

THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP AND WORK MOTIVATION ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT STATE MIDDLE SCHOOL 1 TELUKDALAN SOUTH NIAS

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the influence of leadership and work motivation on the performance of employees of SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, South Nias. The influence of leadership and work motivation is analyzed partially and simultaneously on the performance of employees of SMP Negeri I Telukdalam, South Nias. The research method used is quantitative descriptive research. The data collection technique uses a questionnaire distributed directly to teachers and non-teaching staff at SMPN I Telukdalam using a questionnaire. The sample in this study was 96 teachers and non-teaching staff at SMPN I Telukdalam. The analysis methods used are validity test, reliability test, heteroscedasticity test, classical assumption test, multiple linear regression analysis and hypothesis test. The results of the study indicate that the variables of leadership quality (X1) and work motivation (X2) are significant on employee performance (Y). Therefore, it can be concluded that the influence of each variable partially influences and simultaneously also influences the performance of employees of SMPN I Telukdalam. Data is processed statistically using the SPSS 26 program tool.

Keywords: *Leadership, Work Motivation, Employee Performance*

INTRODUCTION

Human resources (HR) are a vital asset in an institution, as the quality and competence of employees directly impact organizational performance. Effective HR management ensures that institutions have a competent, motivated, and productive workforce, enabling efficient achievement of organizational goals. According to research (Setiawan et al., 2021), the development of an institution is highly dependent on the role of its human resources. A growing institution requires planning in its management, including human resources, to ensure optimal service to stakeholders, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, (Ubaidillah et al., 2023) emphasize that the government requires highly dedicated and qualified human resources to achieve its goals. Despite rapid technological advancements, the role of human resources remains crucial because technology only serves to simplify and accelerate work, while qualified human resources can carry out more complex and strategic functions (Rima et al., 2020).

In the context of schools, optimal employee performance can support the achievement of educational goals, improve service quality, and enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Teluk Dalam 1 State Junior High School, as one of the educational institutions in South Nias Regency, plays a crucial role in developing a competent young generation. Therefore, improving employee performance is a strategic issue that requires attention. One factor influencing employee performance is leadership (Arief, 2020). Effective leaders are not only able to provide direction but also inspire and empower employees to perform optimally. The leadership style adopted by the principal or school manager can create a conducive work environment and support employee performance. A lack of adaptive and communicative leadership can be a barrier to realizing employees' optimal potential (Prastyorini, Widyawati, Kristiawati, EsterKalangi, et al., 2024). Leadership plays a crucial role in determining the performance of educational institutions, especially schools (Arief, 2020). An effective principal can create a conducive learning environment, motivate teachers and staff, and ensure the smooth implementation of the curriculum. Research conducted by (Heriant et al., 2024) found that the principal's leadership performance had

a 39.9% impact on the performance of public junior high school teachers in Tegal Regency. This confirms that effective leadership from the principal plays a significant role in improving teacher performance. Similarly, research conducted by Relaksa et al. (2024) analyzed the principal's leadership style in improving teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Girisubo. The results showed that the democratic leadership style implemented by the principal had a positive correlation with improved teacher performance. The principal successfully built good relationships with teachers, rewarded performance, and created a productive and harmonious work environment. Thus, effective leadership in junior high schools focuses not only on administrative aspects but also on human resource development and the creation of a positive school culture. Investment in principal leadership development will have a direct impact on improving the performance of educational institutions and the quality of education provided to students (Akbar et al., 2024).

Besides leadership, motivation is also a factor influencing an organization's performance. Work motivation acts as the primary driving force influencing individual and organizational performance. Work motivation plays a crucial role in improving an organization's performance (Akbar et al., 2024). Motivated employees tend to work more efficiently, demonstrate high dedication, and contribute positively to achieving organizational goals. Motivation not only increases work efficiency but also helps create a conducive work environment for achieving organizational goals (Asmarani & Marlindawaty, 2024). Therefore, organizations need to design effective motivational strategies, such as providing rewards, creating career development opportunities, and maintaining harmonious working relationships to maximize employee performance (Akbar et al., 2024). As the spearhead of the educational process, teachers are not only tasked with delivering material, but also with guiding and shaping students' character. To carry out this task optimally, teachers require strong motivation, both from within themselves (intrinsic motivation) and from the external environment (extrinsic motivation). Intrinsic motivation, such as the desire to contribute to the education of the younger generation and the satisfaction of seeing students' progress, can encourage teachers to continuously improve their competencies. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation, such as awards, recognition, a conducive work environment, and support from the principal and colleagues, can serve as additional drivers that strengthen teachers' commitment to carrying out their duties.

Teacher performance, as a component of human resources, is a key factor in determining the quality of education in schools. Teacher work motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, plays a crucial role in improving this performance (Saifullah et al., 2024). Several studies have examined the relationship between motivation and teacher performance. Some studies suggest that work motivation has a significant influence on teacher performance in junior high schools (Kastawi et al., 2021a). Similarly, research (Kurnia et al., 2024a) reports that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play a role in improving teacher performance in schools. Research shows that teachers with high levels of work motivation tend to perform better, both in terms of lesson preparation, teaching creativity, and the ability to resolve challenges that arise in the classroom. This is supported by a study by Arlini and Musadad (2022), which found that work motivation contributes significantly to teacher performance in supporting educational success in schools. Furthermore, research by Kurnia et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of motivation as a key determinant in creating a productive and enjoyable learning environment. Therefore, efforts to improve teacher work motivation should be a primary concern for stakeholders in the education sector. Policies that support teacher welfare, provide regular training, reward achievement, and create a positive work culture can be strategic steps to ensure teachers remain motivated and deliver their best performance. This will further improve the quality of education in schools, positively impacting student development and national progress.

METHOD

A. Research Design

This research is a survey research design with a quantitative descriptive approach. According to Sugiyono (2019), survey research is research conducted on large or small populations, but the data studied is data from samples taken from that population. Based on the level of explanation, this research is classified as causal associative research. Causal associative research is research that seeks a causal relationship or influence, namely the relationship or influence of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y) (Sugiyono, 2019).

B. Place and Time of Research

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri I Telukdalam, South Nias and the research period was from February to July 2025. SMP Negeri I Telukdalam, South Nias was chosen as the research location so that it could

represent the existing school population in South Nias Regency in terms of gender, ethnicity, income, etc., so that this research could be generalized to other places.

C. Population and Sample

1. Population

Population is a generalization area consisting of: objects/subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by researchers to be studied and then conclusions drawn, (Sugiyono, 2019). Based on the definition of population above, the population in this study is all employees of SMP Negeri I Telukdalam Nias Selatan.

2. Sample

A sample is a part of the number and characteristics possessed by the population (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the sample was taken using a Nonprobability Sampling design, a sampling technique that does not provide equal opportunities/opportunities for each element or member of the population to be selected as a sample (Sugiyono, 2019) with a Purposive Sampling technique, namely a sampling determination technique selected using certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2019). Based on Roscoe's opinion in Sugiyono's book (2019), that a suitable sample size in research is between 30 and 500. So the determination of the number of 96 samples/respondents has entered the criteria so that it is suitable for research.

D. Data collection technique

The data collection technique in this study was to provide an online questionnaire to respondents. A questionnaire is a data collection technique carried out by providing a set of written questions or statements to respondents to answer (Sugiyono, 2019). Researchers compiled and distributed a questionnaire containing a list of statements to respondents. This questionnaire will be distributed to respondents to obtain their responses to the object of study, namely the influence of employee performance. The measurement used by researchers in the data processing process is a Likert scale. A Likert scale is a scale used to measure an individual's or group's perception, attitude, or opinion regarding an event or social phenomenon, based on an operational definition established by the researcher. On a Likert scale, each available answer is assigned a score. Five alternatives will be used in assigning scores on a scale of 1 to 5, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Respondents' Answer Scores

No	Answer	Score
1	Strongly Agree (S)	5
2	Agree (S)	4
3	Disagree Less (KS)	3
4	Disagree (TS)	2
5	Strongly Disagree (STS)	1

E. Data Analysis Techniques

1. Classical Assumption Test

The Classical Assumption Test is a statistical requirement that must be met before conducting a Multiple Regression Analysis Test. The Classical Assumption test approach used in this study is:

1.1 Normality Test

The normality test is used to see whether the residual values are normally distributed, or not. A good regression model has normally distributed residuals. Data normality testing uses SPSS version 26 statistics, based on probability, as follows:

1. If the probability > 0.05 then the distribution of the regression model is normal.
2. If the probability < 0.05 then the distribution of the regression model is not normal.

1.2 Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test is used to determine whether a correlation exists between independent variables in the regression model. To test for multicollinearity, the VIF value and tolerance values < 10 and greater than 0.1 can be used to conclude that the data are free from multicollinearity.

1.3 Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test aims to determine whether there is inequality in the variances of residuals or other observations in a regression model. Several methods are used to determine the presence or absence of heteroscedasticity in a regression model. In this study, the Glesjer test was used, which concludes:

1. If the significance value > 0.05 then there is no heteroscedasticity problem.
2. If the significance value is < 0.05 , there is heteroscedasticity.

2. Multiple Linear Regression Test

Regression analysis is used to estimate the value of variable Y based on the value of variable X, as well as estimating the change in variable Y for each unit change in variable X. The equation form of multiple linear regression is:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y : Dependent variable

X₁, X₂ : Independent variable

A : constant, is a related value which in this case is when the independent variable is 0 (X₁, X₂ = 0)

b₁, b₂ : Multiple regression coefficient

ε : Other factors that influence the variables

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The influence of leadership on employee performance

The t-test results show that the leadership variable (X₁) has a t-count value of 7.134 with a significance level of 0.000. This value is much greater than the t-table of 1.985 (df = 93, $\alpha = 0.05$), so it can be concluded that leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This means that the better the leadership style implemented by the school leader, the higher the performance demonstrated by the employees. This finding supports the research hypothesis that leadership has a real influence on the quality of employee work. Effective leadership creates clear direction, motivation, and work goals for his subordinates. Thus, a principal who is able to demonstrate a transformational and supportive leadership style can encourage improved teacher and staff performance at SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam. This shows that leadership is an important factor in the work system of an educational organization.

This result is in line with research conducted by (Sari et al., 2020), who found that principal leadership significantly influences teacher performance in secondary schools. Leaders who are able to provide direction, role models, and fairly reward employees will foster higher work morale. Furthermore, communicative and democratic leadership will create a conducive and responsible work environment. Leadership is not only about authority, but also about the ability to influence, direct, and motivate subordinates. In the educational context, principals as leaders play a strategic role in determining the school's vision, mission, and work culture. The leader's exemplary behavior and discipline will be contagious to employee attitudes and behavior. Therefore, the right leadership approach will strengthen employee productivity in a sustainable manner.

Another study that supports these findings is a study by Habibi et al. (2021), which states that transformational leadership significantly contributes to improving employee loyalty and performance. Leaders who possess vision, integrity, and the ability to build positive emotional relationships with their subordinates have been shown to be more successful in creating productive changes in work behavior. In the school context, a principal with an inspirational leadership style will instill a collective work spirit and foster a sense of belonging to the organization. When employees feel valued, listened to, and involved in decision-making, they will be more motivated to deliver their best performance. This is also reflected in the results of a recent study at SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, where leadership style was shown to significantly contribute to improved performance. Strong and consistent leadership has been shown to be a key driver in achieving educational institutions' work targets. Therefore, leadership aspects should be a primary focus in strategies to improve educational quality. This finding is further supported by the leadership theory of Saut Pardamean Siahaan et al., 2021, which states that transformational leadership can increase employee commitment and motivation through idealistic influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized attention. In the context of school organizations, leaders who adopt these principles will encourage optimal performance from

employees and teachers. Implement policies that support individual and collective employee development.

2. The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

The results of the data analysis show that the work motivation variable (X_2) has a t-value of 7.050 and a significance value of 0.000. This value is greater than the t-table of 1.985 at a significance level of 5% and degrees of freedom (df) of 93 ($n - k - 1 = 96 - 2 - 1$). This proves that work motivation has a significant effect on employee performance at SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, South Nias. Thus, the second hypothesis stating that there is a positive and significant influence between work motivation and employee performance is accepted. This means that the higher the level of motivation possessed by employees, the better the performance shown. This finding strengthens Herzberg's theory which states that intrinsic motivators such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility contribute to improved performance. Work motivation encourages individuals to complete tasks more diligently, responsibly, and directed. Therefore, it is important for school leaders to create a work environment that motivates employees in carrying out their duties.

This research aligns with findings from (Anum & Chaerudin, 2023), which show that work motivation has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. At SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, motivation derived from the principal's appreciation, a conducive work environment, and career security contribute to encouraging teachers and staff to perform optimally. Furthermore, research from (Kastawi et al., 2021a) supports this finding, stating that work motivation is a key determinant of improved performance within the school environment. Teachers who feel cared for, appreciated, and involved in decision-making tend to demonstrate higher levels of loyalty and work productivity (Kurnia et al., 2024b). This demonstrates that motivation is not merely a complement but a key foundation for developing competent employees. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions to develop a sustainable motivation system.

In a school context, motivated teachers and staff demonstrate high levels of discipline, initiative in learning innovation, and commitment to the school's vision (Kastawi et al., 2021b). Unmotivated employees tend to work monotonously and contribute minimally to achieving organizational goals. Therefore, school management needs to explore various strategies to increase internal and external employee motivation. These strategies can include providing non-financial rewards, increasing capacity through training, or creating open communication between employees and management. If motivation can be maintained consistently, improving employee performance is achievable. These results reinforce the conclusion that work motivation plays a strategic role in boosting employee productivity in schools (Kurnia et al., 2024a).

3. The Influence of Leadership and Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Based on the results of the simultaneous regression analysis (F test) in this study, the F-count value was obtained at 220.033 with a significance value of 0.000. This value is much greater than the F-table of 3.09 at a significance level of 5% with $df_1 = 2$ and $df_2 = 93$. Since the significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that the variables of leadership and work motivation simultaneously have a significant effect on employee performance at SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, South Nias Regency. This means that the combination of the leadership style implemented by the principal and the work motivation of teachers and staff together can significantly improve performance. This finding indicates that employee performance is not only determined by a single factor, but is influenced by various managerial and psychological aspects that support each other (Kurnia et al., 2024b). Good leadership can create a conducive work climate, while high motivation can encourage employees to work more optimally. Thus, these two factors have a strategic role in increasing the effectiveness of educational organizations.

This research aligns with the results of studies showing that the principal's transformational leadership has a positive and significant impact on teacher performance in secondary schools (Rahman, 2022). Leadership that inspires, provides clear direction, and fosters healthy interpersonal relationships has been shown to encourage employees to demonstrate their best performance. In the context of SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, the principal's role as a leader is crucial in directing the school's vision and mission to all educators. Employee performance will improve if they feel supported and well-directed by their superiors. Furthermore, clear tasks, appropriate feedback, and rewards will strengthen employee commitment. Therefore, the success of educational institutions in achieving performance targets depends heavily on the quality of their leadership. This confirms that leadership is a key component in strategies to improve the performance of educational organizations.

In addition to leadership, work motivation has also been shown to significantly influence performance, as demonstrated by the partial and simultaneous regression results in this study. Research by (Pratiwi & Wimba, 2021) confirms that high motivation will create an internal drive for individuals to complete their tasks optimally. At SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, motivation can come from various sources, such as awards, career development opportunities, a positive work environment, and social support from coworkers. Motivated employees will demonstrate high levels of loyalty, discipline, and initiative in carrying out their duties (Helmi, 2022). Motivation can also act as a balancing factor when working conditions are less than ideal, as individuals remain driven by personal and organizational goals. Therefore, effective motivation management will significantly contribute to increased work productivity. Therefore, school management needs to develop appropriate motivational strategies to boost employee morale.

Furthermore, research by (Asmarani & Marlindawaty, 2024) supports these findings, where work motivation and leadership were found to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance in elementary education institutions. Their results indicate that organizations that are able to create synergy between effective leadership styles and adequate reward systems will have higher performance levels. In relation to SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, this means that leadership and motivation are not only internal factors for employees but must be systematically managed by the school. This strategy includes developing the principal's leadership through managerial training and creating a work system that motivates employees. When the work environment is well managed, the performance of teachers and administrative staff can significantly improve. This demonstrates the need for schools to implement a participatory leadership approach and pay attention to the well-being of their employees. With the support of these two important factors, the quality of educational services provided to students will be optimal.

Overall, the findings of this study strengthen the hypothesis that leadership and work motivation simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam. The calculated F-value, which far exceeds the F-table, and the very low significance level, strongly support the validity of the regression model used. The implication of these results is the importance of the principal's role as both a leader and a motivator in improving the work quality of teachers and staff. Optimal employee performance will not be achieved solely through administrative policies but requires a humanistic approach that considers the psychological and professional needs of individuals. Therefore, improving leadership quality and empowering motivation must be a priority in educational management. This research is expected to serve as a reference for policymakers within the South Nias Regency Education Office in formulating policies for developing educational human resources. By creating an effective leadership system and a motivating work culture, the performance of educational institutions can be continuously improved.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis that has been carried out, both partially and simultaneously, several conclusions can be drawn. First, leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam, South Nias Regency. The t-test results show a calculated t-value of $7.134 > t\text{-table } 1.985$ with a significance of $0.000 < 0.05$, which proves that the better the principal's leadership style, the higher the employee performance. Second, work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This is evidenced by the calculated t-value of $7.050 > t\text{-table } 1.985$ and a significance of 0.000 . Employees who have high motivation tend to show dedication, responsibility, and more optimal work results. Third, simultaneously, leadership and work motivation together have a significant effect on employee performance, as shown by the results of the F test with an calculated F of $220.033 > F\text{-table } 3.09$ and a significance of 0.000 . The regression model used in this study proved statistically significant and suitable for explaining the relationship between variables. Fourth, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.826 indicates that 82.6% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by leadership and work motivation variables, while the remaining 17.4% is explained by other factors not examined in this study. And finally, the results of this study strengthen the theory and findings from various previous scientific journals that effective leadership and high work motivation are the main factors in improving employee performance, especially in the context of educational institutions such as SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam.

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