

Job Satisfaction as a Mediator Between Leadership Style, Work Motivation, and Employee Performance

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Leadership Style; Work Motivation; Job Satisfaction; Employee Performance; Public Sector. Conflict of Interest Statement: The author(s) declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. Copyright © 2026 AMAR. All rights reserved.	Purpose: This study examines the direct effects of leadership style and work motivation on employee performance and the mediating role of job satisfaction among employees of the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, Indonesia. Research Method: A quantitative explanatory design with a cross-sectional survey was employed. Data were collected from 279 employees selected through proportional random sampling from a population of 1,396 employees using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS was applied, including Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), model fit assessment, and hypothesis testing. Results and Discussion: Leadership style and work motivation significantly and positively affect job satisfaction and employee performance. Job satisfaction significantly improves employee performance and mediates the effects of leadership style and work motivation on employee performance. These findings demonstrate that leadership and motivation enhance performance both directly and through increased job satisfaction. Implications: Government institutions should strengthen participative leadership, employee motivation, and satisfaction-oriented human resource practices to improve employee performance. Future studies should examine additional organizational and contextual factors across broader public-sector settings. Originality: This study provides empirical evidence on the simultaneous effects of leadership style and work motivation on employee performance through job satisfaction within a local government context, extending the application of organizational behavior frameworks to Indonesian public-sector institutions.

Introduction

Public organizations are increasingly expected to deliver high-quality public services while maintaining accountability, transparency, and organizational effectiveness. The realization of these expectations depends largely on the quality of human resources, particularly employees who possess high levels of competence, commitment, and performance. In the public sector, employee performance has become one of the primary indicators for measuring the effectiveness of government institutions in achieving strategic objectives and providing excellent public services (Hermansyah et al., 2024). Consequently, improving employee performance has become a strategic priority for local governments, especially in developing countries where bureaucratic reform remains an ongoing agenda. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that employee performance is influenced not only by individual capabilities but also by organizational factors such as leadership style, work motivation, organizational culture, and job satisfaction (Lumenta et al., 2023). Effective leadership

encourages employees to work toward organizational goals, while adequate motivation stimulates higher productivity and organizational commitment. Therefore, understanding the interaction among these variables is essential for developing effective human resource management strategies within government organizations (Wardiyana et al., 2025a).

Recent empirical studies have increasingly highlighted the importance of leadership style and motivation as fundamental determinants of employee performance. Leadership style reflects the ability of leaders to influence, inspire, and guide employees in achieving organizational objectives. Transformational and participative leadership styles, in particular, have been found to foster greater employee engagement, organizational commitment, and work effectiveness. Likewise, employee motivation plays a significant role in enhancing work productivity by encouraging individuals to perform beyond minimum job requirements. Several studies conducted in both public and private organizations reported that employees with higher intrinsic and extrinsic motivation tend to demonstrate stronger work engagement and superior performance outcomes (Manzoor et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the magnitude and direction of these relationships often differ across organizational settings, indicating that contextual factors may influence the effectiveness of leadership and motivational practices. Moreover, recent literature suggests that job satisfaction may explain the mechanism through which leadership style and motivation ultimately influence employee performance, thereby positioning job satisfaction as an important mediating variable within organizational behavior research (Manupapami et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature on leadership, motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance, empirical findings remain inconclusive. Some researchers reported that leadership style has a direct and significant impact on employee performance, whereas others found that its influence becomes insignificant after incorporating job satisfaction as a mediating variable. Similarly, although motivation has generally been recognized as an important predictor of employee performance, several studies have revealed inconsistent findings regarding its direct effect across different organizational contexts, particularly within government institutions characterized by rigid bureaucratic structures and standardized administrative procedures (Masukela et al., 2023). These inconsistencies indicate the existence of a theoretical and empirical gap that requires further investigation. Furthermore, previous studies have predominantly focused on private organizations, educational institutions, or state-owned enterprises, while relatively limited attention has been given to local government institutions in Indonesia. Consequently, further empirical investigation is necessary to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership style and motivation contribute to employee performance through job satisfaction within local government organizations (Sappara et al., 2022).

The implementation of bureaucratic reform in Indonesia has intensified the demand for local governments to improve organizational effectiveness through better governance and enhanced public service delivery. As frontline institutions responsible for implementing national and regional development programs, local governments are required to continuously improve the quality of human resources to meet increasing public expectations. Employee performance has become one of the most critical indicators for evaluating organizational effectiveness because it directly influences service quality, policy implementation, and public trust. In this context, leadership style and employee motivation are recognized as strategic organizational resources capable of improving employees' attitudes and behaviors (Salam & Makmur, 2023). Nevertheless, recent organizational behavior studies emphasize that these relationships are rarely linear, as employees' perceptions of their work environment, particularly their level of job satisfaction, substantially determine whether leadership practices and motivational efforts translate into superior performance (Cortés-Denia et al., 2023a). Therefore, understanding the mediating role of job satisfaction has become increasingly important in explaining employee performance within public organizations.

The empirical context of this study is the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi Province, which continues to strengthen bureaucratic reform and improve the quality of public administration in accordance with the national agenda for good governance. Despite continuous efforts to enhance institutional performance, several organizational challenges remain evident. Differences in leadership approaches among organizational units, varying levels of employee motivation, disparities in work commitment, and unequal service quality indicate that employee

performance has not yet reached its optimal level across all government agencies (Nurfadillah et al., 2024). These conditions suggest that organizational factors influencing employee performance deserve further empirical investigation. Moreover, increasing demands for transparency, accountability, (Pomantow & Kurnia, 2024). Consequently, identifying organizational factors capable of enhancing employee performance has become an urgent priority for the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency as it strives to achieve sustainable public sector performance improvement.

Previous studies have predominantly examined the direct relationships between leadership style, motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance without comprehensively exploring the psychological mechanism underlying these relationships within Indonesian local government organizations (Kristanti et al., 2022). Although numerous studies have confirmed that effective leadership and employee motivation positively influence organizational outcomes, relatively few have investigated the mediating role of job satisfaction in the public sector, particularly within district governments. Furthermore, existing studies frequently employ different leadership dimensions, organizational settings, and analytical approaches, resulting in inconsistent empirical findings that limit theoretical generalization. Accordingly, this study addresses both empirical and theoretical gaps by proposing a mediation model in which job satisfaction functions as an explanatory mechanism linking leadership style and motivation with employee performance (Nhat Vuong et al., 2023). This approach is expected to enrich the organizational behavior literature while providing practical recommendations for policymakers in designing evidence-based human resource management strategies that strengthen employee satisfaction and improve organizational performance within local government institutions.

Although previous studies have substantially contributed to understanding the determinants of employee performance, important research gaps remain. First, many empirical investigations have emphasized the direct influence of leadership style and work motivation on employee performance while paying relatively limited attention to the mediating mechanism through which these variables operate (Cortés-Denia et al., 2023). From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employees are more likely to reciprocate organizational support and effective leadership by demonstrating higher commitment and performance only when they experience satisfaction with their jobs. Likewise, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that motivational factors and organizational conditions simultaneously influence employees' psychological states before affecting performance outcomes (Zhang & Gandham, 2025). Consequently, examining job satisfaction as a mediating variable provides a more comprehensive explanation of employee behavior than direct-effect models alone. Integrating these theoretical perspectives is expected to enrich the human resource management literature, particularly in the context of public sector organizations where organizational structures, administrative procedures, and performance evaluation systems differ considerably from those of private organizations.

Another important gap concerns the contextual limitations of previous studies. Most existing research has been conducted in private companies, manufacturing industries, educational institutions, hospitals, or state-owned enterprises, whereas empirical evidence from Indonesian local governments remains relatively scarce (Putra & Putra, 2024). Local government institutions possess unique organizational characteristics, including hierarchical bureaucratic systems, strict regulatory frameworks, political influences, and standardized administrative procedures, all of which may alter employees' perceptions of leadership effectiveness, motivational practices, and job satisfaction. Therefore, findings generated from private-sector organizations cannot be generalized directly to government institutions (Khan, 2025). In addition, rapid technological transformation, the implementation of electronic government systems, and increasing public expectations for efficient and transparent public services have created new organizational challenges requiring local governments to adopt more adaptive leadership approaches and innovative human resource management practices. These contextual differences justify the need for further empirical investigation within district government organizations, particularly the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency.

The novelty of this study lies in the development of an integrated mediation model that simultaneously examines the relationships among leadership style, work motivation, job satisfaction,

and employee performance within the organizational context of the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency. Unlike previous studies that primarily investigated direct effects, this research proposes that job satisfaction constitutes the principal psychological mechanism through which leadership style and motivation influence employee performance. Furthermore, the study extends the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from Indonesian local government institutions that are actively implementing bureaucratic reform and public service transformation (Yogi et al., 2025). The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by validating organizational behavior theories within the public sector and practically by offering strategic recommendations for policymakers in improving leadership effectiveness, strengthening employee motivation, enhancing job satisfaction, and ultimately achieving sustainable organizational performance. Consequently, this study provides meaningful contributions to both the academic literature and public sector human resource management practices.

Based on the theoretical arguments, empirical phenomena, and research gaps discussed above, this study aims to analyze the effect of leadership style and work motivation on employee performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction among employees of the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the direct effects of leadership style and motivation on employee performance, evaluate their influence on job satisfaction, and determine whether job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationships between these antecedent variables and employee performance. The results are expected to provide empirical evidence that enriches organizational behavior and human resource management literature while supporting local government leaders in designing effective policies for improving employee performance. Ultimately, strengthening employee satisfaction through effective leadership and motivational strategies is anticipated to enhance organizational effectiveness and improve the quality of public services delivered to the community.

Literature Review

Leadership Style

Leadership style represents a set of behavioral patterns through which leaders influence, guide, and motivate employees to achieve organizational objectives. In organizational research, leadership style has been recognized as a critical determinant of employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance because leaders influence how employees perceive organizational goals, respond to challenges, and commit to their responsibilities (Nguyen et al., 2025). In public sector organizations, leadership is particularly important because leaders are not only responsible for managing internal resources but also for promoting accountability, innovation, and effective public service delivery. However, the effectiveness of leadership styles may vary depending on organizational contexts, employee characteristics, and environmental uncertainty.

One of the foundational perspectives explaining leadership effectiveness is Path-Goal Theory developed by House. This theory proposes that leaders enhance employee performance by clarifying goals, removing barriers, and providing appropriate support according to employee needs and situational demands. According to this perspective, leadership behaviors affect employee motivation, job satisfaction, and performance outcomes because leaders influence employees' perceptions of goal attainability and organizational support (Boyd, 2025). The theory identifies four leadership behaviors: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership. Nevertheless, previous studies have indicated that no single leadership style universally produces optimal outcomes, suggesting that leadership effectiveness depends on contextual factors such as organizational structure, task complexity, and employee readiness.

Beyond situational leadership perspectives, Transformational Leadership Theory introduced by Bass and Avolio emphasizes the role of leaders in creating organizational change through vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Transformational leaders encourage employees to transcend individual interests by developing intrinsic motivation, creativity, and organizational commitment (Wen & Harms, 2025). Previous empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that transformational leadership contributes positively to employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance. For example, Wahyu and Suhana

(2025) found that transformational leadership improves employee performance through enhanced organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Similarly, Afota et al. (2024) reported that supportive leadership increases employee engagement, which subsequently contributes to improved performance outcomes.

However, existing literature also reveals several limitations. First, many previous studies have examined leadership style primarily in private-sector organizations, while evidence regarding leadership effectiveness in public sector environments remains comparatively limited. Public organizations operate under unique conditions characterized by bureaucratic procedures, accountability requirements, and continuous demands for service improvement. Therefore, findings derived from private organizations may not fully explain leadership dynamics within public institutions. Second, previous research has often focused on the direct relationship between leadership style and employee performance, while the psychological mechanisms explaining this relationship, such as motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction, require further investigation.

Furthermore, although transactional leadership has been recognized as effective for maintaining stability and ensuring compliance through reward and punishment mechanisms, transformational leadership appears more relevant in environments experiencing rapid change because it encourages innovation, adaptability, and proactive employee behavior (Zolak Poljašević et al., 2025). Nevertheless, previous studies have produced mixed findings regarding which leadership approach generates stronger performance outcomes, indicating the need for further empirical examination in different organizational settings.

Based on these theoretical perspectives and empirical inconsistencies, this study conceptualizes leadership style as the ability of organizational leaders to inspire, support, motivate, and direct employees toward achieving organizational objectives while creating a positive work environment. The theoretical arguments suggest that effective leadership styles enhance employee motivation, commitment, and satisfaction, which ultimately contribute to improved organizational performance. Therefore, this study proposes that leadership style has a significant positive relationship with organizational performance.

Work Motivation

Work motivation refers to the internal and external psychological forces that stimulate employees to initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behavior toward achieving organizational goals (Dwivedula, 2025). Motivation determines the intensity, persistence, and direction of employee effort in performing assigned tasks.

One of the most influential motivation theories is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivator factors (Zhang & Gandham, 2025). Hygiene factors—including salary, supervision, organizational policies, and working conditions prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily increase employee motivation. Conversely, motivator factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and personal growth stimulate higher levels of employee satisfaction and performance.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs also explains that employees are motivated by a progression of physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs (LISA & DRĂGĂLIN, 2025). Public organizations increasingly recognize that employees seek not only financial compensation but also recognition, career development, meaningful work, and opportunities for professional growth.

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) further emphasizes that intrinsic motivation emerges when employees experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness within the workplace. Employees with stronger intrinsic motivation generally demonstrate higher organizational commitment, greater creativity, and superior work performance.

Recent empirical studies indicate that motivated employees exhibit stronger organizational commitment and higher job satisfaction. Research conducted by (Wu et al., 2025) found that intrinsic motivation significantly improves employee performance through enhanced work engagement. Similarly, (AlMarzooqi et al., 2025) demonstrated that work motivation positively influences job satisfaction and organizational performance within public organizations.

Therefore, work motivation is conceptualized as the psychological drive that encourages employees to perform organizational tasks enthusiastically, persistently, and effectively while contributing to organizational objectives.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is generally defined as a positive emotional state resulting from an individual's appraisal of job experiences (Bilobrk et al., 2025). It reflects employees' overall evaluation of their work, including compensation, supervision, promotion opportunities, work environment, and interpersonal relationships.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that job satisfaction is primarily influenced by intrinsic motivational factors, whereas dissatisfaction arises from inadequate hygiene factors. Consequently, organizations seeking to improve employee satisfaction should provide meaningful work, career advancement opportunities, recognition, and supportive leadership rather than relying solely on financial incentives.

According to (Nurbaya et al., 2025), job satisfaction comprises satisfaction with work itself, salary, supervision, promotion opportunities, and co-workers. Employees experiencing high job satisfaction generally demonstrate stronger organizational commitment, lower turnover intentions, reduced absenteeism, and improved job performance.

Numerous empirical studies consistently identify job satisfaction as a mediating variable linking organizational practices and employee performance. (Croitoru et al., 2025) concluded that transformational leadership significantly enhances employee performance through increased job satisfaction. Likewise, (Putri Yasmin & Hartono, 2025) found that motivated employees experience higher job satisfaction, which subsequently contributes to greater organizational effectiveness.

Consequently, job satisfaction is positioned in this study as an intervening variable that mediates the relationships between leadership style, organizational culture, work motivation, and employee performance.

Employee Performance

Employee performance represents the degree to which employees accomplish organizational objectives efficiently and effectively (Dalal et al., 2020). Performance reflects not only work outcomes but also the behavioral processes involved in completing organizational responsibilities.

According to (Kundi et al., 2021), employee performance encompasses work quality, productivity, efficiency, innovation, adaptability, responsibility, and organizational citizenship behavior. In public organizations, employee performance additionally includes accountability, responsiveness, service quality, transparency, and compliance with governmental regulations.

The Performance Theory proposed by Campbell emphasizes that performance results from the interaction between employee ability, motivation, and organizational opportunity. Employees possessing adequate competencies and motivation within supportive organizational environments are more likely to achieve superior performance outcomes.

Recent research consistently demonstrates that leadership, organizational culture, motivation, and job satisfaction significantly influence employee performance. (Kundi et al., 2021) found that leadership style and organizational culture substantially improve employee performance through organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Similarly, (Schwarz et al., 2020) concluded that motivated employees with higher job satisfaction exhibit stronger performance within public organizations.

Based on these theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, employee performance in this study is defined as employees' ability to achieve organizational objectives effectively through high-quality work, productivity, responsibility, service orientation, and organizational commitment.

Research Design and Methodology

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the relationships among leadership style, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance in the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. A cross-sectional survey

approach was adopted by collecting data through structured questionnaires administered at a single point in time (Audretsch & Belitski, 2024).

The population comprised 1,396 civil servants (ASN) and non-civil servant employees working in regional government organizations of Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The sample size was initially determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 283 respondents. To ensure adequacy for covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) analysis, the sample size was further evaluated based on established SEM recommendations. According to Hair et al., the minimum sample size for CB-SEM should consider model complexity, the number of observed indicators, and the number of structural paths, with a recommended range of at least 200 respondents for models with moderate complexity. Furthermore, the sample size of 283 respondents exceeds the minimum requirement and provides sufficient statistical power for estimating model parameters and testing hypothesized relationships. Respondents were selected using proportional random sampling to ensure adequate representation from each organizational unit.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Secondary data were obtained from government reports, institutional documents, books, and relevant scientific publications to support the theoretical framework of the study (Snyder, 2019).

The study involved four variables: leadership style and work motivation as independent variables, job satisfaction as the mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. Measurement indicators were adapted from established theories and previous empirical studies to ensure construct validity and reliability (TomasMHultt, 2021).

Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software. The analysis included descriptive statistics, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), evaluation of Goodness-of-Fit indices (Chi-square, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI), and hypothesis testing through structural path analysis. Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$ (Hair et al., 2025).

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Respondent Identity Description Analysis

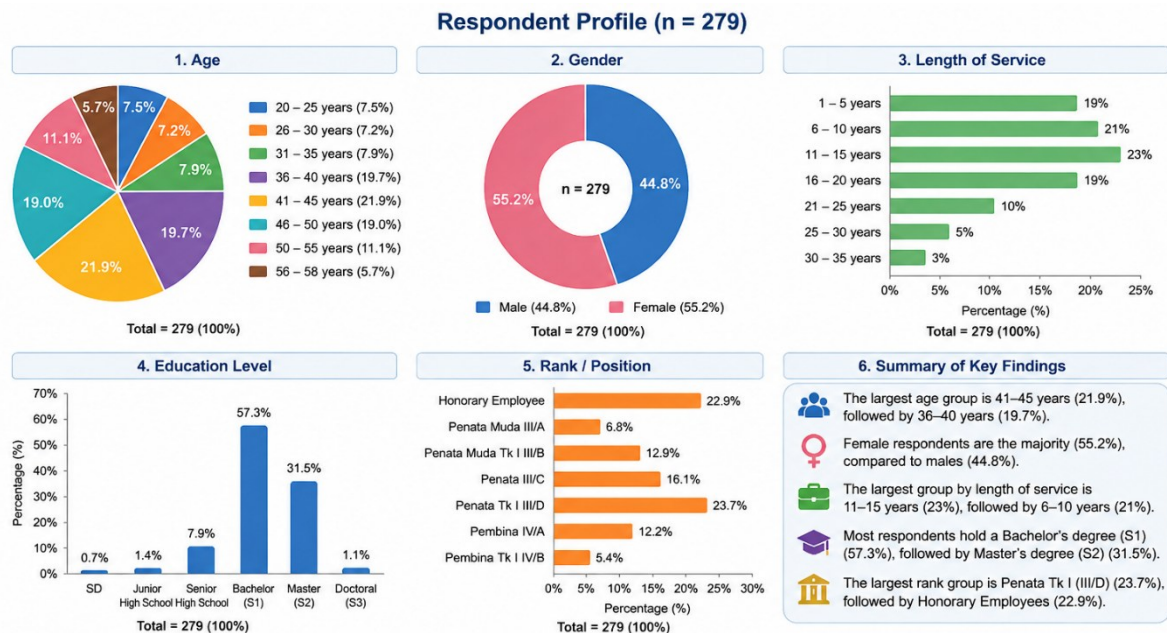


Figure 1. Figure 1. Description of Respondent's Identity

The demographic characteristics of the 279 respondents indicate that the majority of participants were aged 41–45 years (21.9%), followed by 36–40 years (19.7%) and 46–50 years (19.0%), suggesting that most respondents were in their productive and experienced working years. Female respondents (55.2%) slightly outnumbered males (44.8%), reflecting a relatively balanced gender distribution. In

terms of work experience, the largest proportion had 11-15 years of service (23.0%), followed by 6-10 years (21.0%), indicating that most respondents possessed substantial organizational experience. Regarding educational attainment, the majority held a Bachelor's degree (57.3%), while 31.5% had a Master's degree, demonstrating a relatively high educational profile among employees. Based on employment status and rank, the largest group consisted of Penata Tk. I (III/D) employees (23.7%), followed by honorary employees (22.9%), illustrating a diverse representation of both civil servants and non-civil servant personnel. Overall, these demographic characteristics indicate that the respondents provide a representative profile of employees within the Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, thereby supporting the reliability of the study findings.

Validity and Reliability Test

Table 1. Summary of Validity and Reliability Results

Construct	Number of Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Result
Leadership Style	20	0.759-0.845	0.972	Valid & Reliable
Work Motivation	30	0.755-0.862	0.982	Valid & Reliable
Job Satisfaction	25	0.701-0.845*	0.978	Valid & Reliable
Employee Performance	20	0.759-0.865*	0.978	Valid & Reliable
Overall Sampling Adequacy	—	KMO = 0.945	—	Excellent
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	—	p < 0.001	—	Significant

Source: Compiled by the authors from primary survey data (2024) using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 and AMOS 22.

The results of the validity and reliability tests demonstrate that the measurement model used in this study has excellent psychometric properties. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.945 and the significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$) confirm that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis and that the observed variables are sufficiently correlated to form latent constructs. Furthermore, all questionnaire items exhibited factor loadings greater than the recommended threshold of 0.40, indicating strong convergent validity. These findings suggest that each indicator adequately represents its intended construct and supports the structural relationships proposed in the research model (Hair et al., 2025).

The reliability analysis further confirms the robustness of the measurement instrument. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranged from 0.972 to 0.985 across all constructs, substantially exceeding the minimum acceptable value of 0.70, which indicates excellent internal consistency among the measurement items. Consequently, the constructs of Leadership Style, Human Resource Quality, Employee Motivation, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance can be considered both valid and highly reliable for subsequent Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Overall, these results provide strong empirical evidence that the research instrument is appropriate for testing the proposed hypotheses (Hair et al., 2025).

Confirmatory Test Analysis

Table 2. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Goodness of fit	Cut-off	Results in the model	Information
P value/prob	≥ 0.05	0.061	Good
Chi Square	Small and insignificant	1615.578	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.014	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.842	Not Good
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.829	Not Good
CMIN/Df	≤ 2	1.057	Good
TLI	> 0.95	0.993	Good
CFI	> 0.95	0.993	Good
Chi square tabel	1621.082		

Source: Compiled by the authors from primary survey data (2024) using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 and AMOS 22

Based on the results of the second Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the measurement model demonstrated an acceptable overall fit and satisfied the recommended goodness-of-fit criteria. The Chi-square significance value ($p = 0.061$) exceeded the 0.05 threshold, the Chi-square statistic (1615.578) was lower than the critical value (1621.082), and the RMSEA value (0.014) indicated an excellent model fit. Furthermore, the CMIN/DF, TLI, and CFI indices met the recommended cut-off values, while the GFI and AGFI indices were classified as marginal. Overall, the CFA results confirm that the proposed measurement model is valid and appropriate for subsequent structural model and hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2025).

Research Hypothesis Testing

Table 3. Results of Research Hypothesis Testing

Hipotesis	Path analysis model	Estimate	S.E.	P Value	Information
H1	X1 Leadership Style → Y2 Job Satisfaction	0.390	0.054	***	Accepted
H2	X2 Employee Motivation → Y2 Job Satisfaction	0.389	0.056	***	Accepted
H3	X1 Leadership Style → Y1 Performance	0.170	0.055	0.002	Accepted
H4	X2 Employee Motivation → Y1 Performance	0.266	0.057	***	Accepted
H5	Y2 Job Satisfaction → Y1 Performance	0.366	0.067	***	Accepted
H6	X1 Leadership Style → Y2 Job Satisfaction → Y1 Performance	0.143	0.032	***	Accepted
H17	X2 Employee Motivation → Y2 Job Satisfaction → Y1 Performance	0.142	0.033	***	Accepted

Source: Compiled by the authors from primary survey data (2024) using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 and AMOS 22

The hypothesis testing results indicate that all proposed relationships in the structural model are statistically significant and supported. Leadership style and employee motivation both have significant positive effects on job satisfaction ($B = 0.390$, $p < 0.001$; $B = 0.389$, $p < 0.001$, respectively). In addition, leadership style ($B = 0.170$, $p = 0.002$), employee motivation ($B = 0.266$, $p < 0.001$), and job satisfaction ($B = 0.366$, $p < 0.001$) each exert significant positive influences on employee performance. The mediation analysis further demonstrates that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationships between leadership style and employee performance (indirect effect = 0.143, $p < 0.001$), as well as between employee motivation and employee performance (indirect effect = 0.142, $p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that improving leadership practices and employee motivation enhances job satisfaction, which subsequently contributes to higher employee performance. (Hair et al., 2025).

Discussion

This study examined the direct and indirect effects of leadership style and employee motivation on employee performance through job satisfaction among employees of the Sidenreng Rappang Regency Government. The study involved 279 respondents, representing a questionnaire return rate of 90.25%. The findings were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software.

1. The Effect of Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction

The results indicate that leadership style has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction. Employees perceived that their supervisors adopted a participative leadership approach by encouraging communication, providing clear directions, and involving employees in discussions related to organizational goals and work responsibilities. These practices contributed to higher levels of job satisfaction. The strongest perception was associated with supervisors providing clear work guidance, whereas opportunities for discussing the organization's vision and mission received comparatively lower evaluations. These findings suggest that leaders should further encourage employee participation in strategic organizational discussions. The results support leadership theory, which emphasizes that leadership style reflects how leaders influence, direct, and motivate employees to achieve organizational objectives (Wardiyan et al., 2025). Furthermore, the findings are consistent with previous studies by (Angelita et al., 2021) of which reported that leadership style positively influences job satisfaction.

2. The Effect of Employee Motivation on Job Satisfaction

The findings also demonstrate that employee motivation significantly improves job satisfaction. Government employees generally reported high motivation, particularly regarding job security, recognition, career development, and opportunities for personal growth. Although social interaction among employees received relatively lower evaluations, overall motivation was considered satisfactory. These findings imply that organizations should continue providing a secure working environment while strengthening teamwork and interpersonal relationships to further enhance employee satisfaction. This result supports (Yenny Utami et al., 2020) Armstrong's (2016) motivation theory, which states that higher employee motivation leads to greater job satisfaction. It also confirms previous findings reported by (Mathori et al., 2022).

3. The Effect of Leadership Style on Employee Performance

The study found that leadership style has a significant positive influence on employee performance. Effective leadership enables employees to better understand work procedures, receive appropriate guidance, and perform their duties more efficiently, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance. According to (Athus Nicolas Worumi et al., 2024), leadership is an interaction between leaders and followers aimed at achieving organizational goals, while Hasibuan (2019) argues that leadership style influences employee enthusiasm, satisfaction, and productivity. The present findings support these theoretical perspectives and are consistent with previous studies conducted by (Nova Puspitaningrum et al., 2022).

4. The Effect of Employee Motivation on Employee Performance

Employee motivation was also found to have a significant positive effect on employee performance. Employees with higher motivation demonstrated better work outcomes and greater productivity in carrying out their responsibilities. Motivated employees tend to complete their tasks more effectively and contribute more actively to organizational success. These findings are consistent with the theories proposed by (Rosmaini & Tanjung, 2019), which emphasize motivation as a key determinant of employee productivity and performance. Similar results have also been reported by (Evant et al., 2018).

5. The Effect of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance

The results further reveal that job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Employees who experience higher levels of job satisfaction tend to demonstrate better work performance because they are more committed, motivated, and engaged in their responsibilities. These findings indicate that improving employee satisfaction is essential for enhancing organizational performance within the Sidenreng Rappang Regency Government. This result is consistent with previous studies conducted by (Safani Sitorus, 2021).

6. The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Relationship between Leadership Style and Employee Performance

The mediation analysis confirms that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between leadership style and employee performance. Effective leadership enhances employees' job satisfaction, which subsequently contributes to improved performance. Therefore, leadership influences employee performance not only directly but also indirectly through increasing employees' satisfaction with their jobs. These findings support the study conducted by (Siswanto et al., 2020), although they differ from (Jameel & Ahmad, 2020), who reported that job satisfaction did not significantly mediate the relationship between leadership style and employee performance.

7. The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Relationship between Employee Motivation and Employee Performance

The findings also demonstrate that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between employee motivation and employee performance. Employees with higher motivation experience greater job satisfaction, which subsequently leads to improved work performance. This result suggests that organizations should not only focus on increasing employee motivation but also create working conditions that enhance job satisfaction in order to maximize performance outcomes. The findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by (Tambunan et al., 2025), which similarly reported the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between motivation and employee performance.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that leadership style and employee motivation are significant determinants of job satisfaction and employee performance among employees of the Regional Government of Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis confirms that leadership style positively influences job satisfaction and employee performance, while employee motivation also exerts a significant positive effect on both outcomes. Furthermore, job satisfaction itself has a direct and significant impact on employee performance, indicating that employees who experience higher levels of satisfaction tend to perform their duties more effectively and efficiently.

The findings also reveal that job satisfaction serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationships between leadership style and employee performance, as well as between employee motivation and employee performance. This suggests that supportive leadership practices and strong employee motivation not only improve performance directly but also enhance performance indirectly by increasing employees' satisfaction with their work. Consequently, fostering a positive work environment through effective leadership and motivational strategies is essential for improving organizational performance in the public sector.

Overall, the study provides empirical evidence that improving leadership quality and strengthening employee motivation are strategic approaches to enhancing employee performance in local government institutions. These findings contribute to the development of human resource management practices by emphasizing the importance of employee satisfaction as a mechanism through which leadership and motivation influence organizational outcomes. Therefore, government organizations should prioritize participative leadership, employee development, recognition systems, and motivational programs to sustain high levels of job satisfaction and performance.

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