



## The Role of Work Motivation Mediation on the Influence of Leadership on Employee Performance

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### ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the role of work motivation as an intervening variable in the configuration of the relationship between leadership and employee performance at Chuckwie Restaurant Denpasar. Using a quantitative approach and associative-causal design, the entire employee population of 38 people was studied through total sampling techniques. The questionnaire instrument was used as a data collection tool, which was then analyzed through path analysis assisted by SPSS version 25.0. Empirical findings indicate that leadership plays a positive and significant role in influencing both work motivation and employee performance. Furthermore, work motivation was identified as an effective and significant mediator in bridging the relationship between leadership and performance, reinforcing the effects of leadership on individual work output indirectly. These findings emphasize that effective leadership is not just a managerial issue, but touches on the affective and cognitive aspects of employees in shaping a sustainable work ethic. Therefore, motivation cannot be separated from leadership in formulating systemic and transformative performance improvement strategies.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The success of an agency is greatly influenced by the quality of its human resources. Human resources are not only a factor of production, but also the main driver in achieving organizational goals through the skills, energy, and knowledge possessed (Kirana, Sriathi & Suwandana, 2022). In the culinary sector, such as Chuckwie Restaurant Denpasar, high operational challenges demand optimal and consistent employee performance (Herlambang & Suwandana, 2020).

Employee performance has an important role in the sustainability of the organization. Performance is the result of work achieved according to the responsibilities given, which are assessed from quality and quantity (Silalahi, 2021; Andayani & Tirtayasa, 2019). Decreased performance can have an impact on customer service and satisfaction, as happened at Chuckwie Restaurant, where service delays and decreased product quality were found. Based on interviews with several employees, this is related to inconsistent leadership, lack of two-way communication, and lack of work motivation. Leadership has an important influence on motivation and performance. Effective leaders are able to encourage, direct, and inspire employees (Amang, 2023; Susila, Netra & Suwandana, 2023). Fahmi (2021) and Widhiantara et al. (2023) stated that leadership includes the ability to influence subordinates through communication, while Paais & Pattiruhu (2020) emphasized the importance of leadership in achieving common goals.

However, previous findings show mixed results. Some researchers such as Aryanti & Perkasa (2024), Dastane (2020), and Hidayat et al. (2023) found a significant influence between leadership and performance, while other studies showed the opposite results (Sugiharto & Subroto, 2022; Marjaya & Pasaribu, 2019).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Work motivation is not just a momentary enthusiasm, but the main fuel that drives the wheels of employee productivity. Whether it arises from within as an inner calling, or is born from the outside as a form of appreciation, motivation is able to shape the direction, rhythm, and intensity of work that ultimately determines the overall quality of performance. (Adhari, 2021; Fauzi, Wardi & Thaib, 2023). Leaders play an important role in providing this encouragement so that employees stay productive (Collins, 2021; Adinda, Firdaus & Agung, 2023). This research is rooted in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), which divides factors that affect performance into hygiene and motivators. To improve performance, organizations need to pay attention to the balance of these two factors.

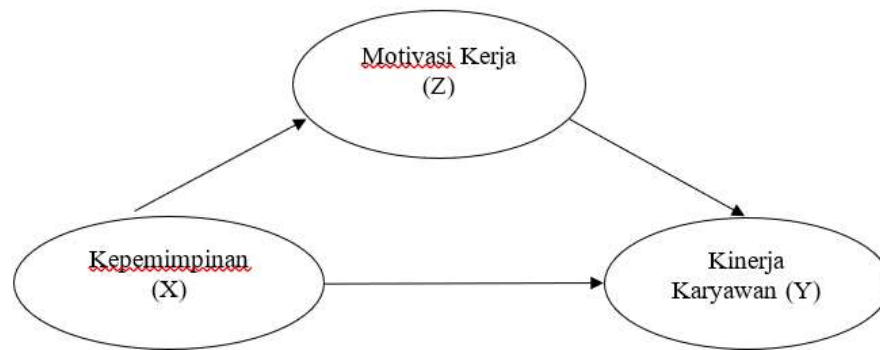


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Leadership is not just about instruction, but the driving force that determines the direction and performance of the organization. Aryanti & Perkasa (2024), Dastane (2020), and Amoa-Gyarteng & Dhliwayo (2024) affirm that effective leadership is significantly correlated with improved performance. Precise direction and consistent support from leaders create a productive work ecosystem (Hidayat et al., 2023). Zahratulfarhah et al. (2022) highlight that the harmonization between leadership style and employee expectations is a crucial factor in forming stable work performance. Thus, adaptive and responsive leadership can be a catalyst in optimizing employee potential.

H1: Leadership has a positive effect on employee performance

Effective leadership creates a psychological space conducive to the emergence of work motivation. Research by Rahman et al. (2023), Mahaputra & Saputra (2021), and Razak (2022) shows that leaders who are able to present clarity of direction, appreciation for contributions, and emotional support, play a significant role in shaping employee intrinsic motivation. Agustin (2020) underlined the importance of participatory leadership in fostering a sense of belonging to organizational goals. Thus, the role of the leader goes beyond the managerial function; It is a source of inspiration that revives the spirit of work.

H2: Leadership has a positive effect on work motivation

Work motivation is the main determinant in explaining the variation in individual performance in the organizational environment. The findings of Mousa & Othman (2020), Suprayitno (2024), and Sesi & Suwandana (2020) show that high motivation is consistently directly proportional to productivity, discipline, and work effectiveness. Andreas (2022) notes that motivation plays an internal driver that affects both personal performance and team dynamics. In this case, Sitopu et al. (2021) emphasized that organizations that manage motivation strategically will reap superior and sustainable performance.

H3: Work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance

Work motivation is not only an independent variable, but also plays a mediative function that explains why leadership impacts performance. Based on the studies of Barlian & Hanggara (2025), Okadarma et al. (2024), and Asmiadi (2022), transformative leadership is able to generate motivation, which in turn strengthens performance. Amrin & Hamsal (2024) refer to motivation as a connecting node that explains the relational strength between leaders and employee work outputs. Astutik & Sandy (2023) emphasize that leadership that

does not pay attention to motivational aspects tends to lose motivation for performance. This means that in this relationship structure, motivation is present as a psychological mechanism that mediates the transformation of direction into action.

H4: Work motivation mediates the influence of leadership on employee performance

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative approach with an associative design to dissect the dynamics of the relationship between leadership, work motivation, and employee performance, while placing work motivation as a mediating node in these causal relationships. This study was carried out at Chuckwie Restaurant Denpasar, by taking the entire population of 38 employees as a sample through the saturated sample technique. The data collection instruments are in the form of closed questionnaires and supporting interviews, which have passed the construct validity and internal reliability tests. The measurement scale uses the five-point Likert model. Data analysis was carried out through path analysis techniques using SPSS version 25.0, equipped with classical assumption tests to ensure the feasibility of the model.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents were 21–30 years old, as many as 20 people (52.6%). This figure shows that more than half of the study population is in the early productive age phase—a time when work ethic, adaptability, and readiness for change are usually at their peak. Meanwhile, as many as 10 respondents (26.3%) were under the age of 20, indicating the involvement of young workers in daily operations. The age group of 31–40 years closed the distribution with a proportion of 21.1% or 8 people. Overall, the age structure of the respondents reflects that the work ecosystem at Chuckwie Restaurant Denpasar is dominated by the younger generation, who have the potential to be important actors in this study.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Klasifikasi	Number (people)	Percentage (%)
Age	<20 Years	10	26,3
	21-30 Years	20	52,6
	31-40 Years	8	21,1
Sum		38	100

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Referring to Table 2, it can be concluded that all research instruments that include the variables of employee performance, leadership, and work motivation are declared valid. This is evidenced by the *Pearson Correlation* value for each item that all exceed 0.30. Thus, these instruments meet the validity test criteria and are considered valid to be used as a measuring tool in this study.

Table 2. Validity Test

No.	Variabel	Statement	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	Information
1.	Employee performance (Y)	Y1	0,699	Valid
		Y2	0,915	Valid
		Y3	0,865	Valid
		Y4	0,724	Valid
		Y5	0,908	Valid
2.	Leadership (X)	X1	0,927	Valid
		X2	0,934	Valid
		X3	0,839	Valid
		X4	0,915	Valid
3.	Work motivation (Z)	Z1	0,775	Valid
		Z2	0,824	Valid
		Z3	0,855	Valid
		Z4	0,884	Valid
		Z5	0,822	Valid

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

No.	Variabel	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	Information
1.	Employee performance (Y)	0,883	Reliabel
2.	Leadership (X)	0,924	Reliabel
3.	Work motivation (Z)	0,886	Reliabel

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Referring to Table 4, the employee performance variable recorded a total average score of 3.36, which is included in the sufficient category. This indicates that respondents rated the performance of employees at Chuckwie Restaurant Denpasar quite well. The item with the lowest average was the statement "I feel the work I produced has a minimal error rate," which earned an average score of 2.97. This value is also in the adequate category, which indicates that respondents feel that their work has not been completely error-free.

Table 4. Description of Respondents' Answers to Employee Performance

No	Statement	Respondent's Answer (orang)					Sum	Average	Criterion
		1	2	3	4	5			
1	I feel that the quality of my work has met the standards set by the company.	0	2	16	15	5	137	3,61	Good
2	I can complete the number of jobs assigned.	0	10	11	11	6	127	3,34	Enough

3	I always try to complete my tasks before the deadline that has been set.	1	9	13	13	2	120	3,16	Enough
4	I feel like the work I produce has a minimal error rate.	1	14	12	7	4	113	2,97	Enough
5	I often take the initiative to start a task without having to wait for directions from my superiors.	0	6	11	8	13	142	3,74	Good
Average Total Employee Performance								3,36	Enough

*Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)*

Referring to Table 5, the leadership variable recorded a total average score of 3.12, which is included in the sufficient category. This shows that employees of Chuckwie Denpasar Restaurant give a fairly positive assessment of their leadership experience during work. The statement with the lowest average was found in the item "My leadership involves me in the decision-making process that affects my work," which obtained an average score of 2.55, which was in the poor category. These findings show that in general, respondents feel less involved in the decision-making process related to their work.

Table 5. Description of Respondents' Answers to Leadership

No	Statement	Respondent's Answer (orang)					Sum	Average	Criterion
		1	2	3	4	5			
		1	My leaders often give direct direction on how to carry out the work.	1	11	14			
2	My leaders always explain the reasons behind the decisions made for our work.	2	8	7	18	3	126	3,32	Enough
3	My leadership involves me in the decision-making process that affects my work.	7	9	17	4	1	97	2,55	Bad
4	My leader delegated important tasks to me, which showed that he believed in my abilities.	2	8	9	6	13	134	3,53	Good
Average Total Leadership								3,12	Enough

*Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)*

Referring to Table 6, the work motivation variable recorded a total average value of 3.34, which is included in the sufficient category. These findings show that employees of Chuckwie Denpasar Restaurant have a sufficient level of work motivation in carrying out their duties. The statement with the lowest average score is "I often receive recognition for my contribution to completing tasks at work," with an average score of 2.84, which is also quite adequate. This indicates that in general, respondents feel less recognized for their contributions in the workplace.

Table 6. Description of Respondents' Responses to Work Motivation

No	Statement	Respondent's Answer (orang)					Sum	Average	Criterion
		1	2	3	4	5			
1	The company provided adequate health insurance to support my physical needs.	0	2	19	12	5	134	3,53	Tall
2	I feel safe because I am free from harassment, threats and intimidation from colleagues.	2	7	15	6	8	125	3,29	Enough
3	I establish harmonious working relationships and group problem-solving.	0	11	15	7	5	120	3,16	Enough
4	I often receive recognition for my contribution to completing tasks at work.	3	10	19	2	4	108	2,84	Enough
3	I feel encouraged to develop my skills and abilities at work.	0	2	11	15	10	147	3,87	Tall
Average Total Work Motivation								3,34	Enough

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Referring to the normality test conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, as seen in Table 7, the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) Kolmogorov-Smirnov value for Sub-Structural 1 was 0.060 and for Sub-Structural 2 was 0.200. Because of the value of Asymp. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov sig. (2-tailed) is greater than the alpha value of 0.05, indicating that the data used in this study are normally distributed. Thus, it can be concluded that this research model meets the assumption of normality.

Table 7. Normality Test

Equation	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
Sub-Structural 1	0,060	Normal
Sub-Structural 2	0,200	Normal

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Referring to Table 8, all independent variables in the regression model show a tolerance value above 0.10 and a VIF value below 10. This indicates that there is no high linear relationship between independent variables in the model. In other words, each independent variable has a fairly independent predictive ability without significant overlap with the other variables. Based on the general criteria in the multicollinearity test, these findings show that the regression model used in this study is free from multicollinearity problems.

Table 8. Multicollegiate Test Results

Type	Tolerance	VIVID	Information
Sub- Leadership	0,621	1,609	Free Multicollegiate
Structural Work	0,621	1,609	Free Multicollegiate
2 motivation			

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Referring to Table 9, it can be seen that each model has a significance value greater than 5% (0.05). This shows that the independent variable in this study does not have a significant influence on the dependent variable, namely *the residual absolute*. Therefore, it can be concluded that this study does not experience heteroscedasticity problems.

Table 9. Heteroscedasticity Test

Equation Model	Itself.	Information	
Sub-Structural 1 Leadership	0,211	Heteroscedasticity Free	
Sub-Structural 2	Leadership	0,125	Heteroscedasticity Free
	Work motivation	0,188	Heteroscedasticity Free

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Referring to Table 10, the leadership variable showed a regression coefficient of 0.615, which statistically reflects a positive and significant influence on employee work motivation. An interpretation of this value indicates that any improvement in leadership quality will encourage a proportionate increase in work motivation. In this context, leadership plays not only a structural function in the organization, but also as a psychological determinant that shapes an individual's work ethic, commitment, and initiative in carrying out his or her duties. This analysis was obtained through *path analysis* techniques with the help of SPSS software version 25.0 for Windows, which allowed researchers to trace causal relationships between variables in a more structured manner. In this

second sub-structure, the results of the test show that leadership plays a key role as a predictor of work motivation, which theoretically and empirically strengthens the argument that good leadership qualities are a prerequisite for the formation of a sustainable work drive.

Table 10. Results of Path Analysis in Sub-Structural 1

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Itself.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8,816	1,758		5,014	0,000
Leadership	0,631	0,135	0,615	4,684	0,000
R2 : 0.379					

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Referring to Table 11, the leadership variable recorded a coefficient of 0.310, which indicates that leadership has a positive influence on employee performance. This means that an increase in leadership levels will be followed by an increase in employee performance. Meanwhile, the work motivation variable has a coefficient of 0.540, which shows that work motivation also has a positive influence on employee performance. Thus, the increase in work motivation will be directly proportional to the improvement of employee performance.

Table 11. Results of Path Analysis in Sub-Structural 2

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Itself.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3,496	1,927		1,814	0,078
Leadership	0,327	0,144	0,310	2,273	0,029
Work motivation	0,554	0,140	0,540	3,955	0,000
R2 : 0.594					

Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of research at Chuckwie Restaurant Denpasar, it was found that leadership has a real and significant influence on employee performance. The stronger the quality of leadership, the more directed the performance improvement will occur. Not only that, leadership also shows a positive influence on work motivation, proving that an effective leader is able to arouse work morale internally. Other findings reveal that work motivation plays an important role in driving employee performance. This means that high motivation will have a direct impact on productivity. Furthermore, work motivation has been shown to be a partial mediator in the relationship between leadership and performance. In other words, good leadership not only has a

direct impact, but also stimulates performance through increased work motivation.

As a follow-up to these findings, there are several recommendations that deserve attention. First, to improve employee performance, management is advised to provide regular training and mentoring, as well as periodic evaluations to overcome doubts about work results. Second, in terms of leadership, it's important for management to involve employees in decision-making so that they feel valued. Third, in terms of work motivation, companies can increase rewards, both in the form of incentives, praise, and formal recognition. Finally, further research is suggested to add other variables such as work stress, workload, and work environment, as well as expand the research object on similar restaurants so that the results are more widely applicable.

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

Building on the findings of this study, **advanced research** could be directed toward developing a more comprehensive conceptual model by incorporating external variables such as work stress, workload, organizational culture, and work environment, which may strengthen or weaken the mediating role of motivation between leadership and employee performance. A mixed-methods approach is also recommended to capture both quantitative dynamics and the qualitative depth of employee experiences, providing richer theoretical and practical insights. Furthermore, cross-sectoral or cross-cultural studies are needed to test the generalizability of these findings, particularly in industries with different operational characteristics from the culinary sector. The use of advanced analytical tools, such as Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) or even machine learning techniques, could further enhance the validity of the model and open predictive opportunities for better understanding the interplay of leadership, motivation, and performance.

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