



Analysis of Leadership and Recognition of Employee Performance with Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable in the Office Medan Barat District Office

Analisis Kepemimpinan dan Pengakuan atas Kinerja Karyawan dengan Motivasi Kerja sebagai Variabel Mediasi di Kantor Distrik Medan Barat

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ABSTRAK

Kinerja pegawai merupakan faktor kunci dalam menentukan keberhasilan pelayanan publik di instansi pemerintah, termasuk Kantor Kecamatan Medan Barat. Variasi kualitas layanan, ketepatan waktu penyelesaian pekerjaan, dan tingkat inisiatif karyawan menunjukkan bahwa kinerja karyawan belum optimal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh kepemimpinan dan penghargaan terhadap kinerja karyawan, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung melalui motivasi kerja sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode sensus seluruh 60 PNS di Kantor Kecamatan Medan Barat. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan dianalisis menggunakan metode Partial Least Square (PLS) dengan bantuan aplikasi SmartPLS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan memiliki efek positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja karyawan dan motivasi kerja. Penghargaan juga ditemukan memiliki efek positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja karyawan dan motivasi kerja. Selain itu, motivasi kerja memiliki efek positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja karyawan. Pengujian untuk efek tidak langsung menunjukkan bahwa motivasi kerja bertindak sebagai variabel mediasi yang signifikan dalam hubungan antara kepemimpinan dan penghargaan terhadap kinerja karyawan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan kinerja karyawan tidak hanya bergantung pada sistem kepemimpinan dan penghargaan, tetapi juga sangat dipengaruhi oleh tingkat motivasi kerja karyawan. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat diperhatikan oleh pimpinan Kantor Kecamatan Medan Barat dalam merumuskan kebijakan penguatan kepemimpinan, meningkatkan sistem penghargaan, dan meningkatkan motivasi kerja dalam rangka mewujudkan pelayanan publik yang lebih efektif dan berkualitas.

ABSTRACT

Employee performance is a key factor in determining the success of public services in government agencies, including the West Medan Sub-District Office. Variations in service quality, timeliness of work completion, and employee initiative levels indicate that employee performance is not yet optimal. This study aims to analyze the influence of leadership and rewards on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through work motivation as a mediating variable. This study uses a quantitative approach with a census method of all 60 civil servants at the West Medan Sub-District Office. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method with the help of the SmartPLS application. The results show that leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and work motivation. Rewards were also found to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance and work motivation. Furthermore, work motivation had a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Testing for indirect effects showed that work motivation acted as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between leadership and rewards on employee performance. These findings indicate that improving employee performance does not only depend on leadership and reward systems, but is also greatly influenced by the level of employee work motivation. This study is expected to be taken into consideration by the leadership of the West Medan Sub-District Office in formulating policies to strengthen leadership, improve reward systems, and increase work motivation in order to realize more effective and higher-quality public services.

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a strategic factor in determining the success of public service delivery in government agencies, including the West Medan Sub-District Office. As a government apparatus at the sub-district level, the Sub-District Office has an important responsibility in carrying out governmental functions, administrative services, and community development. The quality of services provided to the community is largely determined by employee performance in carrying out tasks effectively, efficiently,

and in accordance with established standards. Mangkunegara (2020) states that employee performance is the result of the quality and quantity of work achieved by an individual in carrying out tasks in accordance with their assigned responsibilities.

Along with increasing public demands for fast, accurate, transparent, and professional public services, government officials are required to demonstrate optimal performance. However, based on initial observations and internal evaluations at the West Medan Sub-District Office, variations in employee performance were still found, such as inconsistencies in the quality of work, delays in completing tasks, and a lack of initiative in providing services. These conditions indicate that employee performance is not yet fully optimal. This is in line with Sedarmayanti's (2020) opinion that employee performance is influenced by individual abilities and the effectiveness of work processes within the organization.

One important factor that influences employee performance is leadership. Robbins and Judge (2020) define leadership as the ability to influence a group to be willing to work together to achieve organizational goals. Effective leadership is able to provide clear direction, build good communication, and create a conducive work environment for employees. Ridwan et al. (2020) emphasize that leaders who are able to provide examples, support, and guidance will encourage employees to work in a more focused and productive manner. In the context of the West Medan Sub-District Office, the role of leadership is crucial, given that the success of public services is highly dependent on cross-section coordination and appropriate decision-making.

In addition to having a direct influence, leadership also plays an important role in shaping employee work motivation. Work motivation is an internal drive that influences the intensity, direction, and persistence of a person's work behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2020). Employees who are led fairly, communicatively, and supportively tend to have higher work motivation, so they are more enthusiastic in completing tasks and taking responsibility for their work. Vo et al. (2022) state that work motivation acts as the main driver connecting organizational factors with individual performance.

Work motivation not only stands as an independent variable, but also has the potential to be a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership and employee performance. Good leadership can increase work motivation, which in turn has an impact on improving employee performance. Conversely, ineffective leadership has the potential to decrease work motivation, thereby preventing employee performance from developing optimally. Therefore, work motivation is an important factor that bridges the influence of leadership on employee performance.

Based on this description, research on the role of work motivation in mediating the influence of leadership on employee performance at the West Medan Sub-District Office is relevant and important to conduct. This study is expected to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between leadership, work motivation, and employee performance, as well as serve as a basis for sub-district leaders in formulating leadership strengthening policies and work motivation improvement strategies to enhance the quality of employee performance and public services in a sustainable manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Performance

Ridwan et al. (2020) define performance as the overall results or level of success of an individual in a certain period when carrying out tasks, compared to predetermined and agreed-upon work standards, targets, and criteria.

Work Motivation

According to Vo et al., 2022, work motivation is a drive that stems from individual needs (competence, autonomy, social relationships) that encourages productive and effective individual work behavior.

Recognition

According to Mdhlalose (2024), recognition is the provision of rewards to employees for their ideas or innovations, which demonstrates the function of recognition as a driver of specific desired behaviors.

Leadership

Robbins & Judge (2020) define leadership as the ability to influence a group to achieve goals. In essence: focus on influence and the achievement of organizational goals.



Conceptual Framework

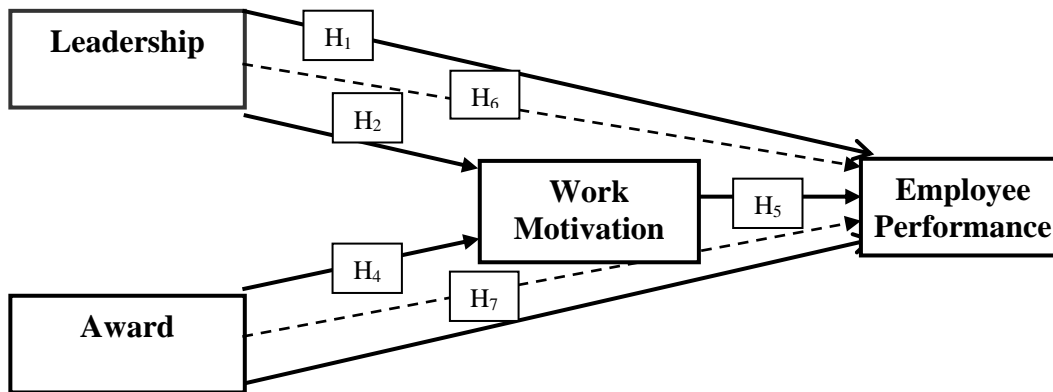


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

1. H₁: Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
2. H₂: Leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
3. H₃: Recognition has a negative and significant effect on employee performance at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
4. H₄: Rewards have a negative and significant effect on work motivation at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
5. H₅: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
6. H₆: Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
7. H₇: Rewards have a negative and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.

RESEARCH METHOD

Type of Research

The type of research used by the researcher is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research can be defined as a method based on positivism philosophy, used to study a specific population or sample, with sampling techniques generally conducted randomly, data collection using research instruments, and quantitative/statistical data analysis with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses. This type of quantitative research was conducted to create a study aimed at adjusting a study and analyzing leadership and employee performance rewards with work motivation as a mediating variable at the West Medan Sub-District Office.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings Values

	Award	Employee Performance	Leadership	Work Motivation
X1.1			0.843	
X1.2			0.845	
X1.3			0.877	
X1.4			0.783	
X1.5			0.848	
X1.6			0.849	
X2.1	0.761			

	Award	Employee Performance	Leadership	Work Motivation
X2.2	0.862			
X2.3	0.898			
Y.1		0.680		
Y.2		0.889		
Y.3		0.735		
Y.4		0.856		
Y.5		0.842		
Y.6		0.899		
Z.1				0.867
Z.2				0.777
Z.3				0.871

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, which show the results of outer model testing through loading factor/outer loadings values, all indicators in each variable have a loading value ≥ 0.60 . This indicates that each indicator is measured validly and robustly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire have met the validity criteria, as shown in the following figure.

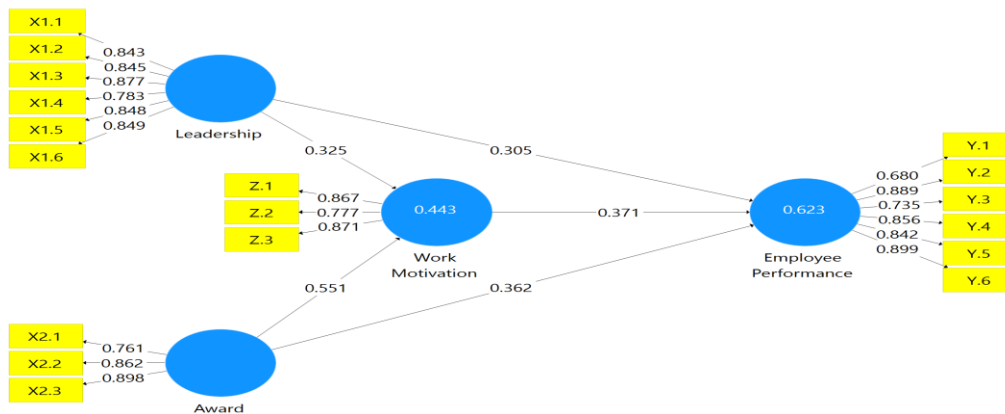


Figure 2 Outer Loading

In this study, there is an equation, and that equation consists of two substructures for substructure 1:

$$Z = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e_1$$

$$Z = 0.325 X_1 + 0.551 X_2 + e_1$$

For substructure 2:

$$Y = \beta_2 X_1 + \beta_3 X_2 + \beta_3 Z + e_2$$

$$Y = 0.305 X_1 + 0.362 X_2 + 0.371 Z + e_2$$

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Award	0.800	0.854	0.879	0.709
Employee Performance	0.901	0.911	0.925	0.674
Leadership	0.918	0.928	0.936	0.708
Work Motivation	0.790	0.799	0.877	0.705

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025



From Table 2 above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable in measuring their respective constructs. Thus, the research instrument is declared reliable and suitable for use in structural model testing.

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

In assessing the model with PLS, we begin by looking at the R-squared for each dependent latent variable. The table below shows the R-squared estimation results using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R-Square
Employee Performance	0.623	0.603
Work Motivation	0.443	0.423

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 3 shows the R-squared values for both dependent variables. For the work motivation variable, the R-squared value is 0.623, meaning that the influence of leadership and rewards is 0.623 or 62.3%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model. The R-squared value for employee performance is 0.443, meaning that leadership, rewards, and work motivation account for 0.443 or 44.3%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model.

Direct Influence Between Variables

The direct effect between variables can be seen in the *path coefficients*. The data analysis results show the direct effect values in the following table.

Table 4. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Leadership -> Employee Performance	0.305	3.003	0.003	Accepted
Leadership -> Work Motivation	0.325	3.374	0.001	Accepted
Award -> Employee Performance	0.362	3.161	0.002	Accepted
Award -> Work Motivation	0.551	7.515	0.000	Accepted
Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.371	2.675	0.008	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

The results in Table 4 show the following direct effect values:

1. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a t-statistic value of 3.003 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.003 below 0.05, meaning that leadership has a real effect on employee performance because the significance value is above 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Rahman et al., 2023; Fadillah & Mesra, 2024).
2. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 3.374 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.001 below 0.05, meaning that the quality of human resources has a real effect on work motivation because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Tarigan & Ferine, 2024).

3. Rewards have a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a t-statistic value of 3.161 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.001 below 0.05, meaning that rewards have a real effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that rewards have a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Arman & Siagian, 2025).
4. Rewards have a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 7.515 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that rewards have a real effect on work motivation because the significance value is above 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that rewards have a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Seppala & Smith, 2020).
5. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a t-statistic value of 2.675 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.008 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation has a real effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Pohan & Rizky, 2024; Yanti et al., 2025).

Indirect Influence Between Variables

The indirect effect between variables can be seen in the *specific indirect effects* value. The data analysis results show the indirect effect value in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effects (Indirect Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Leadership -> Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.121	2.177	0.030	Accepted
Award -> Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.204	2.415	0.016	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 5 shows the indirect effects between variables, namely:

1. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 2.177 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.030 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between leadership and employee performance.
2. Rewards have a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 2.415 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.016 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between rewards and employee performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

1. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the West Medan Sub-District Office.
2. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at the West Medan Sub-District Office.
3. Rewards have a negative and significant effect on employee performance at the West Medan Sub-District Office.
4. Rewards have a negative and significant effect on work motivation at the West Medan Sub-District Office.
5. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
6. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the West Medan Subdistrict Office.
7. Recognition has a negative and significant impact on employee performance through work motivation at the Medan Barat Subdistrict Office.



Recommendations

Employee performance with the lowest score was "I produce work that meets the established standards." Therefore, the recommendation is to improve work quality control by establishing more measurable work standards, providing regular feedback, and conducting continuous performance evaluations so that employees are able to produce consistent work that meets the established standards.

Work motivation with the lowest score was "I have the freedom to organize my work to complete tasks." The office is advised to maintain and direct employee freedom in organizing their work while still setting clear targets, authority limits, and monitoring mechanisms, so that work flexibility can promote efficiency without reducing the quality and accountability of work.

Recognition with the lowest value statement: "The work I do gives me personal satisfaction." Offices need to increase employee job satisfaction by giving appreciation for work results, creating a conducive work environment, and aligning tasks with employee interests and competencies, so that the work performed can provide personal satisfaction and encourage more optimal performance.

Leadership with the lowest value statement "Leaders are able to make appropriate and fair decisions". Leaders need to maintain and improve the quality of decision-making through the application of the principles of transparency, objectivity, and openness to employee input, so that the decisions made can be perceived as appropriate, fair, and able to increase employee trust and performance.

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