

## The mediating role of work motivation: The effect of leadership, workload, and reward on employee performance

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### ABSTRACT

Employee performance is considered key in achieving company goals, reflecting commitment, dedication and contribution to the company's vision. Motivation, as the main driver in the work environment, is a key factor in motivating employees to contribute optimally. Effective leaders have the ability to influence employee behavior. Heavy workloads, especially for drivers and helpers, can have a negative impact on employee motivation. Companies are advised to seek an optimal balance in workload to ensure employee well-being and productivity. Recognition and reward strategies are expected to maintain high quality employees. The aim of this research is to analyze the relationship and influence of leadership, workload and rewards on employee performance with work motivation as a mediating variable at liquefied petroleum gas distributors in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. This research used a cluster sampling technique with a total of 105 respondents. SPSS software was used to analyze the data. The findings demonstrate leadership, workload and rewards have a positive effect on employee performance, however work motivation cannot mediate leadership, workload and rewards on employee performance.

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### 1. Introduction

The close relationship between employee motivation and performance plays an important role in achieving company success. Employee performance is a key factor in determining the direction and results of a company. Employee performance not only includes individual achievements but also the employee's ability to make a significant contribution to the company's success (Zhenjing et al., 2022). In this context, performance is not just routine work but reflects the level of commitment, dedication, and contribution of employees in achieving the company's vision and mission. High performance creates synergy between individual and organizational goals, which drives the company to achieve its goals effectively (Abubakar et al., 2019).



Motivation, as the main driving factor in the work environment, has attracted great attention in various studies because of its close relationship with productivity. The higher the level of individual motivation, the greater the enthusiasm invested in their work (Taris et al., 2020). This motivation appears when individuals feel a need for it. Motivation drives collective work enthusiasm at the company level. In an effort to achieve company goals, motivation is key to motivating employees to contribute optimally, using all their potential and skills (Wijayanto & Riani, 2021). By providing strong motivation to all staff, companies can significantly increase their work productivity (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020).

An effective leader in a company is one who is able to provide innovative ideas to encourage the growth and progress of the organization, and has the ability to provide direction and be responsible for the efforts of all team members in achieving company goals. Without a competent leader, achieving company goals, growth, and progress will be difficult to overcome. Therefore, a leader's ability to influence employee behavior effectively is very important (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). Leadership is defined as a person's ability to influence subordinates so that they are willing to carry out the leader's orders even if they are not always liked by subordinates. The role of leadership in liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) distributors is one factor that can influence employee motivation and performance. If the distributor leader has communication skills, there is a good understanding of employee needs and the ability to motivate (Decuyper & Verdorfer, 2022). However, observations have shown that leaders' efforts to increase motivation have not been successful. This is caused by a lack of effective communication, lack of understanding of the problems faced by employees, or ineffective motivation methods. If corrective action is not taken quickly, the company's goal of improving employee performance will be hampered, which has the potential to threaten its continuity in the future (Păunescu & Argatu, 2020).

In a corporate environment, each employee experiences a different workload level. Workload levels can vary depending on the complexity of work procedures, job demands, and levels of responsibility (Leicht-Deobald et al., 2022). Therefore, the speed of task completion and the productivity of each employee tend to differ according to their individual workload levels. A workload level that is too high can result in excessive stress, whereas a workload level that is too low can result in lack of stimulation (Leicht-Deobald et al., 2022). Based on the results of the interviews, heavy workloads, such as those faced by drivers and helpers in delivering LPG gas cylinders, can negatively impact employee motivation. Physically demanding workloads, time pressure, and high customer demand can cause employees to feel stressed and exhausted. Therefore, companies must find an optimal balance between excessive and low workloads to ensure employee welfare and productivity.

Companies are expected to maintain high-quality employees by using strategies to recognize the contributions made by employees to the company in the form of incentives or awards (Newman et al., 2024). Rewards are a form of compensation, both in the form of cash and non-monetary benefits, given to employees as compensation for their contribution to the company (Nnubia, 2020). By receiving rewards, employees feel appreciated and believe that the company supports their career development (Chan & Hooi, 2023). Providing benefits and facilities for workers at the Sidoarjo LPG distributor is a form of reward given to employees. Even though these rewards are important in improving employee welfare, observations show that they have not succeeded in motivating employees.

The Sidoarjo LPG distributor was chosen as the object of research because of its important role in the LPG distribution in the Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Interesting internal dynamics, such as diverse leadership styles, high workloads, and varied reward systems, provide important insights into the work motivation of drivers and helpers. Interesting phenomena include differences in leadership styles, the high workload experienced by drivers and helpers, variations in the reward system, and diverse employee motivation. In this study, there is a gap

with the previous research conducted by ElHaffar et al. (2020) which shows that leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation. However, Shao et al. (2019) showed that leadership has no significant effect on employee performance through work motivation. Research on workload has shown mixed results. Juru and Wellem (2022) stated that workload has a negative and significant effect on employee performance, with work motivation as a mediator. However, research by Jia et al. (2022) shows that workload has no significant effect on employee performance, with work motivation as a mediating variable. In addition, there are differences in the findings on the topic of rewards. Research conducted by Martahadi et al. (2024) showed that rewards have a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation. However, Napitupulu and Gultom (2023) show that rewards have no significant effect on employee performance through work motivation. Therefore, it is important to discuss the mediating role of work motivation on leadership, workload, and rewards on employee performance.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1. Literature Review

#### 2.1.1. Leadership

Leadership is a crucial aspect of organizational management that aims to influence and direct employee behavior toward achieving organizational goals (Coura et al., 2022). Leadership is defined as the process of influencing a group of people to achieve a common goal (Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021). Added that leadership involves creating a vision of the future, developing strategies to achieve that vision, and motivating and inspiring others to work toward that vision. In the context of organizational implementation, effective leadership can improve employee performance and the organization as a whole. Turay et al. (2019) stated that good leadership can create a positive work environment, increase job satisfaction, and reduce employee turnover rates. Therefore, understanding and implementing effective leadership is critical to the long-term success of an organization (Andrej et al., 2023).

#### 2.1.2. Workload

Workload is an important aspect of human resource management that can affect individual performance and productivity. According to Inegbedion et al. (2020), workload is defined as the amount of responsibility and work that an employee must complete within a certain period. Excessive workload can lead to stress and decreased work quality, while too light a workload can reduce employee motivation (Savitri & Widajati, 2023). Overall, workload is a complex and multifaceted variable that requires a holistic management approach. Understanding the factors that influence workload and how they interact with work demands and control can assist organizations in designing better strategies to improve employee performance and well-being (Babic et al., 2020).

#### 2.1.3. Reward

Reward is an important aspect of human resource management that focuses on how companies incentivize employees to improve their motivation and performance. Rewards can be divided into various forms, such as financial incentives, recognition, and career development opportunities (Chan & Hooi, 2023). The main purpose of a reward system is to motivate employees, increase job satisfaction, and ultimately boost organizational performance. According to Hoyos and Serna (2021), the main indicators of an effective reward system include several factors. First, there is a clear and fair compensation structure, in which employees are rewarded according to their contributions and work results. Second is transparent and objective performance

appraisals, where rewards are given based on fair and accurate evaluations. Third, the diversity of reward forms, including bonuses, allowances, and other facilities, can be tailored to the needs and preferences of employees.

#### **2.1.4. Employee Performance**

Performance is a standard that is used as evidence that someone has tried their best, and this effort is an indicator of someone who has the potential to be developed to assume greater responsibilities such as quality of work, speed and accuracy of work, initiative in work, and ability to work together (Oetomo, 2020). Employee performance involves the quality and quantity of output, attendance at work, accommodating and helpful nature, and timeliness of output (Ngwa et al., 2019). According to Hristov and Chirico (2019), performance indicators are as follows: First, the ability to use knowledge, methods, techniques, and equipment used to carry out tasks as well as the experience and training gained. Second, the ability to complete tasks, functions, and responsibilities as employees. Last, the ability to cooperate with others, motivating employees to negotiate with others.

#### **2.1.5. Work Motivation**

Ferraro et al. (2020) state that motivation is a force from within or outside humans to encourage enthusiasm to pursue certain desires and goals. Driver and Tocher (2019) states that motivation encourages a person to carry out a certain activity; therefore, motivation is often defined as a factor driving a person's behavior. Based on the above opinions, it can be concluded that motivation is an impulse that causes a person to perform an action to achieve a certain goal. According to Bushi (2021), work motivation is the drive of employees to do their jobs and moves them to achieve personal and organizational goals. Indicators of work motivation according Kadyirov et al. (2024): First, hard work, carrying out activities with fully owned capabilities. Second, future orientation, interpreting what will happen in the future and future plan. Third, task orientation, which is always oriented towards quality work results. The last, there are efforts to advance, carrying out activities to obtain a goal.

## **2.2. Hypothesis Development**

### **2.2.1. Positive Effect of Leadership on Employee Performance**

Leadership is often defined as the style or approach applied by managers in leading a team or organization, which affects the way team members interact and work. Based on this, it is expected that an effective leadership style can improve employee performance because good leaders are able to provide the direction, motivation, and support required by employees to achieve their goals (Yousofi & Rahimzad, 2024). In addition, the purpose of leadership itself is not only to manage and motivate but also to create a conducive work environment and support individual development (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019). Previous research has found that leadership has a positive effect on employee performance (Baig et al., 2021).

**H<sub>1</sub>: Leadership Has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance**

### **2.2.2. Negative Effect of Workload on Employee Performance**

Workload is often understood as the amount of work that an employee must complete in a given time (Inegbedion et al., 2020). If the workload exceeds the capacity to be managed effectively, it can result in increased stress and burnout, which in turn can reduce employee performance (Sandrin et al., 2019). Previous research indicates that high workloads are often associated with reduced productivity and work quality as well

as decreased employee satisfaction (Holland et al., 2019). Previous studies conducted by Ninawati (2020) and Shan et al. (2022) showed that workload has a negative effect on employee performance.

**H<sub>2</sub>: Workload Has a Negative Effect on Employee Performance**

**2.2.3. Positive Effect of Reward on Employee Performance**

Rewards in an organizational context can be understood as incentives provided to employees to increase their motivation and performance. According to Judge et al. (2020), an effective reward system can increase job satisfaction and encourage employees to work harder, which ultimately leads to improved individual performance. Rewards given fairly and in accordance with employee contributions are expected to reduce turnover rates and increase productivity. Dewi et al. (2019) showed that the implementation of a good reward system is positively related to improving employee performance. This is consistent with the results of Pandey (2020), who revealed that adequate rewards can reduce work stress and increase motivation, thus having a direct impact on improving employee performance. Additionally, Nsiah et al. (2022) and Newman et al. (2024) shows that rewards have a positive effect on employee performance.

**H<sub>3</sub>: Reward has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance**

**2.2.4. Positive Effect of Leadership on Work Motivation**

Effective leadership can be defined as a leadership style that inspires and motivates team members to achieve common goals by increasing engagement and job satisfaction (Wu et al., 2022). Supportive leadership is often considered a key element in creating a positive and productive work environment, which, in turn, can increase employee motivation (Cooke et al., 2019). Effective leadership can have an impact on employee work motivation because good leaders can provide clear direction, support, and constructive feedback, which is expected to reduce stress and increase morale (Wen et al., 2019). In a previous study by Khan et al. (2020) shows that good leadership has a positive effect on increasing work motivation, which has an impact on overall individual and team performance.

**H<sub>4</sub>: Leadership Has a Positive Effect on Work Motivation**

**2.2.5. Positive Effect of Workload on Work Motivation**

Workload is often considered a key factor that affects employee motivation. High workloads can lead to decreased motivation if not managed properly, as employees may feel overwhelmed and unable to meet the demands of their jobs (Maslach & Leiter, 2022). Conversely, workloads organized in a fair and balanced manner can increase work motivation, as employees feel that the tasks they are given are in line with their abilities and resources (Sherf et al., 2019). Previous research, such as by Jermsittiparsert et al. (2021), shows that appropriate workloads can increase job satisfaction and productivity, which ultimately have a positive impact on individual and team performance.

**H<sub>5</sub>: Workload Has a Positive Effect on Work Motivation**

**2.2.6. Positive Effect of Reward on Work Motivation**

Reward in the context of work motivation can be interpreted as an important element that affects the level of enthusiasm and involvement of employees in their work. According to Manzoor et al. (2021), effective rewards can increase intrinsic motivation and motivate employees to achieve improved performance. According to Dewi et al. (2019), adequate rewards play an important role in increasing job satisfaction and

productivity because they can motivate employees to work harder when they feel rewarded through various forms of rewards such as bonuses, promotions, or recognition. Providing the right reward can increase job satisfaction and lead to improved employee performance (Eryanti & Daga, 2023). A previous study conducted by Nurofik and Yuliana (2022) showed that rewards have a positive effect on employee work motivation.

**H<sub>6</sub>: Reward Has a Positive Effect on Work Motivation**

#### **2.2.7. Positive Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance**

Work motivation can be defined as the internal drive that drives individuals to achieve goals and perform tasks effectively (Aliyyah et al., 2021). Work motivation can encourage a person to take the initiative and show creativity while completing tasks. This often results in more innovative solutions and an improved overall performance (Rauter et al., 2019). High work motivation can have an impact on employee performance, because if employees feel motivated, they tend to be more productive, committed, and perform better (Mehmood et al., 2024). This is in line with previous research conducted by Chien et al. (2020), which shows that work motivation has a positive effect on improving employee performance in various industrial sectors.

**H<sub>7</sub>: Work Motivation Has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance**

#### **2.2.8. The Mediating Role of Work Motivation on The Effect of Leadership to Employee Performance**

Work motivation can be interpreted as an important factor that influences leadership effectiveness in improving employee performance. Effective leadership has the potential to positively impact work motivation, which in turn can affect overall employee performance (Tinh et al., 2024). Good leadership is often considered the key to creating a work environment that supports and motivates employees to achieve organizational goals. A high work motivation can reduce turnover rates and increase employee productivity (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Previous research by Torlak et al. (2014) and Rivaldo (2021) showed that leadership focusing on employee work motivation can significantly improve performance, suggesting a strong mediating relationship between work motivation and employee performance.

**H<sub>8</sub>: Leadership Has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as Mediation**

#### **2.2.9. The Mediating Role of Work Motivation on The Effect of Workload to Employee Performance**

According to de Reuver et al. (2021), high workload significantly affects employee performance. High work motivation increases employees' ability to deal with workloads, which in turn increases their performance. As motivation provides additional energy and focus, it has a significant influence on employee performance (Li et al., 2020). Work motivation also increases commitment and job satisfaction, and instills a positive perception of their role. There is a correlation between work motivation and employee performance. Motivated employees work more effectively to achieve goals and make meaningful contributions to the organization (Savitri & Widajati, 2023). Previous research by Jin et al. (2024) and Martahadi et al. (2024) has shown that work motivation as mediation has a positive effect on workload and employee performance.

**H<sub>9</sub>: Workload has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as Mediation**

### 2.2.10. The Mediating Role of Work Motivation on The Effect of Reward to Employee Performance

Work motivation can affect employee performance in an organization. High work motivation is often related to effective rewards, which in turn affect individual productivity and performance (Ngwa et al., 2019). Rewards based on performance achievement can increase motivation and encourage employees to achieve better results (Dewi et al., 2019). A previous study by Kumari et al. (2021) showed that work motivation positively mediates the relationship between rewards and employee performance.

**H<sub>10</sub>: Reward Has a Positive Effect on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as Mediation**

### 2.3. Research Framework

Based on the visual representation depicted in Figure 1, this study explored the complex relationships and potential mechanisms underlying these influences by introducing an intermediary variable, specifically work motivation. This intermediary role of work motivation is critical for understanding the influence of independent variables on employee performance. This study aims to provide nuanced insights into the dynamics between leadership, workload, rewards, and work motivation and, ultimately, employee performance in an organizational context.

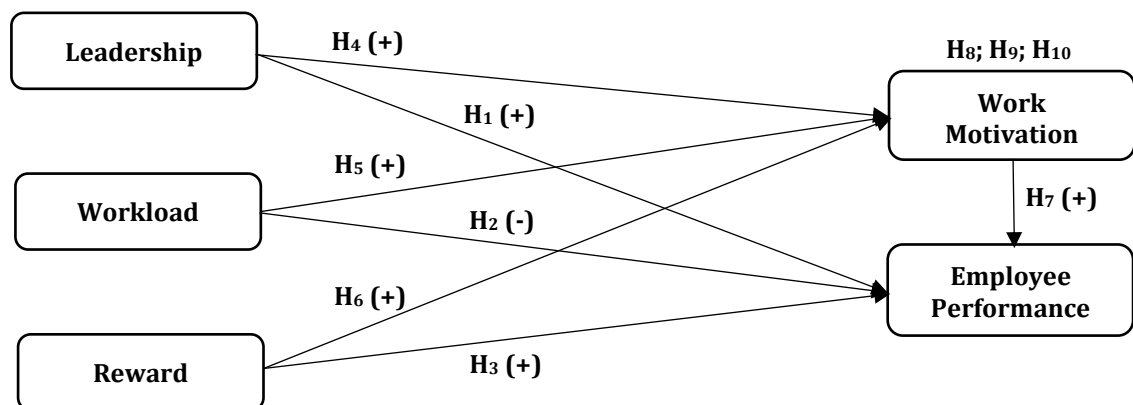


Figure 1. Research Framework

## 3. Research Method

### 3.1. Population and Sampling Method

The population in this study were all drivers and helpers who worked at three LPG distributors in Sidoarjo, Indonesia: Sinar Biru Persada Company, Surya Bumi Nusantara Company, and Berkah Restoe Iboekoe Company. Total population of this study comprised of 105 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed in 105 sheets, all of which were used for data processing. The sampling method used in this research was cluster sampling with grouping based on Sidoarjo, Candi, and Buduran District, Indonesia. Cluster sampling is sampling where the population is divided into several groups or clusters. This method was chosen so that researchers can obtain broader and more representative data from various regions, so that research results can be obtained

### 3.2. Data Collection Method

This study used a questionnaire to obtain data from respondents. The questionnaire was given to the respondents directly and contained several indicator statements that

represented each research variable. Each statement indicator was measured using a five-point Likert scale. Leadership contains ten indicators (Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021), workload contains four indicators (Rindorindo et al., 2019), rewards contains six indicators (Yang & Ai, 2020), employee performance contains six indicators (Geralt et al., 2020), and work motivation contains six indicators (Ferraro et al., 2020).

### 3.3. Data Analysis Method

Validity testing is very important for determining which research statements are true and which are not. The validity analysis of each statement was carried out by calculating the correlation between the assessment score per statement in the questionnaire and the total score using the corrected item-total correlation method (Patrick, 2019). This method was applied in the validity test, resulting in a  $r_{\text{count}}$  that was compared with the  $r_{\text{table}}$ . If  $r_{\text{count}}$  is greater than  $r_{\text{table}}$ , the indicator is considered valid (Patrick, 2019). The formula for the  $r_{\text{table}}$  is  $df = n - 1 = 105 - 1 = 104$ , so  $r_{\text{table}} = 0.195$ . Reliability testing refers to the Cronbach's alpha value, with a reliable test having a value greater than 0.6 (Baba et al., 2019). Hypothesis testing was performed by comparing the p-value with the significance coefficient, where the hypothesis was influential if the p-value was smaller than the significance coefficient. The p value used is 0.05, so the hypothesis is declared accepted if the significance value is less than 0.05 (Di Leo & Sardanelli, 2020).

The Sobel test was used to assess the significance of the mediation effects in the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable, considering the role of a mediating variable. This test helps determine whether the mediating variable mediates the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Abu-Bader & Jones, 2021). Thus, the Sobel test is useful for understanding how and why one variable affects the other through a mediator. The Sobel test can be used to assess the calculated z-values. If the calculated z-value is  $> 1.96$ , then it can be concluded that the mediating variable can mediate between the dependent and independent variables.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Reliability Test

Table 1 show the results of reliability tests for each variable. From the test results, the data obtained can be declared reliable, this is proven by the Cronbach's alpha value of leadership, workload, reward, employee performance and work motivation greater than 0.6.

**Table 1. Reliability Test Result**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Leadership	0.663
Workload	0.661
Reward	0.695
Work Motivation	0.721
Employee Performance	0.853

Source: Primary Data Processed (2024)

### 4.2. Validity Test

Table 2 shows the results of validity testing by comparing the calculated  $r_{\text{count}}$  with the predetermined  $r_{\text{table}}$ . Based on these calculations, it can be concluded that all indicators representing each variable are valid. This can be proven by the value of  $r_{\text{count}}$  greater than the  $r_{\text{table}}$  of 0.195.



**Table 2. Validity Test Result**

Indicator	Leadership	Workload	Reward	Employee Performance	Work Motivation
L 1	0.427				
L 2	0.364				
L 3	0.468				
L 4	0,376				
L 5	0.591				
L 6	0.527				
L 7	0.300				
L 8	0.504				
L 10	0.225				
L1 0	0.274				
W 1		0.670			
W 2		0.762			
W 3		0.538			
W 4		0.258			
R 1			0.677		
R 2			0.749		
R 3			0.548		
R 4			0.558		
R 5			0.546		
R 6			0.671		
EP 1				0.770	
EP 2				0.849	
EP 3				0.684	
EP 4				0.629	
EP 5				0.841	
EP 6				0.840	
WM 1					0.570
WM 2					0.599
WM 3					0.580
WM 4					0.570
WM 5					0.547
WM 6					0.514

Source: Primary Data Processed (2024)

### 4.3. Hypothesis Test

Table 3 shows the results of direct hypothesis testing. Based on the results of hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that only the second hypothesis is rejected (workload does not negatively affect employee performance because the coefficient value is positive). The first, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh hypotheses in this study are proven to be accepted because the coefficient value is positive and the significance value is less than 0.05.

**Table 3. Hypothesis Test Result**

Hypothesis	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Leadership → Employee Performance	0.264	0.096	0.233	2.743	0.007
Workload → Employee Performance	0.416	0.097	0.366	4.290	0.000
Reward → Employee Performance	0.205	0.079	0.218	2.581	0.011
Leadership → Work Motivation	0.239	0.079	0.265	3.018	0.003
Workload → Work Motivation	0.247	0.080	0.272	3.093	0.003
Reward → Work Motivation	0.171	0.065	0.228	2.613	0.010
Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.283	0.067	0.384	4.224	0.000

Source: Primary Data Processed (2024)

#### 4.4. Sobel Test

The Sobel test can be used to assess the calculated z-values. If the calculated z-value is  $> 1.96$ , then it can be concluded that the mediating variable can mediate between the dependent and independent variables. In Table 4, it can be concluded that work motivation does not mediate the relationship between leadership, workload, and reward on employee performance because the Z value is  $< 1.96$ .

**Table 4. Hypothesis Test Result**

Variable	Z Value
Leadership	1.623
Workload	1.635
Reward	1.537

Source: Primary Data Processed (2024)

#### 4.5. Discussion

##### 4.5.1. The Effect of Leadership on Employee Performance

The first hypothesis shows that leadership has a positive effect on employee performance. The better the quality of leadership in a company, the higher the performance achieved by employees. Effective leadership can direct, motivate, and inspire employees to achieve their goals (Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021). Additionally, in various industries, good leadership focuses on developing employees, providing constructive feedback, and creating supportive and inclusive work environments (Turay et al., 2019). High-quality leadership can increase employee engagement, strengthen loyalty, and maximize employee potential, which ultimately has a positive impact on organizational performance (Kamel, 2019). The results of this study were consistent with those of a previous study conducted by Baig et al. (2021) and Liu et al. (2023), who show that effective leadership plays a positive role in improving employee performance in various industrial sectors.

##### 4.5.2. The Effect of Workload on Employee Performance

The second hypothesis indicates that workload positively impacts employee performance, suggesting that as employees' workload increases, so does their performance. An optimal workload can motivate employees to work more effectively and efficiently by enhancing their productivity and ability to overcome challenges (Fragouli & Ilia, 2019). In addition, in a dynamic work environment, a controlled workload can help develop employees' skills through practical experience and boost their motivation to complete tasks (Kuijpers et al., 2020). A well-managed workload can generate positive feedback, enhance employee performance, and strengthen employees' commitment to the organization (Shammout, 2021). An appropriate workload can also minimize stress and burnout, while improving job satisfaction and overall performance. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, which demonstrates that an optimal and measurable workload significantly enhances employee performance (Hancock & Matthews, 2019).

##### 4.3.3. The Effect of Reward on Employee Performance

The third hypothesis shows that rewards have a positive effect on employee performance. The higher the reward provided by the company, the higher the employee performance achieved. This is because rewards can increase employee motivation by providing financial and nonfinancial incentives that value their contributions to the company (Chan & Hooi, 2023). Additionally, rewards play an important role in improving productivity and work quality by increasing job satisfaction, reducing turnover, and

encouraging employees to achieve company targets (Dewi et al., 2019). Reward can provide positive feedback, increase employee satisfaction, and encourage operational efficiency and creativity. In addition, effective rewards can reduce unwanted costs, such as the costs of recruiting and retraining new employees (Ghani et al., 2022). The results of this study are in line with those of previous research (Manzoor et al., 2021), which showed that appropriate rewards can result in significant improvements in employee performance.

#### **4.3.4. The Effect of Leadership on Work Motivation**

The fourth hypothesis shows that leadership has a positive effect on motivation. This means that the better the quality of leadership applied in an organization, the higher is the level of employee motivation. Effective leadership can provide clear direction, emotional support, and appropriate incentives to motivate employees (Nielsen et al., 2019). Effective leadership can create a positive work environment in which employees feel motivated to achieve organizational goals and continuously improve their performance (Mareny, 2021). This provides positive feedback that can increase job satisfaction and employee loyalty and reduce turnover and absenteeism (Turay et al., 2019). The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020), which show that effective leadership plays a positive role in increasing work motivation.

#### **4.3.5. The Effect of Workload on Work Motivation**

The fifth hypothesis shows that workload has a positive effect on work motivation. The higher the workload given to employees, the higher their work motivation. This is due to the fact that a well-structured and managed workload can provide challenges that increase employees' desire to achieve certain goals (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021). Employees who are given workloads that match their capacity tend to feel more motivated because they feel trusted and have clear responsibilities (Sherf et al., 2019). In addition, a well-managed workload can increase employee engagement and help employees develop new skills through more diverse and challenging work experiences (Wibawa et al., 2021). An optimal workload can also increase employees' sense of achievement and job satisfaction, which in turn motivates them to work harder and contribute more to the organization. The results of this study are in line with those of previous studies conducted by Tentama et al. (2019) which shows that workload has a positive effect on work motivation.

#### **4.3.6. The Effect of Reward on Work Motivation**

The sixth hypothesis shows that rewards have a positive effect on work motivation. The higher the reward given to employees, the higher the work motivation they feel. This is because rewards can encourage and recognize employees' efforts and contributions, thereby increasing their sense of satisfaction and enthusiasm (Manzoor et al., 2021). In addition, rewards focus on ensuring that employees feel valued and motivated by providing financial incentives, non-financial rewards, recognition, and career development opportunities (Dewi et al., 2019). Rewards can provide positive feedback; increase job satisfaction, loyalty, and employee productivity; and reduce turnover rates (Irbor & Okolie, 2019). The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Kalogiannidis (2021), who showed that rewards play a significant positive role in increasing employee work motivation in various industrial sectors.

#### **4.3.7. The Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance**

The seventh hypothesis of this study confirms that work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance. As stated by Huang (2021), work motivation can spur employees to work harder, innovate, and achieve better goals. This is also supported by Carvalho et al. (2020), who state that motivational factors, such as rewards and recognition, can increase job satisfaction and employee performance. Research conducted by Maryani et al. (2021) shows that there is a positive effect between work motivation on employee performance.

#### **4.3.8. The Effect of Leadership on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as Mediation**

The eighth hypothesis states that work motivation does not mediate the relationship between leadership and employee performance, which means that the effect of leadership on employee performance is not through work motivation variables. Effective leadership can directly improve employee performance without having to increase motivation. For example, leaders who have good communication skills and provide clear directions can directly influence employees' work results without having to increase their motivation first (Braun et al., 2019). In addition, effective leadership may focus more on operational efficiency and compliance with procedures, which, in turn, improves employee performance directly. This result-oriented leadership may rely more on supervision and control than on efforts to increase work motivation. Furthermore, performance-oriented leadership may use external incentives or other control mechanisms that directly affect employee performance, without requiring increased work motivation as a mediator (Wallo et al., 2024). For example, a clear reward and punishment system can motivate employees to work harder without increasing their intrinsic motivation. The results of this study are in line with those of the previous research conducted by Nguyen (2020), who also found that leadership can directly affect employee performance without going through work motivation variables. This study confirms that, in some contexts, the direct effect of leadership on employee performance is more significant than the mediation of work motivation.

#### **4.3.9. The Effect of Workload on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as Mediation**

The ninth hypothesis shows that work motivation does not mediate the relationship between workload and employee performance. This means that changes in workload do not significantly affect employee performance through changes in work motivation. In this context, although workload may change, it is not sufficiently strong to increase or decrease employee performance through changes in work motivation. This finding could be attributed to several factors. First, a high workload may be more likely to induce stress than increase motivation, which in turn may hinder employee performance (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2021). Second, workloads that are too light may also not provide enough challenges to motivate employees, resulting in stagnant performance (Maslach & Leiter, 2022). Third, in certain industries, such as transportation and logistics, fluctuating workloads may not have a consistent impact on work motivation because other factors, such as working conditions, compensation, and managerial support, have a greater influence (Rasheed et al., 2020). The results of this study are in line with those of previous studies conducted by Handayani (2022), who also found that work motivation is not a significant mediating variable in the relationship between workload and employee performance.

#### 4.3.10. The Effect of Reward on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as Mediation

The Tenth Hypothesis shows that work motivation does not mediate the relationship between rewards and employee performance. This means that although the rewards given to employees increase, this does not have direct implications for improving employee performance through work motivation. In other words, rewards are not strong enough to influence work motivation, which impacts employee performance (Forson et al., 2021). The reasons for this finding may vary. One reason may be that rewards alone are not sufficient to drive employees' intrinsic motivation. While rewards can provide a short-term motivational boost, other factors such as the work environment, company policies, and support from superiors may play a greater role in influencing work motivation (Ashraf, 2019). Furthermore, in certain industries, rewards may not be the main factor influencing performance. For example, in the transportation and logistics industry, factors such as customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and service quality may have more influence on employee performance than financial or non-financial rewards (Alkaf et al., 2021). The results of this study are in line with those of previous research conducted by Siswanto (2021) who also found that work motivation is not always a significant mediator between rewards and employee performance.

## 5. Conclusion

Effective leadership, well-managed workloads, and appropriate rewards can motivate and improve employee performance positively and significantly. Good leadership provides direction, motivation, and support to employees, allowing them to work effectively and efficiently. A balanced workload ensures that employees do not experience excessive fatigue, which can affect their productivity and work quality. Meanwhile, the right rewards such as recognition, incentives, and compensation can motivate employees to achieve maximum work results. Overall, the combination of these three factors creates a work environment that is conducive to achieving optimal performance. This study has several limitations. Further research is expected to refine the indicators of questions in the questionnaire and adapt to the object of research, so that it can describe the intent and purpose of further research. It is expected to add other variables that are still related to factors related to employee performance to produce a broader picture and more accurate results and use a larger sample.

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