



The Influence of Leadership Style and Workload on Employee Performance Through Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable at the Human Resources Development Agency of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions

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Abstract: Employee performance has become one of the strategic issues in public sector organizations due to increasing demands for accountability and public service quality. Although leadership style and workload have frequently been associated with employee performance, previous studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding their direct effects, particularly when work motivation is considered as a mediating mechanism. This study aims to examine the influence of leadership style and workload on employee performance through work motivation among civil servants at the Human Resources Development Agency (BPSDM) of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions, Indonesia. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using primary data collected from 115 civil servants selected through proportionate random sampling. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that leadership style and workload significantly affect work motivation, while workload and work motivation significantly influence employee performance. Leadership style does not directly affect employee performance but exerts an indirect effect through work motivation. The novelty of this study lies in confirming the mediating role of work motivation in explaining how leadership style contributes to employee performance within the context of Indonesian public sector organizations.

Keyword: Leadership Style, Workload, Work Motivation, Employee Performance, PLS-SEM.

INTRODUCTION

The success of public sector organizations in achieving organizational objectives is highly dependent on the quality of human resources and their ability to deliver effective public services. In the era of bureaucratic reform, government institutions are expected not only to improve administrative performance but also to strengthen organizational effectiveness through competent, motivated, and high-performing employees. Employee performance has therefore

become one of the most important indicators of organizational success because it reflects the capability of public organizations to transform strategic plans into measurable outcomes. Consequently, identifying factors that influence employee performance has become an important concern in public management research.

The Human Resources Development Agency (Badan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia/BPSDM) of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions plays a strategic role in improving the quality of human resources responsible for rural and regional development throughout Indonesia. The institution is mandated to formulate technical policies, organize education and training programs, develop community empowerment initiatives, and monitor program implementation. These responsibilities require employees to perform effectively under increasingly complex organizational demands. Nevertheless, organizational performance reports indicate a gradual decline in institutional performance achievement, decreasing from 99.57% in 2021 to 91.99% in 2025. Although these performance achievements remain relatively high, the downward trend suggests that organizational performance may be influenced by internal human resource factors requiring further investigation. This phenomenon provides a practical basis for examining the determinants of employee performance within BPSDM.

Leadership style has long been recognized as one of the primary determinants of employee performance. According to Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), leaders influence organizational effectiveness by inspiring employees, providing intellectual stimulation, demonstrating individualized consideration, and motivating followers to achieve organizational goals beyond personal interests. Effective leadership encourages employees to develop stronger organizational commitment and higher motivation, ultimately improving their performance. Conversely, ineffective leadership may reduce employee enthusiasm and weaken organizational productivity.

Another important factor affecting employee performance is workload. Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) explains that workload represents job demands requiring physical and psychological effort. Excessive workload may generate stress, fatigue, and burnout, leading to lower employee performance. However, when workload is appropriately distributed and supported by adequate organizational resources, employees are more likely to maintain productivity and achieve better performance outcomes. Therefore, workload should not merely be viewed as a burden but as a managerial factor requiring effective allocation and control.

Besides leadership and workload, employee motivation is widely acknowledged as an important psychological mechanism explaining employee behavior in organizations. Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) argues that individuals are motivated when they believe that their efforts will produce desirable performance and valuable rewards. In public organizations, leadership practices and workload management influence employees' motivation, which subsequently determines the quality of their performance. Consequently, motivation may function as an intervening variable that explains how organizational factors affect employee performance.

Previous empirical studies generally report that leadership style, workload, and work motivation influence employee performance. Nevertheless, the findings remain inconsistent. Several studies conclude that transformational leadership significantly improves employee performance, whereas other studies report insignificant direct relationships. Likewise, workload has been reported to exert both positive and negative effects depending on organizational context and job characteristics. Research concerning work motivation as a mediating variable has also produced mixed empirical evidence, indicating that the mechanism through which leadership and workload influence employee performance has not yet been fully understood.

Another limitation of previous studies is related to research context. Most empirical investigations have been conducted in private organizations, educational institutions, hospitals, or local government agencies. Studies focusing specifically on human resource development institutions within the Indonesian central government remain relatively limited. Furthermore, previous studies generally examine direct relationships among leadership style, workload, motivation, and employee performance without comprehensively integrating these variables into a single structural model using the SEM-PLS approach. This gap indicates the need for empirical evidence from government institutions with strategic responsibilities in developing human resources and community empowerment.

The novelty of this study lies in the development and empirical testing of an integrated model explaining employee performance through the simultaneous interaction of leadership style, workload, and work motivation within the context of Indonesia's public sector. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examined direct effects, this study evaluates the mediating role of work motivation in explaining how leadership style and workload influence employee performance among civil servants at the Human Resources Development Agency of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions. The findings are expected to enrich organizational behavior literature while providing practical recommendations for improving human resource management within government institutions.

Based on the research background, theoretical perspectives, and identified research gaps, this study aims to analyze: (1) the influence of leadership style on work motivation; (2) the influence of workload on work motivation; (3) the influence of leadership style on employee performance; (4) the influence of workload on employee performance; (5) the influence of work motivation on employee performance; (6) the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between leadership style and employee performance; and (7) the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between workload and employee performance.

METHOD

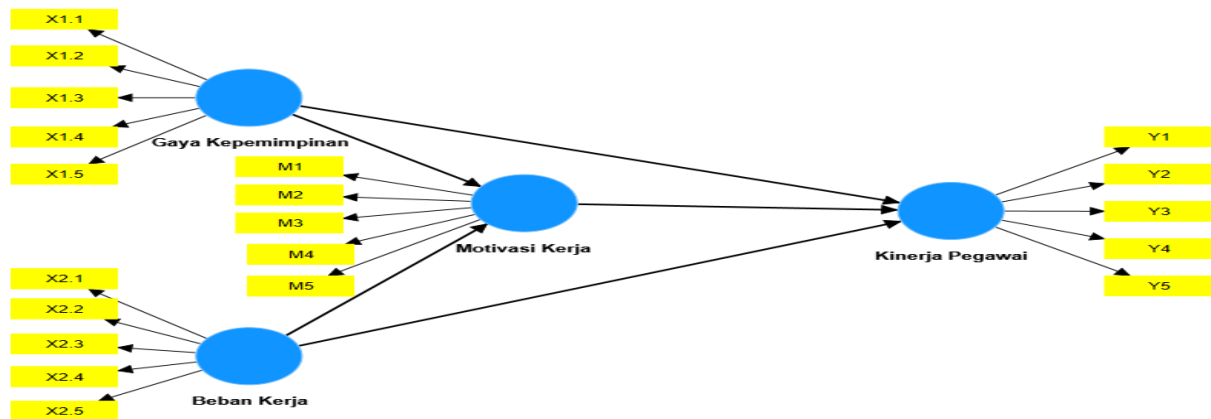
This study employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among leadership style, workload, work motivation, and employee performance. The research was conducted at the Human Resources Development Agency (BPSDM) of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions, Indonesia, between May and August 2026. The selected research setting represents a public sector institution with strategic responsibilities in developing human resources and community empowerment programs across Indonesia.

The population consisted of 160 civil servants (Pegawai Negeri Sipil/PNS) working at the BPSDM central office. The minimum sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. To improve statistical robustness and ensure adequate representation across organizational units, data were collected from 115 respondents selected using proportionate random sampling. This sampling technique ensured that each organizational unit was proportionally represented according to its population size. The population and sampling approach were derived from the characteristics of BPSDM central-office civil servants described in the study.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed directly to respondents. All measurement items were adapted from established theories and previous empirical studies. Leadership style was measured using indicators derived from Transformational Leadership Theory proposed by Bass (1985), including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Workload was measured based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework developed by Demerouti et al. (2001), emphasizing work demands, task complexity, and workload distribution. Work motivation was operationalized using Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), while employee performance was measured through indicators reflecting work quality, work

quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and responsibility. All questionnaire items employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The conceptual framework of this study consists of four latent variables. Leadership style (X_1) and workload (X_2) function as exogenous variables, work motivation (Z) serves as the mediating variable, and employee performance (Y) represents the endogenous variable. Seven hypotheses were formulated to examine both direct and indirect relationships among these constructs. The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.



Source: Research Results (2026)
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software. The PLS-SEM approach was selected because it is appropriate for predictive research involving multiple latent variables and mediation analysis while imposing fewer assumptions regarding data normality than covariance-based SEM (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis consisted of two stages. First, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to assess convergent validity, discriminant validity, internal consistency reliability, and multicollinearity using outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach's Alpha, Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Second, the structural model (inner model) was evaluated through path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples to test the significance of direct and indirect relationships. Hypotheses were accepted when the p-value was less than 0.05 and the t-statistic exceeded 1.96.

The research procedure began with instrument development based on theoretical constructs, followed by a pilot review, questionnaire distribution, data screening, and statistical analysis. Ethical considerations were maintained by informing respondents of the study objectives, ensuring voluntary participation, and guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 115 civil servants employed at the Human Resources Development Agency (BPSDM) of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions. Most respondents were female (60%), aged between 31 and 40 years, held undergraduate or master's degrees, occupied functional positions, and had worked for five to ten years. These characteristics indicate that the respondents possessed adequate educational background and organizational experience to evaluate leadership style, workload, work motivation, and employee performance objectively.

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Prior to testing the structural relationships, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure the validity and reliability of all constructs. The evaluation included convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability.

Table 1 presents the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct.

Table 1. Convergent Validity

Variable	AVE	Result
Leadership Style	0.648	Valid
Workload	0.698	Valid
Work Motivation	0.594	Valid
Employee Performance	0.530	Valid

All AVE values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

Table 2. Construct Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Result
Leadership Style	0.865	Reliable
Workload	0.892	Reliable
Work Motivation	0.829	Reliable
Employee Performance	0.779	Reliable

The reliability coefficients exceeded 0.70, confirming adequate internal consistency for all constructs.

Discriminant validity assessed through the Fornell–Larcker Criterion and HTMT indicated that each construct was empirically distinct. Furthermore, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below the recommended threshold, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern in the proposed research model.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Work Motivation	0.355	Moderate
Employee Performance	0.514	Moderate

The results indicate that leadership style and workload explained 35.5% of the variance in work motivation. Meanwhile, leadership style, workload, and work motivation jointly explained 51.4% of the variance in employee performance, suggesting moderate explanatory power.

Predictive relevance testing also demonstrated acceptable model quality

Table 4. Predictive Relevance

Variable	Q^2
Work Motivation	0.201

Employee Performance	0.252
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Since all Q^2 values were greater than zero, the model possesses satisfactory predictive capability.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping procedure with a significance level of 5%.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	P-value	Decision
H1	Leadership Style → Work Motivation	0.383	0.000	Supported
H2	Workload → Work Motivation	0.268	0.034	Supported
H3	Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.613	0.000	Supported
H4	Leadership Style → Employee Performance	0.146	0.240	Not Supported
H5	Workload → Employee Performance	0.411	0.000	Supported
H6	Leadership Style → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.235	0.002	Supported
H7	Workload → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.164	0.036	Supported

The findings demonstrate that leadership style significantly improves work motivation but does not directly influence employee performance. Conversely, workload significantly affects both work motivation and employee performance. Work motivation exerts the strongest positive effect on employee performance and successfully mediates the effects of leadership style and workload on employee performance.

Discussion

The empirical findings reveal that leadership style positively influences work motivation. This result supports Transformational Leadership Theory, which argues that leaders inspire employees through vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and motivational encouragement. Effective leadership therefore strengthens employees' willingness to exert greater effort in accomplishing organizational objectives.

Workload also significantly affects work motivation. This finding is consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, which suggests that job demands do not necessarily reduce employee motivation when accompanied by sufficient organizational resources. Within BPSDM, an appropriate distribution of workload appears to encourage employees to maintain productivity while remaining motivated to achieve organizational targets.

The study further confirms that work motivation has the strongest direct influence on employee performance. This finding supports Expectancy Theory, emphasizing that employees demonstrate higher performance when they believe their efforts will lead to meaningful outcomes and organizational recognition. Consequently, work motivation represents an important psychological mechanism linking organizational practices with employee performance.

Interestingly, leadership style does not directly influence employee performance. This result differs from many previous studies reporting a significant direct relationship. The finding suggests that within public organizations characterized by formal bureaucratic procedures, leadership alone may not immediately improve employee performance. Instead, leadership contributes indirectly by strengthening employees' work motivation. Therefore, motivation functions as a full mediating mechanism explaining how leadership affects performance.

Unlike leadership style, workload exhibits a significant direct effect on employee performance. This finding indicates that an appropriate workload distribution enables employees to utilize their competencies more effectively and accomplish organizational tasks efficiently. At the same time, workload also improves employee performance indirectly by increasing work motivation, demonstrating the dual role of workload in influencing organizational outcomes.

The mediation analysis confirms that work motivation significantly mediates the relationships between leadership style and employee performance as well as between workload and employee performance. These findings indicate that organizational interventions designed to improve leadership effectiveness and workload management should simultaneously strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation to maximize performance improvement.

Compared with previous studies, this research contributes to organizational behavior literature by integrating Transformational Leadership Theory, Job Demands–Resources Theory, and Expectancy Theory into a comprehensive structural model explaining employee performance in Indonesian public sector organizations. Rather than examining isolated relationships, this study demonstrates that employee performance is shaped by the interaction between organizational factors and psychological mechanisms.

The novelty of this research lies in demonstrating that work motivation serves as the primary mechanism through which leadership style influences employee performance among civil servants within the Human Resources Development Agency of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions. Furthermore, the study confirms that workload not only directly improves employee performance but also enhances performance indirectly through increased work motivation. These findings provide new empirical evidence regarding employee performance management in Indonesian public organizations and enrich the application of organizational behavior theories in the public sector.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of leadership style and workload on employee performance through work motivation among civil servants at the Human Resources Development Agency (BPSDM) of the Ministry of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach.

The empirical findings demonstrate that leadership style significantly enhances employees' work motivation but does not directly improve employee performance. This indicates that effective leadership contributes to organizational performance primarily by strengthening employees' motivation rather than exerting an immediate influence on work outcomes. Conversely, workload significantly influences both work motivation and employee performance, suggesting that appropriate workload management enables employees to maintain productivity while remaining motivated to accomplish organizational objectives.

The study further confirms that work motivation is the strongest determinant of employee performance and serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationships between leadership style and employee performance as well as between workload and employee performance. These findings emphasize that improving employee performance in public sector

organizations requires not only effective leadership and balanced workload distribution but also organizational strategies aimed at enhancing employees' intrinsic motivation.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches organizational behavior literature by integrating Transformational Leadership Theory, Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, and Expectancy Theory into a comprehensive structural model explaining employee performance in Indonesian public organizations. Practically, the findings provide empirical evidence for government institutions in designing leadership development programs, workload management systems, and employee motivation strategies to improve organizational performance.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study was conducted within a single government institution, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other public organizations with different organizational characteristics. Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design; therefore, causal relationships were examined at a single point in time. Third, the model explained 51.4% of the variance in employee performance, indicating that other organizational and individual factors not included in this study may also influence employee performance.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed.

For organizational practice, BPSDM should strengthen transformational leadership competencies through structured leadership development programs that emphasize inspirational leadership, coaching, mentoring, and employee empowerment. Management should also periodically evaluate workload distribution to ensure alignment between task complexity, employee competencies, and available organizational resources. In addition, initiatives aimed at enhancing employee motivation—such as performance recognition, competency development, career advancement opportunities, and fair performance appraisal systems—should be further strengthened because work motivation has been demonstrated to play a central role in improving employee performance.

For future research, scholars are encouraged to expand the research scope by involving multiple ministries, government agencies, or regional governments to improve external validity. Future studies may also incorporate additional variables such as organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, organizational culture, employee engagement, job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, or digital leadership to increase the explanatory power of the research model. Furthermore, longitudinal research designs are recommended to examine changes in employee motivation and performance over time and to provide stronger evidence regarding causal relationships.

Overall, this study confirms that employee performance in public sector organizations is influenced not only by leadership style and workload but also by the psychological mechanisms represented by work motivation. Therefore, organizational policies integrating leadership development, workload management, and employee motivation are expected to produce more sustainable improvements in organizational performance.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Hernanto Setiyawan; Methodology: Hernanto Setiyawan and Zainul Kisman; Data Collection: Hernanto Setiyawan; Formal Analysis: Hernanto Setiyawan; Writing – Original Draft: Hernanto Setiyawan; Writing – Review & Editing: Hernanto Setiyawan and Zainul Kisman; Supervision: Zainul Kisman. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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