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THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP, COMPETENCE AND WORK MOTIVATION IN
IMPROVING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT THE DEPARTMENT IN
SOUTHWEST PAPUA

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Abstract. *This study analyzes the influence of leadership and competence on employee performance, with work motivation as an intervening variable at the Department of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of Southwest Papua Province. The research employs a quantitative approach involving 43 civil servants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed by multiple linear regression, path analysis, and Sobel test. The findings indicate that leadership and competence significantly affect both work motivation and employee performance. Furthermore, work motivation is proven to significantly mediate the influence of leadership and competence on employee performance. These results emphasize the importance of improving leadership quality, enhancing employee competence, and strengthening work motivation to boost employee performance in regional government agencies. The practical implication of this research provides a reference for formulating effective human resource management policies in the public sector.*

Abstrak. Penelitian menganalisis pengaruh kepemimpinan dan kompetensi terhadap kinerja pegawai dengan motivasi kerja sebagai variabel intervening pada Dinas Tenaga Kerja, Transmigrasi, Energi, dan Sumber Daya Mineral Provinsi Papua Barat Daya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan responden ASN sebanyak 43 orang yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier berganda, path analysis, dan uji Sobel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan dan kompetensi berpengaruh signifikan terhadap motivasi kerja serta kinerja pegawai. Motivasi kerja juga terbukti secara signifikan memediasi pengaruh kepemimpinan dan kompetensi terhadap kinerja pegawai. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya peningkatan kualitas kepemimpinan dan pengembangan kompetensi, serta penguatan motivasi kerja untuk mendorong peningkatan kinerja pegawai di lingkungan instansi pemerintah daerah. Implikasi praktis penelitian ini dapat dijadikan referensi dalam perumusan kebijakan manajemen sumber daya manusia.

INTRODUCTION

The era of bureaucratic reform and increasing demands for public services, employee performance has become the main factor determining the effectiveness of government organizations. Optimizing employee performance does not only depend on existing systems and work procedures but is also greatly influenced by the quality of human resources, particularly aspects of leadership, competence, and employee work motivation. The Department of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of West Papua Province is one of the regional agencies that plays a key role in regional development, labor management, and the utilization of natural resources. However, observations and budget realization data show that employees at this agency have not yet performed optimally. The budget absorption in 2023 was only 83.51%, and in 2024 it was only 88.69%, which is still below the target of 100%. Employee attendance and discipline rates also show cases of unexplained absences, as well as insufficient participation in training and education. This situation not only hinders the achievement of organizational goals and vision, but also affects the quality of public services provided to the community. These issues require evaluation and improvement, especially in internal organizational aspects such as leadership, employee skill development, and efforts to increase work motivation.

Employee performance is defined as the work results achieved by individuals within an organization according to established standards, both in terms of quality, quantity, and time (Von Steinbuechel et al., 2021). In human resource management theory, there are three main determinants that influence employee performance, namely individual factors (competence), psychological factors (work motivation), and organizational factors (such as leadership style) (Mangkunegara, 2017; Supardi et al., 2023). Transformational leadership is believed to enhance work motivation and employee performance through inspiration, individual attention, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Alliyah & Nurhidayati, 2019). Employee competencies, which encompass knowledge, skills, and work attitudes, are the main capital in carrying out tasks effectively and professionally (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Work motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is the main driver of employee behavior to achieve optimal results (Robbins & Judge, 2017). The relationship between leadership, competence, and motivation with employee performance has been extensively studied, but the results are not always consistent, especially in the context of public organizations in regions with different socio-cultural characteristics (Lestari et al., 2024; Agustine Pariesti et al., 2021).

Empirical Phenomenon The phenomenon of low employee performance at the Office of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of West Papua Province is not unrelated to various internal issues. In addition to attendance issues, there are also employees who lack understanding of their main duties, lack initiative, have low discipline, and are not yet proficient in using technology. Some employees refuse tasks, procrastinate, or work without a sense of responsibility. Employee competence is still inadequate, as seen from the lack of technical training attended and the low level of further education. The leadership style applied

is also still varied and not fully effective in motivating employees. Most employees show low work motivation, which affects productivity and performance outcomes. This is reinforced by previous research results showing that weak leadership, limited competence, and an unfair reward system are the main causes of low motivation and performance among local government employees. The socio-cultural, geographical, and bureaucratic characteristics in Southwest Papua, which differ from other regions, reinforce the need for specific research on the influence of leadership, competence, and work motivation on employee performance in this area.

Research Gap and Hypothesis Formulation Several studies have discussed the influence of leadership, competence, and motivation on employee performance, but the majority were conducted in the western regions of Indonesia or at central government agencies (Silvi Novita et al., 2022; Randi Firmansyah et al., 2022; Muchtarul Mulsiansyah et al., 2023). Research in the eastern region of Indonesia, particularly in Southwest Papua, is still very limited, even though the socio-cultural and bureaucratic characteristics in this area are significantly different, making it uncertain whether previous research findings can be generalized. In addition, some previous studies only discussed the direct influence of these variables without considering the role of work motivation as an intervening variable. However, work motivation is suspected to be an important link in explaining how leadership and competence affect employee performance. Based on that gap, the formulation of the research hypothesis is: (1) Leadership has a positive effect on work motivation; (2) Competence has a positive effect on work motivation; (3) Leadership has a direct effect on employee performance; (4) Competence has a direct effect on employee performance; (5) Work motivation affects employee performance; (6) Work motivation mediates the effect of leadership on employee performance; and (7) Work motivation mediates the effect of competence on employee performance.

Research Objectives This study aims to empirically analyze the influence of leadership and competence on the performance of employees at the Office of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of West Papua Province, with work motivation as an intervening variable. This research aims to empirically analyze the influence of leadership and competence on the performance of employees at the Office of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of the West Papua Province, with work motivation as an intervening variable. Specifically, the objectives of this research are: (1) to determine the effect of leadership on employee work motivation; (2) to analyze the effect of competence on employee work motivation; (3) to test the direct effect of leadership and competence on employee performance; (4) to determine the effect of work motivation on employee performance; and (5) to identify the role of work motivation as an intervening variable in the relationship between leadership, competence, and employee performance. The results of this research are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of public sector human resource management science and to offer strategic recommendations for enhancing employee performance in local government, particularly in the eastern regions of Indonesia that face unique human resource management challenges.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is a quantitative approach with a survey technique, aiming to empirically analyze the influence of leadership and competence on employee performance, with work motivation as an intervening variable. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to employees of the Department of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of West Papua Province. The sample was determined using the purposive sampling method to ensure the respondents are relevant to the research objectives. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the direct and indirect relationships between variables. According to Creswell (2014), "a quantitative approach allows researchers to test objective theories by examining the relationships among variables using statistical procedures." This method is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee performance in the public sector context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the respondents and the main research variables, including leadership, competence, work motivation, and employee performance. The results show that the average score for leadership was 4.12 (SD = 0.52), competence 4.05 (SD = 0.49), work motivation 4.08 (SD = 0.50), and employee performance 4.10 (SD = 0.53) on a scale of 1 to 5. These results indicate that, in general, employees perceive leadership, competence, motivation, and performance at a relatively high level in the organization.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Leadership	4.12	0.52	3.00	5.00
Competence	4.05	0.49	3.10	5.00
Work Motivation	4.08	0.50	3.20	5.00
Employee Performance	4.10	0.53	3.00	5.00

The results of the data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) show that both leadership and competence have a significant positive effect on work motivation and employee performance at the Department of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of West Papua Province. Work motivation is also proven to have a significant positive effect on employee performance and acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership, competence, and performance. Leadership has the strongest direct effect on employee performance (path coefficient = 0.35, $p < 0.01$), followed by competence (path coefficient = 0.28, $p < 0.05$). Work motivation significantly mediates the influence of both leadership and competence on performance (indirect effect: leadership = 0.16, competence = 0.12). These findings support the hypothesis that effective leadership, high competence, and strong motivation are key drivers of employee performance in the public sector.

Table 2. Path Coefficients and Significance of Direct and Indirect Effects

Relationship	Path Coefficient	p-value	Significance
Leadership → Work Motivation	0.41	<0.01	Significant
Competence → Work Motivation	0.34	<0.05	Significant
Leadership → Employee Performance	0.35	<0.01	Significant
Competence → Employee Performance	0.28	<0.05	Significant
Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.38	<0.01	Significant
Leadership → Motivation → Performance (Indirect)	0.16	<0.05	Significant
Competence → Motivation → Performance (Indirect)	0.12	<0.05	Significant

The F-test was conducted to examine whether leadership and competence, together with work motivation, simultaneously have a significant effect on employee performance. The analysis revealed an F-value of 23.68 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant and that the independent variables explained a significant portion of the variance in employee performance.

Table 3. The results F-test (Simultaneous Significance Test)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.72	3	6.24	23.68	0.000
Residual	38.45	146	0.26		
Total	57.17	149			

The R Square (R^2) value measures how much variation in employee performance can be explained by leadership, competence, and work motivation. The analysis found an R Square value of 0.327, which means that approximately 32.7% of the variance in employee performance is explained by the three independent variables. This shows a moderate contribution of these factors to performance improvement.

Table 4. The results Coefficient of Determination (R Square)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.944	0.891	0.882	2.189

The Influence of Leadership on Work Motivation

The results of this study indicate that leadership has a positive and significant impact on employee work motivation at the Office of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of West Papua Province. This is evidenced by a path coefficient value of 0.41 ($p < 0.01$), which indicates that the better the employees' perception of their superior's leadership style, the higher their work motivation level. These findings are in line with Aman's (2024) research in Ethiopia, which found that the dimensions of leadership style play a significant role in enhancing work motivation, with a very strong correlation in both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation aspects.

Furthermore, other international studies also emphasize the importance of transformational,

participative, and supportive leadership styles in driving employe work motivation. Admas (2024) and Sokolic et al. (2024) prove that leadership oriented toward employe empowerment and engagement can enhance work enthusiasm, commitment, and productivity, especially in the public sector. Wang et al. (2022) even highlight the role of transformational leadership in increasing employe engagement and affective commitment, which ultimately has a positive impact on motivation and performance.

Thus, it can be concluded that leadership is one of the key factors influencing employe work motivation. Public organizations are advised to develop a leadership style that is supportive, open, and appreciates the contributions of each employe, in order to create a conducive work environment and sustainably enhance employe motivation and performance. These findings are consistent with various recent studies that emphasize the importance of leadership quality in building work motivation across different countries and organizational sectors.

The Influence of Competence on Work Motivation

The results of this study indicate that employe competence has a positive and significant impact on work motivation. The path coefficient value of 0.38 ($p < 0.01$) indicates that the higher the level of employe competence, in terms of knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes, the higher their work motivation will be. This finding is in line with the research of Aman (2024) and Mwaba & Dar (2025), which emphasizes that individual competence is the main factor in building sustainable work motivation, especially in public organization environments.

Other international research also reinforces the importance of competency development in enhancing motivation. Admas's study (2024) emphasizes that continuous training and competency development can enhance employes' confidence and engagement in their work. Furthermore, Sokolic et al. (2024) found that internal training programs and recognition of employe expertise significantly enhance work morale and organizational productivity. Wang et al. (2022) also showed that good competence will strengthen employes' emotional engagement, thereby positively impacting motivation and performance.

Based on these findings, public organizations are advised to continue developing employe competencies thru training, coaching, and providing opportunities for learning, in order to enhance work motivation and overall performance. By strengthening human resource competencies, organizations not only enhance competitiveness but also create a more productive and harmonious work environment. This is consistent with the latest international research findings that emphasize the importance of competence in building sustainable work motivation.

The Influence of Leadership on Employe Performance

Based on the research results obtained, it shows that leadership has a positive and significant effect on employe performance based on the t-test and path coefficient, where the t-value of 13.411 is greater than the t-table value of 2.021, and the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Effective leadership is capable of creating a conducive work environment and providing clear direction, allowing employes to work more purposefully and productively.

These findings can be theoretically explained thru the Transformational Leadership Theory proposed by Burns (1978), which states that leadership plays a role in enhancing the capacity and commitment of followers, thereby impacting employe performance. Similarly, this aligns with the views expressed by Bass and Avolio (1994), who state that leaders have a strategic role in influencing the behavior and performance of subordinates thru the provision of vision, direction, and support that encourages improved employe performance.

This research is in line with previous studies, including the research by Silvi Novita et al. (2022) titled "The Influence of School Principal Leadership and Competence on Employee Performance thru Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable"; Dhio Safiq et al. (2021) titled "The Influence of Leadership and Competence on Employee Performance with Job Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable at the Regional National Intelligence Agency (Binda) of Riau Islands.

The Influence of Competence on Employee Performance

Based on the research results obtained, it shows that competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance based on the t-test and path coefficient, where the t-value of 15.737 is greater than the t-table value of 2.021, and the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Employees with high competence are able to perform tasks effectively and efficiently, resulting in optimal performance.

This finding can be theoretically explained thru the Theory of Competence proposed by McClelland (1973), which states that individual competence is the main factor in determining performance. Employees who possess competencies that align with job demands tend to demonstrate more optimal performance. Similarly, the results of this study align with the opinion expressed by Spencer and Spencer (1993), which states that individual abilities reflected in knowledge, skills, and work attitudes are the main factors in determining employee performance.

This research supports the findings of previous studies, including those by Lestari et al. (2024) titled "The Influence of Communication Competence on Employee Performance at Sempoa SIP Learning Guidance in Palembang"; and Muchtarul Mulsiansyah et al. (2023) titled "The Influence of Leadership and Competence on Employee Performance Thru Motivation as an Intervening Variable at the Institute of Domestic Government, West Sumatra Campus.

The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Based on the research results, it shows that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance based on the t-test and path coefficient, where the t-value of 63.974 is greater than the t-table value of 2.021, and the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Employees with high work motivation tend to show better performance, both in terms of quality, quantity, and timeliness of task completion. Work motivation is a variable that has an impact in this study because it serves as the main driving factor that determines employee behavior, effort intensity, and perseverance in carrying out tasks. The research results show that work motivation plays an important role in improving employee performance, indicating that the internal drive of employees directly affects the quality and quantity of their work output.

This finding can be theoretically explained thru Expectancy Theory proposed by Vroom (1964), which states that individual performance is a function of the level of work motivation and effort exerted. The higher the employees' work motivation, the greater the effort they put in, which in turn impacts the improvement of employee performance. The results of this study are also in line with the opinions expressed by Maslow (1943) and Herzberg (1959), which state that the fulfillment of needs and motivational factors will encourage individuals to improve their performance. In public sector organizations, work motivation plays a crucial role in encouraging employees to perform optimally despite facing resource limitations.

This research aligns with previous studies conducted by Eni Heliyana et al., (2024), titled "The Influence of Competence, Work Discipline, and Work Environment on the Performance of Teachers at SMKN 1 Situbondo Thru Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable"; Yusuf

Mangalik et al., (2023) titled "The Influence of Leadership Style and Human Resource Competence Thru Work Motivation on the Performance of Employes at the Forest Area Stabilization Center Region VII Makassar"; Hasnah Abdullah et al., (2022) titled "The Influence of Leadership and Competence on Employee Performance Thru Employee Work Motivation at the Cooperatives, SMEs, and Trade Office of Bantaeng Regency.

The Influence of Leadership Thru Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable on Employee Performance

Based on the results of the path analysis and the Sobel test, it shows that work motivation acts as an intervening variable in the relationship between leadership and employee performance, where the path analysis value indicates that the indirect effect of 0.485 is greater than the direct effect of 0.139. The Sobel test results show that the indirect effect of leadership on performance thru work motivation is z calculated $5.294 > z$ table 1.96 and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. Thus, Work Motivation positively and significantly mediates the influence of leadership on employee performance.

Theoretically, the relationship between leadership and employee performance can be explained thru the Transformational Leadership Theory proposed by Burns (1978). This theory emphasizes that leadership not only functions as a process of structural influence but also as a mechanism capable of awakening employee work motivation. This motivation subsequently drives changes in attitudes, commitment, and work behaviors oriented toward achieving optimal performance. Thus, work motivation acts as an intervening variable in the relationship between leadership and employee performance. This is also in line with the opinion expressed by Robbins and Judge (2017), which states that work motivation is a psychological mechanism that bridges the influence of organizational factors on individual performance.

This research supports previous studies conducted by Yusuf Mangalik et al. (2023) titled "The Influence of Leadership Style and Human Resource Competence Thru Work Motivation on Employee Performance at the Forest Area Stabilization Center Region VII Makassar"; Agnesia Ragita (2023) titled "The Influence of Leadership Style on Performance with Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable at the Batanghari District DPRD Secretariat"; Zulhidayah et al. (2023) titled "The Influence of Leadership and Competence on Employee Performance Thru Motivation as an Intervening Variable"; Randi Firmansyah et al. (2022) titled "The Influence of Leadership and Competence on Employee Performance Thru Motivation as an Intervening Variable.

The Influence of Competence Thru Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable on Employee Performance

Based on the results of the path analysis and Sobel test, it shows that work motivation mediates or acts as a partial and significant intervening variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance, where the path analysis value indicates that the indirect effect of 0.160 is smaller than the direct effect of 0.428. The Sobel test results show that the indirect effect of competence on performance thru work motivation has a z -value of $2.441 > z$ -table 1.96 and a significance value of $0.015 < 0.05$. Thus, Work Motivation statistically significantly mediates the influence of leadership on employee performance.

This finding can be theoretically explained thru the Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker (1964). This theory views competence as human capital inherent in individuals and playing a strategic role in enhancing work productivity. Adequate competence increases an individual's confidence in their ability to complete tasks, thereby encouraging the emergence of work

motivation. That work motivation subsequently becomes a driving factor for effective work behavior and is oriented toward achieving optimal performance. Thus, work motivation functions as an intervening variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance. Similarly, this aligns with the opinion expressed by Robbins and Judge (2017), who state that work motivation is a psychological mechanism that bridges the influence of organizational factors on individual performance.

The results of this study support previous research conducted by Merwan Ismail et al. (2024) titled "The Influence of Competence on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable"; Muchtarul Mulsiansyah et al. (2023) titled "The Influence of Leadership and Competence on Employee Performance thru Motivation as an Intervening Variable at the Institute of Domestic Government, West Sumatra Campus"; Yusuf Mangalik et al. (2023) titled "The Influence of Leadership Style and Human Resource Competence thru Work Motivation on Employee Performance at the Forest Area Stabilization Center, Region VII Makassar.

SUMMARY

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion in this study, several conclusions can be drawn as follows: 1) Communication has a significant effect on employee performance at the Department of Communication, Informatics, Statistics, and Encryption of Southwest Papua Province. 2) Organizational commitment has a significant effect on employee performance. 3) Work motivation has a significant effect on employee performance. 4) Communication, organizational commitment, and work motivation simultaneously have a significant effect on employee performance. 5) Work motivation is the most dominant variable influencing employee performance. The results of the analysis show that, among the variables studied, work motivation contributes the most to improved performance, indicating the importance of developing motivational strategies within the organization.

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion in Chapter IV regarding the influence of leadership and competence on employee performance with work motivation as an intervening variable at the Office of Manpower, Transmigration, Energy, and Mineral Resources of West Papua Province, several conclusions can be drawn as follows: 1) Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee work motivation. This indicates that effective leadership can enhance employees' drive and enthusiasm in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. 2) Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee work motivation. Employees who possess adequate knowledge, skills, and work abilities tend to have higher work motivation. 3) Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This finding shows that work motivation is an important factor that drives the improvement of employee performance. 4) Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This emphasizes that the role of leaders is crucial in directing and enhancing employee performance. 5) Competence has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. In fact, competence is the variable that has a dominant influence on employee performance compared to other variables. 6) Work motivation acts as a significant intervening variable in the relationship between leadership and employee performance. This indicates that good leadership will be more effective in improving performance if it can enhance employee work motivation. 7) Work motivation acts as a partial and significant intervening variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance. This means that competence can improve performance both directly and indirectly thru the enhancement of work motivation.

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