes from the followers may be deemed tarnishing and harming the company reputation. However, Yagoo takes for his granted as an opportunity to come up with unique solution. For instance, the name "Yagoo" initially started from the accident of one idol member who mistakenly read wrong kanji of "Motoaki Tanigo" (35p Nakama, 2022).

Before the name 'Yagoo' became popular, fans and idol members rarely talked about Cover's CEO." Said one of the member (Kiara, 2022). In an interview with the popular culture news portal Crunchyroll, Yagoo mentioned, "I feel that with the name "Tanigo"... it feels a lot more formal, like the president of the company. I embraced "Yagoo" to make myself a bit more personable to the audience. That's my reasoning behind going along with it" (Coats, 2022).

Various interviews have asked how Yagoo responds to jokes or memes circulating on the internet (Coco, 2021; Holostars Vtuber Group, 2022; Kiara, 2022). One of the jokes claimed his company resembles a comedy company more than an idol company. Yagoo revealed, "My dream hasn't died; in fact, seeing you all enjoy it allows me to say that I am increasingly accomplish that dream" (Coco, 2021).

Expressing authentic feelings fosters a sense of connection, rather than inciting manipulation or aggression to influence others. Being emotionally expressive is also not classified as a weakness for transformational leader. A member share

her testimony, "Yagoo crying can be attributed to his emotional investment in Hololive's activities. He considers his company as his own baby" (Kiara, 2022).

A consistency of Yagoo traits showed by his considerate and undivided attention toward the growth of each member. Another member stated, "Yagoo cried when he personally dislikes the choices he had to make, but for the sake of the company, he must do it" (Yura, 2022). "We are like comrades in arms. We went through difficult times, but he would never abandon us. I struggled to grow in the beginning, but he nurtured me until I flourished... If he had been a strict leader, he might have graduated or fired me without mercy" (Tako Sub, 2022).

The need for relatedness creates a congruency between the followers and the trait of the leader they follow. A member stated, "Yagoo seems very gentle and kind. That was my first impression. I think it's different from simply being kind because someone is a leader. In fact, I've never seen Yagoo get angry. Instead of scolding employees, Yagoo would say, "this is how it's done" (Vtuber Fan, 2022).

Yagoo himself noted, "It is usually the talent who gets the spotlight. It's never the people who make the system. Given this rare chance, I'd like to use the opportunity to say, 'hey, this is how we do things' and get it right" (Baillet et al., 2023). "Usually, with an organization like this, you only see the talent. But with Hololive Production, I and my staff are quite visible to the audience. We're out in the forefront. I think that really helps build trust with the audience. I think that's a really big part of it" (Coats, 2022). This need also reflected on how Yagoo addressed the success of the

company, "Probably the biggest reason for this success is the element of real time interaction. The Vtubers and the audience get to communicate" (Coats, 2022). In conclusion, the trust builds with the fans community and the staff resulted in the success of the venture.

The fourth theme was shared intrinsic motivation and its internalization by followers. The life trajectory of Yagoo has been a big support of the followers' psychological growth, as seen by the adored public communication management in response to the fans and the creative demands. This is aligned to transformational leadership theory (Peng et al., 2021), that the leaders deliberately motivate their followers to develop resilience when confronting challenges by mustering effective problem-solving skills, encouraging creative growth through failure, and promoting undaunted attitude to try new things.

According to self-determination theory (Ryan et al., 2024), efforts driven by intrinsic motivations are more likely to be internalized and applied in everyday decision-making. Furthermore, trust in a leader is cultivated through (1) enabling members and fans to internalize choices and actions as part of their identity (autonomy), with a belief that the leader's proactive actions benefits those around them; (2) encouraging others to be enthusiastically challenged by trying new things while leveraging their competencies (competency); (3) attending to the needs of others and offering authentic responses (relatedness) (Peng et al., 2021).

Yagoo's aspirations stem from a desire to provide technological services that can assist others and manage talent

(Kiara, 2022). This is consistently reflected in his aspirations expressed year after year. "In the next five years, I hope to make virtual YouTubers a fundamental part of the viewers' daily lives" (Kiara, 2022). "In the next ten years, with HoloEarth as a Metaverse, I aim to create a global transformation by providing a space where creators can collaborate" (Tanigo, 2019). Thus, providing an environment where fans feel like a part of the world, engaging with one another to achieve shared goals (Coats, 2022). In 2024, Yagoo successfully continue to bring collaboration that facilitates the fan activity and interaction. "Our goal is to create a society where everyone can thrive as a creator. We aim to support individuals in taking their first steps as creators through activities such as fan art and indie game development within the Hololive community. Moving forward, we hope to cultivate a growing number of creators who will continue to develop their talents professionally" (Baillet et al., 2024).

To achieve those dreams, Yagoo scouted those who may reflect the shared intrinsic motivation as he has. "For me, viewers like people who do something really good, who do something their best, and they're trying to bring this to their audience" (Diaz, 2024). "The reason Oozora Subaru passed (the company audition) because we thought she was very motivated... Though she knew very little about voice acting and 2D content, she had a lot of spirit. She expressed Hololive had potential to improve technologically from here on out" (Vtube Tengoku, 2021). A member of Hololive who interviewed Yagoo said, "To Yagoo the most important point would be eagerness or determination. Since you know this is the

20th episodes of Holotalk [hosted by Hololive member] and being able to continuously stream every day. Something you really need to have quite a lot of determination for. He respects that and he thinks that is very essential to being part of Hololive" (Kiara, 2022).

The transformational leadership approach, equipped with valuable personality dispositions, is resonated to be relevant with the followers' characteristics. This is creating the congruency between the followers' expectations and values with the leader (Peng et al., 2021). Several members of Hololive have expressed their reasons for joining the company, showing a strong conviction towards the transformative changes brought by Cover Corp in the future, as well growing enthusiasm for the members to contribute to those changes (Holostars VTuber Group, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This psychobiography is conducted with theoretical framework to offer scientific insight regarding the motive and the consequences of transformational leadership. The success of transformational leadership can be achieved by supporting the development of the followers, in terms of fulfilling the needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness. For the sole purpose of penetrating the global scope of commercial business, those three needs are propped by entrepreneurial traits. This would likely increase the followers' shared motivation to engage in new challenges and partake in a competitive business environment. Given that psychobiography solely focused on individual life trajectory, it is

recommended that future study conduct a case study by comparing the life narratives of various humanistic figures, both from profit and non-profit organizations, to better examine the current framework.

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