

The Influence of Servant Leadership and Organizational Culture on Employee Performance, with Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable, at the Ambon City Transportation Agency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Servant Leadership and Organizational Culture on Employee Performance, with Work Motivation as a mediating variable at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. The study population consisted of all employees (50 individuals), who were sampled using census sampling. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS). The results indicate that Servant Leadership and Organizational Culture have a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation and Employee Performance. Furthermore, Work Motivation was found to mediate the influence of Servant Leadership and Organizational Culture on employee performance. These findings underscore the importance of implementing servant-based leadership and a supportive organizational culture to enhance performance within government agencies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a key factor in determining the success of an organization, particularly in government agencies that are oriented towards public service. According to [1], employee performance is the quality and quantity of work results achieved by an employee in carrying out tasks according to their assigned responsibilities. Meanwhile, Robbins and Judge [2] state that performance is a function of the abilities, motivations, and opportunities that individuals have within an organization. Therefore, improving employee performance is a top priority for government agencies, including the Ambon City Transportation Agency.

The Ambon City Transportation Agency plays a strategic role in the provision of transportation and public services, such as

traffic management, public transportation supervision, and improving transportation safety. However, based on field observations, employee performance is not yet optimal. This is evident in delays in completing administrative tasks, a lack of responsiveness in handling public complaints, and suboptimal coordination between departments. Furthermore, some employees still exhibit low levels of discipline, such as arriving late and lacking initiative in their work, which impacts the quality of public services.

One factor influencing employee performance is leadership. In the context of modern organizations, the concept of servant leadership is becoming an increasingly relevant approach. According to Greenleaf [3], servant leadership is a leadership style

that positions the leader as a servant who prioritizes the needs of subordinates and encourages individual development. Research by Liden et al. [4], shows that servant leadership has a positive effect on employee performance by increasing motivation and work engagement. In addition, research by Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) also found that service-based leadership can improve organizational performance through individual development.

However, research results are not always consistent. Research by [5] shows that servant leadership does not have a significant direct effect on employee performance, but rather through mediating variables such as job satisfaction or organizational commitment. The phenomenon at the Ambon City Transportation Agency also shows that the principle of servant leadership has not been fully implemented optimally, as seen from the lack of open communication, limited attention to employee needs, and less than optimal leadership support in completing work.

Besides leadership, organizational culture is also an important factor influencing employee performance. According to [6], organizational culture is a pattern of values and norms that serve as guidelines for behavior within an organization [6]. Research by [7] shows that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on employee performance [7]. Similar results were also stated by Koesmono (2005) who stated that a strong organizational culture can increase employee commitment and performance. However, research by [8] shows that organizational culture does not have a significant effect on employee performance because organizational values have not been fully internalized [8]. This is in line with the phenomenon at the Ambon City Transportation Agency, where there are still undisciplined work habits, low teamwork, and a weak orientation towards public service. On the other hand, work motivation is an important factor influencing employee performance. According to [9], work motivation is the drive that drives someone to

work effectively and efficiently in achieving organizational goals. Research by [10] and Wibowo (2016) shows that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. However, the phenomenon at the Ambon City Transportation Agency shows that there are still employees with varying levels of work motivation, which can be seen from a lack of work enthusiasm, minimal initiative, and a tendency to work only based on orders.

In this study, work motivation is positioned not only as an independent variable but also as a mediating variable that bridges the relationship between servant leadership and organizational culture on employee performance. Theoretically, the use of mediating variables is based on the opinion [11] who states that mediating variables explain the mechanism or process by which an independent variable influences a dependent variable. In this context, servant leadership and organizational culture can increase employee work motivation, which ultimately impacts performance improvement. This is supported by research by Nugroho (2021) and Sari (2022) which found that work motivation can mediate the influence of leadership and organizational culture on employee performance. However, research by Putra (2020) shows that work motivation is unable to significantly mediate the relationship between leadership and employee performance, so the role of mediation still needs further study.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that there is still a significant research gap. This gap is indicated by the differences in research results regarding the influence of servant leadership on employee performance, where some studies show a significant influence, such as Liden et al. [4], while other studies, such as [5], do not find a significant direct influence. In addition, the influence of organizational culture on employee performance also shows mixed results, where [7] found a positive influence, while [8] showed insignificant results. Furthermore, the role of work motivation as a mediating variable has not shown consistent

results, as shown by Nugroho (2021), Sari (2022), and Putra (2020).

Furthermore, most previous research has focused on the private sector or western Indonesia, resulting in relatively limited research on local government agencies in Eastern Indonesia, particularly the Ambon City Transportation Agency. Therefore, this study is crucial for a more comprehensive examination of the influence of servant leadership and organizational culture on employee performance, with work motivation as a mediating variable.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Employee Performance

Employee performance is the work results achieved by individuals in carrying out tasks according to their assigned responsibilities. According to Mangkunegara [1], performance is measured based on the quality and quantity of work, while Robbins and Judge [2] state that performance is influenced by ability, motivation, and opportunity. Performance indicators include work quality, work quantity, timeliness, responsibility, and cooperation.

2.2. Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership proposed by Greenleaf [3] emphasizes that leaders act as servants who prioritize the needs and development of subordinates. Liden et al. [4] explain that servant leadership encompasses empowerment, caring, ethics, and individual development. This leadership style is believed to be able to increase employee motivation and performance through more humanistic relationships.

2.3. Organizational culture

Organizational culture is a system of values and norms that guide the behavior of organizational members. According to [6], organizational culture is formed from the pattern of basic assumptions that develop within the organization, while Robbins [2] emphasizes that organizational culture functions as a system of shared meaning. A strong culture can increase employee commitment and performance.

2.4. Work motivation

Work motivation is a driving force that influences individual behavior at work. According to [9], motivation is the driving force that creates work enthusiasm, while Herzberg (1959) differentiates motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. High work motivation will encourage employees to achieve optimal performance.

2.5. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance

Servant leadership emphasizes the role of the leader as a servant who provides support, attention, and empowerment to subordinates. Leaders who prioritize employee needs will create harmonious working relationships, increase trust, and encourage employee involvement in their work. This condition will have an impact on improving performance, both in terms of quality and quantity of work. In addition, service-oriented leadership can also foster a sense of responsibility and employee commitment to the organization. Research by Liden et al. [4] shows that servant leadership has a positive effect on employee performance, although [5] found that this effect is not always directly significant because it is influenced by other variables.

2.6. The Influence of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance

Organizational culture is a guideline that directs employee behavior at work. A strong culture will create alignment of values and goals between individuals and the organization, so that employees have a clear work direction. Values such as discipline, teamwork, responsibility, and results orientation will encourage employees to work more effectively and efficiently. In addition, organizational culture can also increase employee commitment and loyalty to the organization. Research [7] shows that organizational culture has a positive effect on employee performance, but [8] found that this effect can be insignificant if organizational values have not been optimally internalized by employees.

2.7. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Work Motivation

Servant leadership Servant leadership plays a crucial role in increasing employee work motivation through a humanistic and participatory approach. Leaders who care about the needs of their subordinates, provide support, and open up communication spaces will make employees feel valued and cared for. This can increase both intrinsic and extrinsic employee motivation. Furthermore, empowerment by leaders also encourages employees to develop their potential and contribute more effectively to the organization. Research by [4] and Eva et al. (2019) shows that servant leadership has a positive effect on work motivation, although Jaya (2020) found that this influence can be influenced by organizational conditions and individual employee characteristics.

2.8. The Influence of Organizational Culture on Work Motivation

A positive organizational culture can create a conducive work environment and support increased employee motivation. Clear and consistently implemented organizational values provide direction and purpose in work, fostering a sense of belonging for employees. Furthermore, a culture that encourages collaboration, appreciation, and openness will boost employee morale and satisfaction. Research by Koesmono (2005) and Widodo (2018) indicates that organizational culture has a positive effect on work motivation, but Rahmawati (2021) found that this influence is insignificant if the organizational culture is not fully understood and implemented by employees.

2.9. The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Work motivation is an internal factor that drives individuals to perform optimally. Highly motivated employees demonstrate greater enthusiasm, responsibility, and commitment to their work. This will impact performance improvements, both in terms of quality, quantity, and timeliness of work

completion. Furthermore, work motivation also encourages employees to be more creative and proactive in completing tasks. Research [10] shows that work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance.

2.10. Work Motivation in Mediating Servant Leadership on Employee Performance

Work motivation acts as a mediating variable explaining the mechanism by which servant leadership influences employee performance. Leaders who implement servant leadership will increase employee work motivation through attention, support, and empowerment. Furthermore, high work motivation will encourage employees to work more optimally, thereby improving performance. Thus, the influence of servant leadership on performance is not only direct but also through work motivation as an intermediary variable. Research by Nugroho (2021) shows that work motivation can mediate this relationship, although Putra (2020) found different results.

2.11. Work Motivation in Mediating Organizational Culture on Employee Performance

A strong organizational culture can increase employee work motivation through the internalization of positive organizational values. Employees who understand and accept organizational values will be more motivated to work in accordance with organizational goals. High work motivation will then impact employee performance. Thus, work motivation acts as a variable that strengthens the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance. Research by Sari (2022) shows that work motivation can significantly mediate this relationship.

3. METHOD

The population of this study was all employees of the Ambon City Transportation Agency, both ASN and P3K, with a total of 50 people (39 ASN and 11 P3K) [14]. Because the population was less than 100, this study used census sampling, namely the entire

population was sampled ([13]; [14]). This approach was chosen so that the data was more representative, accurate, and reflected

the actual conditions of employees at the Ambon City Transportation Agency.

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Research Variables

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicator
Servant Leadership (X1)	Employee perceptions of leadership behavior that prioritizes service, empowerment, individual attention, and ethics in leadership, thus encouraging employee motivation and performance ([3]; [4])	1. Empowering subordinates 2. Paying attention to individual needs 3. Behave ethically and fairly 4. Encourage employee self-development
Organizational Culture (X2)	Employee perceptions of the values, norms and rules that apply in the work environment that influence behavior and performance ([6]; [2])	1. Work discipline 2. Cooperation 3. Responsibility 4. Communication 5. Commitment to the organization
Work Motivation (Z)	Internal and external motivation that employees have to work with enthusiasm, achieve targets, and develop themselves ([9]; Herzberg, 1959)	1. Need for achievement 2. Award 3. Responsibility 4. Opportunity to grow
Employee Performance (Y)	The level of achievement of employee work results in accordance with the duties and responsibilities given ([1]; [2])	1. Quality of work 2. Quantity of work 3. Punctuality 4. Responsibility

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Model Structure Testing (Inner Model)

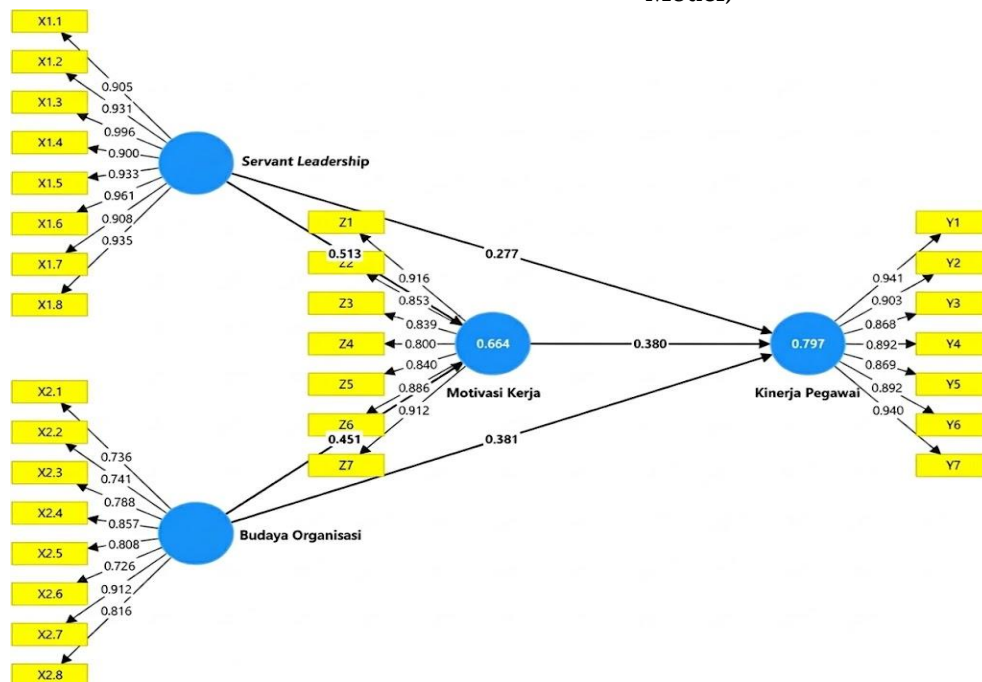


Figure 1. Model Testing Results

Figure 2 displays the results of the SmartPLS model evaluation on the influence of Servant Leadership and Organizational Culture on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as a mediating variable at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. All indicators have a loading factor > 0.70 , indicating good construct validity. The R-Square value shows that 66.4% of the variation in work motivation can be explained by servant leadership and organizational culture, while 79.7% of employee performance is influenced by servant leadership, organizational culture, and work

motivation. Structurally, servant leadership has a positive effect on work motivation (0.513) and employee performance (0.277), organizational culture has a positive effect on work motivation (0.451) and employee performance (0.381), and work motivation affects employee performance (0.380). These results confirm that improving servant leadership and organizational culture will increase work motivation, which in turn has a positive impact on employee performance.

Table 2. R-Square Value

Variables	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Employee Performance	0.797	0.780
Work motivation	0.664	0.645

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

Table 3. Hypothesis Test (Direct Effect)

No	Hypothesis	Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	Direct Influence	SL (X1)→KIN (Y)	0.215	2,345	0.019	Accepted
H2	Direct Influence	BO (X2)→KIN (Y)	0.238	2,614	0.009	Accepted
H3	Direct Influence	SL (X1)→MK (Z)	0.364	3,982	0,000	Accepted
H4	Direct Influence	BO (X2)→MK (Z)	0.341	3,756	0,000	Accepted
H5	Direct Influence	MK (Z)→KIN (Y)	0.401	4,215	0,000	Accepted

Primary Data Source Processed, 2026

4.2.1. Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effect)

Hypothesis I: The Influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance

Servant Leadership (SL/X1) has a positive and significant impact on Employee Performance (KIN/Y). The analysis results show a path coefficient of 0.215, a T-statistic of 2.345, and a P-value of 0.019 (< 0.05), so H1 is accepted. This indicates that increasing effective servant leadership practices can significantly improve employee performance at the Ambon City Transportation Agency.

Hypothesis II: The Influence of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance

Organizational Culture (BO/X2) also has a positive effect on Employee Performance (KIN/Y). The path coefficient of 0.238 with a T-statistic of 2.614 and a P-value

of 0.009 (< 0.05) indicates that H2 is accepted. This indicates that a strong organizational culture can improve employee performance.

Hypothesis III: The Influence of Servant Leadership on Work Motivation

Servant Leadership has a significant effect on Work Motivation (MK/Z) with a path coefficient of 0.364, T-statistic of 3.982, and P-value of 0.000. H3 is accepted, proving that leadership that prioritizes service and employee empowerment substantially increases employee work motivation.

Hypothesis IV: The Influence of Organizational Culture on Work Motivation

Organizational culture has a positive effect on work motivation, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.341, a T-statistic of 3.756, and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). H4 is accepted, indicating that a strong organizational culture

can significantly increase employee work motivation.

Hypothesis V: The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Work motivation is proven to have a significant impact on employee performance with a path coefficient of 0.401, a T-statistic of

4.215, and a P-value of 0.000. H5 is accepted, indicating that work motivation is a key factor that strengthens the interaction between servant leadership and organizational culture in improving employee performance.

4.2.2. Hypothesis Testing (Indirect Effect)

Table 4. Hypothesis Test (Indirect Effect)

H6	Indirect Influence	SL→MK→KIN	0.146	2,587	0.010	Accepted
H7	Indirect Influence	BO→MK→KIN	0.137	2,431	0.015	Accepted

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

Information:

Hypothesis VI: Work Motivation Mediates the Effect of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance

Servant Leadership influences Employee Performance through Work Motivation. The analysis shows an indirect effect coefficient of 0.146 with a T-statistic of 2.587 and a P-value of 0.010 (<0.05), thus H6 is accepted. This finding confirms that Work Motivation significantly mediates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Employee Performance. In other words, the implementation of effective servant leadership practices increases employee work motivation, which in turn drives improved performance at the Ambon City Transportation Agency.

Hypothesis VII: Work Motivation Mediates the Effect of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance

Organizational Culture also has an indirect influence on Employee Performance through Work Motivation. The indirect effect coefficient was recorded at 0.137 with a T-statistic of 2.431 and a P-value of 0.015 (<0.05), thus H7 is accepted. This indicates that Work Motivation functions as a significant mediator between Organizational Culture and Employee Performance. In other words, a supportive organizational culture can increase employee work motivation, which in turn improves employee performance in the agency.

4.3. Discussion

4.3.1. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Work Motivation

This study found that Servant Leadership has a positive effect on employee work motivation at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. Service-oriented leadership practices, empowerment of subordinates, and attention to individual needs have been shown to strengthen employees' internal drive to achieve organizational goals. This finding is consistent with the theory of Bass and Avolio (1994) who stated that a humanistic and inspirational leadership style can increase the intrinsic motivation of subordinates. These results are in line with Wahyuni's (2019) study which found a significant influence of transformational leadership on employee work motivation in government agencies. [4] In their study, they also emphasized that servant leadership contributes to increasing employee commitment and motivation in the public sector.

Eva et al.'s (2019) research demonstrated that servant leadership increases work motivation through trust, social support, and empowerment, all of which are relevant to employee conditions at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed, indicating that the effective implementation of servant leadership resulted in increased work motivation at the study site.

4.3.2. The Influence of Organizational Culture on Work Motivation

Organizational culture has been shown to have a positive influence on employee work motivation. Shared values, strong work norms, and a supportive organizational atmosphere facilitate employee engagement with their work and organizational goals. These results align with Robbins & Judge [2], who stated that a strong organizational culture can shape employee work behavior, commitment, and motivation. Research [7] on government institutions also shows that organizational culture plays a significant role in driving work motivation. Furthermore, a study by Hartnell, Ou & Kinicki (2011) found that an adaptive and supportive organizational culture consistently increases employee motivation and job satisfaction across various organizational contexts. Thus, the second hypothesis is proven, strengthening the evidence that a positive organizational culture drives employee work motivation in government agencies such as the Ambon City Transportation Agency.

4.3.3. The Influence of Servant Leadership on Employee Performance

Servant leadership has also been shown to improve employee performance at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. Leadership practices that pay attention to individual needs, provide support, and empower subordinates contribute to increased productivity, accuracy, and work quality. This finding aligns with Pradana's (2020) research, which shows that transformational leadership has a significant influence on employee performance in government institutions. Bass (1990) asserted that visionary and supportive leaders inspire members to achieve optimal performance. Van Dierendonck's (2011) research also found that servant leadership positively correlates with employee performance through increased work engagement and commitment. This is also consistent with Dirks & Ferrin's (2002) meta-analysis review, which states that a supportive leadership style positively influences individual performance.

Thus, the third hypothesis is confirmed, indicating a positive relationship between servant leadership and performance at the study site.

4.3.4. The Influence of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance

Organizational culture has been shown to have a positive effect on employee performance at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. A harmonious and productive work environment creates organized standards of behavior and work, thereby encouraging improvements in the quality of organizational output. These results align with Kusuma (2019) and Robbins [2], who emphasize that a strong organizational culture can improve employee productivity and performance. Research by O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell (1991) also revealed that the congruence between individual values and organizational culture is positively correlated with work performance. Study [6] even confirms that organizational culture not only provides direction but also facilitates adaptive and performance-oriented working conditions. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is proven, strengthening empirical evidence of the role of organizational culture in improving employee performance in a government context.

4.3.5. The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

The research findings indicate that work motivation has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. Motivated employees tend to demonstrate higher productivity, reliability, and commitment. This finding supports the motivation theory proposed by Mangkunegara [1] and Handayani (2021), which emphasizes motivation as a determining element in the quality of organizational performance. A study [15] also emphasized that motivation is closely related to the level of goal achievement and the quality of work results. Research by Kanfer (1990) shows that individuals with high work motivation tend to behave proactively, are

results-oriented, and are consistent in achieving work targets. Thus, the fifth hypothesis is proven, indicating that work motivation is a key driver of employee performance at the research location.

4.3.6. Mediation of Work Motivation in the Relationship between Servant Leadership and Employee Performance

This study found that work motivation acts as an effective mediator between servant leadership and employee performance. This means that servant leadership practices not only have a direct impact on performance, but their effects are also mediated by increased work motivation. This finding is consistent with research by Putri & Rahman (2020), which emphasized the role of work motivation as a mediator between leadership and employee performance in the public sector. Research by Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) also found that the relationship between leadership style and performance is often mediated by motivational factors such as commitment and participation in work. Thus, the sixth hypothesis is confirmed, confirming that work motivation is an important mechanism in translating the effects of servant leadership into employee performance.

4.3.7. Mediation of Work Motivation in the Relationship Between Organizational Culture and Employee Performance

The findings also indicate that work motivation mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance. A strong organizational culture enhances employee motivation, which in turn improves their performance. This is in line with research by Sari (2021) and Denison (1990), which found that an adaptive and inclusive organizational culture increases commitment and motivation, which then positively impacts performance. A study by Lok & Crawford (2004) also reported that work motivation acts as a mediator between organizational culture and performance

outcomes in the context of government and corporate organizations. Thus, the seventh hypothesis is confirmed, strengthening the role of work motivation as a connecting variable that strengthens the impact of organizational culture on performance. Overall, this study proves that Servant Leadership and Organizational Culture have a direct positive influence on Work Motivation and Employee Performance at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. Furthermore, Work Motivation is proven to be a significant mediating variable in the relationship between servant leadership, organizational culture, and performance. These findings are not only consistent with organizational management and leadership theories but also align with various previous research findings in the context of government and public organizations.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that servant leadership and organizational culture have a positive influence on work motivation and employee performance at the Ambon City Transportation Agency. Service-oriented leadership, empowerment, and individual attention have been proven to increase employee morale and productivity. In addition, a strong, disciplined, and collaborative organizational culture also encourages employees to work more effectively. Furthermore, work motivation plays a significant mediator in the relationship between servant leadership and employee performance, as well as between organizational culture and employee performance. This indicates that work motivation is an important mechanism that bridges the influence of leadership and organizational culture in improving performance. Overall, the combination of implementing servant leadership, strengthening organizational culture, and increasing work motivation has been proven to improve employee performance in government agencies.

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