

The Effect of Leadership on Employee Performance with Motivation as a Mediation Variable (Case Study at the Department of Education and Culture of Demak Regency)

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Abstract. Figure explains that the phenomenon of fluctuations in the attendance rate of the Demak Regency Education and Culture Office employees in 2025, which is seen from the decrease in the percentage of attendance in certain months such as April and October compared to the beginning of the year, indicates the existence of unstable dynamics in the performance and work discipline of the apparatus. This condition indicates that employee performance is not only influenced by administrative factors, but is also closely related to the quality of leadership applied within the organization. Leadership that is unable to provide examples, direction, and motivation has the potential to reduce work enthusiasm, which ultimately has an impact on attendance and performance. Suboptimal leadership can weaken the intrinsic motivation of employees in carrying out their obligations consistently. Therefore, this roll call attendance phenomenon is relevant to the thesis title "The Influence of Leadership on Employee Performance with Motivation as a Mediating Variable", because work motivation is a key factor that bridges the influence of leadership on employee performance, one of which is reflected in the level of discipline and work attendance. Employee performance is also influenced by leadership as research has shown states that leadership variables have a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Therefore, in an institution, a leader plays a crucial role and bears full responsibility for its sustainability. The institution's success or failure in achieving its goals depends heavily on the role of its leader. In determining a leadership style, each leader must be able to adapt to the situation and environmental conditions they face. Based on their individual characteristics, each leader tends to develop a unique leadership style in managing their institution. Furthermore, research was conducted by states that motivation has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Work motivation can be understood as a determining factor for employees in carrying out their work, namely a force originating from within a person that provides energy, direction, and maintains the work behavior carried out. Work motivation is also seen as encouragement given by management to employees, thereby fostering a desire to work voluntarily without any element of coercion. In addition, work motivation is the process of providing encouragement and external influence so that employees are able to complete tasks according to applicable

regulations. Furthermore, work motivation reflects an employee's consideration in acting as well as the perseverance shown to achieve predetermined goals.

Keywords: *Department; Leadership; Motivation; Performance.*

1. Introduction

In an era of increasingly fierce business competition, organizations are required to optimize all available resources to survive and thrive. According to the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), sustainable competitive advantage can only be achieved if an organization possesses valuable, rare, difficult-to-imitate, and non-substitutable resources, one of which is human resources (HR). HR plays a strategic role because they not only carry out operational functions but also drive innovation, create added value, and determine the direction of achieving the organization's vision. High employee performance contributes to increased productivity and the achievement of company goals, while low performance can hinder organizational effectiveness. Therefore, understanding and managing the factors that influence employee performance is a fundamental aspect of modern human resource management.

The success of an organization depends heavily on the performance of its employees. (Rumawas, 2011) defines performance as the achievements or work results achieved by individuals or groups. (Rivai, 2013) explains that performance is a comprehensive picture of a company's condition during a certain period, reflecting the results or achievements influenced by operational activities in utilizing existing resources. Every organization or company continuously strives to improve employee performance in order to achieve predetermined goals. These efforts can be carried out in various ways, such as organizing education and training programs, providing appropriate compensation, motivating employees, creating a conducive work environment, and enforcing work discipline. Improving employee performance is a crucial factor for a company's progress, especially for surviving in dynamic and uncertain business competition. Therefore, management faces significant challenges in managing and improving HR performance, as the quality of employee performance determines the success of achieving goals and the company's sustainability.

Figure Recapitulation of Attendance at the 2025 Demak Regency Education and Culture Office Employee Roll Call

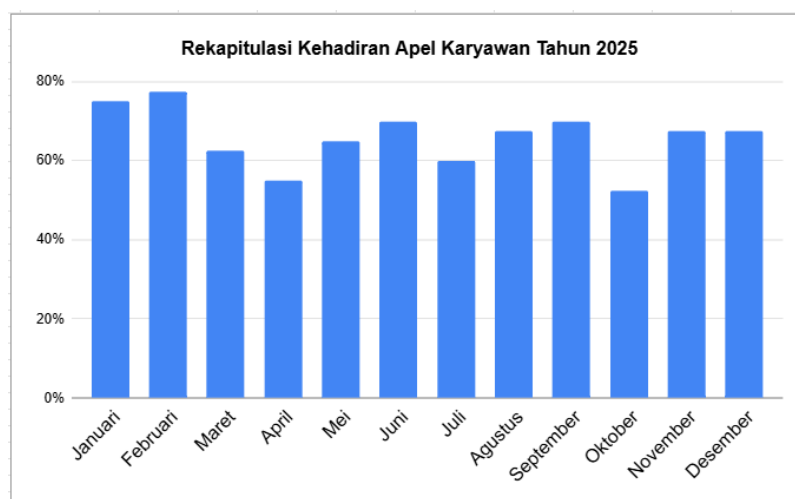


Figure explains that the phenomenon of fluctuations in the attendance rate of the Demak Regency Education and Culture Office employees in 2025, which is seen from the decrease in the percentage of attendance in certain months such as April and October compared to the beginning of the year, indicates the existence of unstable dynamics in the performance and work discipline of the apparatus. This condition indicates that employee performance is not only influenced by administrative factors, but is also closely related to the quality of leadership applied within the organization. Leadership that is unable to provide examples, direction, and motivation has the potential to reduce work enthusiasm, which ultimately has an impact on attendance and performance. Suboptimal leadership can weaken the intrinsic motivation of employees in carrying out their obligations consistently. Therefore, this roll call attendance phenomenon is relevant to the thesis title "The Influence of Leadership on Employee Performance with Motivation as a Mediating Variable", because work motivation is a key factor that bridges the influence of leadership on employee performance, one of which is reflected in the level of discipline and work attendance.

Employee performance is also influenced by leadership as research has shown. (Khoiri & Rahma Oktavia, 2019) states that leadership variables have a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Therefore, in an institution, a leader plays a crucial role and bears full responsibility for its sustainability. The institution's success or failure in achieving its goals depends heavily on the role of its leader. In determining a leadership style, each leader must be able to adapt to the situation and environmental conditions they face. Based on their individual characteristics, each leader tends to develop a unique leadership style in managing their institution.

Furthermore, research was conducted by (Satrya & Putra, 2023) states that motivation has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Work motivation can be understood as a determining factor for employees in carrying out their work, namely a force originating from within a person that provides energy, direction, and maintains the work behavior carried out. (Anggrainy et al., 2018). Work motivation is also seen as encouragement given by management to employees, thereby fostering a desire to work voluntarily without any element of coercion. (Diana et al., 2018). In addition, work motivation is the process of providing encouragement and external influence so that employees are able to complete tasks according to applicable regulations. (Risman & Asdar, 2022). Furthermore, work motivation reflects an employee's consideration in acting as well as the perseverance shown to achieve predetermined goals. (Zebua et al., 2022).

2. Research Methods

This research is a causal study. Causal study research is used to determine the influence or relationship between two or more variables. In other words, the researcher's intention is to try to find the influence of leadership on employee performance with motivation as a mediating variable. Viewed from the analytical approach, this study uses a quantitative

method. Quantitative research is research that obtains data in the form of numbers, using analytical methods to become a calculation tool for the data that has been obtained (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The type of data in this study is primary data. The primary data collection technique in the study is by distributing a number of statements through a questionnaire filled directly by respondents through the Google Forms platform by respondents, namely employees at the Demak Regency Education and Culture Office. The data analysis technique in this study uses partial least squares - structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the suitability of the research model and is used to test the level of validity of the research hypothesis. The SmartPLS 3.0 program is used in this study as software to process and test the research data. Partial least squares (PLS) model testing is used to test the validity, reliability, and accuracy of the model and to test the influence of one variable on another variable.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Validity and Reliability Test

a. Validity Test

The convergent validity test criteria are declared valid if the t-statistics value is > 1.96 and the p-value is < 0.05 . The results of the outer loading values for each research variable indicator are presented in Table below:

Table Convergent Validity Test Results

Variables	Indicator	<i>T Statistics</i>	P Values	Information
Leadership	KE1	38,801	0.000	Valid
	KE2	18,055	0.000	Valid
	THE 3RD	22,588	0.000	Valid
	KE4	25,686	0.000	Valid
Motivation	MO1	14,179	0.000	Valid
	MO2	16,148	0.000	Valid

	MO3	10,725	0.000	Valid
	MO4	9,491	0.000	Valid
	MO5	11,413	0.000	Valid
Performance	KK1	24,796	0.000	Valid
Employee	KK2	28,342	0.000	Valid
	KK3	22,696	0.000	Valid
	KK4	11,533	0.000	Valid
	KK5	15,568	0.000	Valid

Source: Processed data, 2026.

Based on table above The results show that the outer loading values of all indicators used in the study have met the requirements for validity in convergent validity testing, namely that all have t-statistics values > 1.96 or p-values for each indicator in the variables studied < 0.05 . Therefore, it can be concluded that the data can be analyzed further because it has met the criteria.

b. Reliability Test

The Cronbach's Alpha test criteria are declared reliable if each variable has a Cronbach's Alpha value > 0.7 . The results of the reliability test for each research variable are presented as follows:

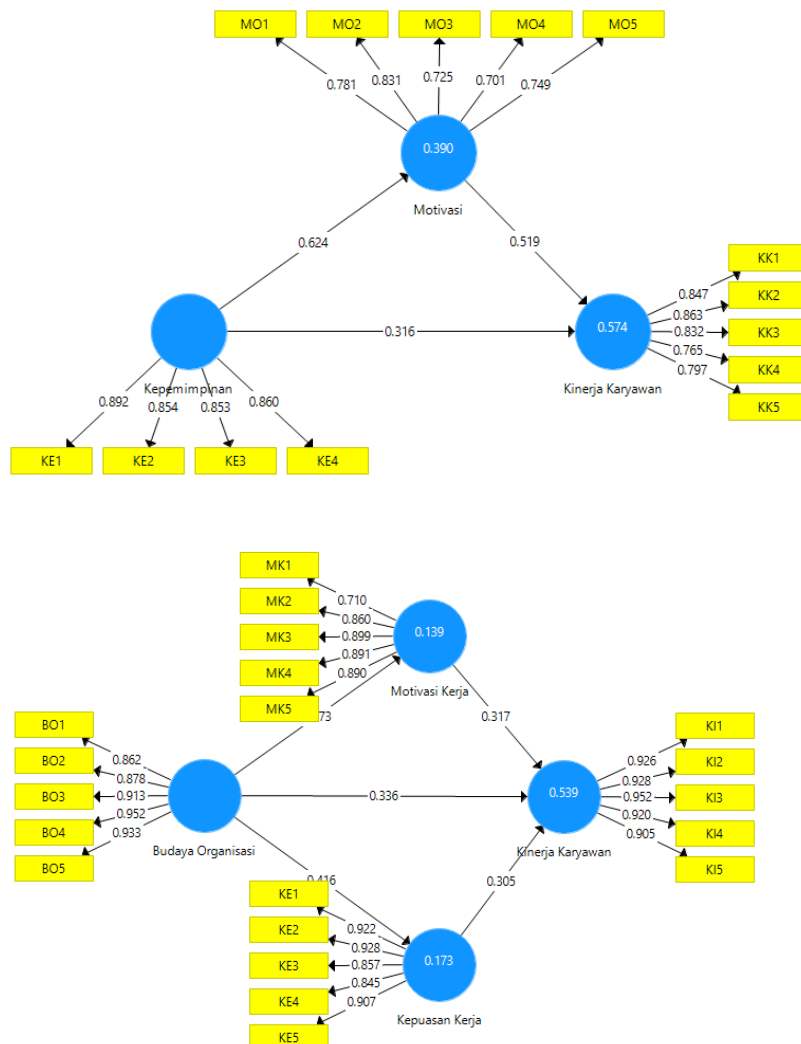
Table Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Cut Value	Information
Organizational culture	0.888	0.7	Reliable

Motivation	0.815	0.7	Reliable
Employee performance	0.879	0.7	Reliable

Source: Processed data, 2026.

Table shows that the Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables of organizational culture, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance are all greater than 0.7. Thus, all variables in this study are declared reliable.



Source: Data processed 2026

c. Figure Outer Model of Research Variables

Based on the visual display of the SEM-PLS estimation graph, all indicators for each construct exhibit outer loading values greater than 0.7, thus meeting the standard for good indicator reliability. This indicates that each indicator consistently represents the latent variable and is suitable for use in subsequent analysis stages. The following presents the overall results of the outer model testing, which includes convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability:

Table Loading Factor

Variables	Indicator	<i>T Statistics</i>
Leadership	KE1	0.892
	KE2	0.854
	THE 3RD	0.853
	KE4	0.860
Motivation	MO1	0.781
	MO2	0.831
	MO3	0.725
	MO4	0.701
	MO5	0.749
Employee performance	KK1	0.847
	KK2	0.863
	KK3	0.832

KK4	0.765
KK5	0.797

Source: Processed data, 2026

d. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is a measurement model that assesses items based on the relationship between item scores and construct values. The convergent validity index is determined using the loading factor and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) parameters. In confirmatory research, an indicator can be declared valid if it has a loading factor value above 0.7. Meanwhile, in explanatory research, an indicator is considered suitable for use if the loading factor value is above 0.6. While in the initial stages of scale development, a cross-loading value of 0.5 is considered invalid (Hair et al., 2012). The loading factor results are presented in the following table:

Table Convergent Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cut-off Value AVE		Cut-off Value
Leadership	KE1	0.892			
	KE2	0.854	0.6	0.748	0.5
	THE 3RD	0.853			
	KE4	0.860			
Motivation	MO1	0.781			
	MO2	0.831			
	MO3	0.725	0.6	0.576	0.5
	MO4	0.701			

	MO5	0.749			
Performance	KI1	0.847			
Employee	KI2	0.863			
	KI3	0.832	0.6	0.675	0.5
	KI4	0.765			
	KI5	0.797			

Source: Processed Data (2026)

Based on the table, the loading factor values show good results because all indicators have met the data validity criteria, namely more than 0.6. Next, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test was conducted with a minimum value limit of 0.5, and the results of the AVE processing using SmartPLS are presented in the following table:

Table Construct Reliability and Validity Results on SmartPLS

Variables	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	<i>rho_A</i>	<i>Composite Reliability Model</i>	<i>Average Variance (AVE)</i>
Leadership	0.888	0.889	0.922	0.748
Motivation	0.815	0.819	0.871	0.576
Employee performance	0.879	0.880	0.912	0.675

Source: Processed Data (2026)

Based on the validity test results in the table, the leadership, motivation, and employee performance variables have met the convergent validity criteria because the loading factor values are above 0.6 and 0.7. Furthermore, the AVE value has also met the requirements because it is greater than 0.5, while discriminant validity is assessed through cross-loading between indicators and other constructs. The test results show that the correlation of each

construct with its respective indicator is higher than the correlation of the indicator with other constructs. Therefore, all indicators in this study can be declared to have met the data validity requirements.

3.2. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is used to ensure that each construct in the research model measures a distinct concept and does not overlap with other constructs. Discriminant validity testing can be conducted through three main approaches, namely the Fornell-Larcker Criterion which compares the square root of the AVE in each construct with the correlation between constructs, where the square root of the AVE must be higher than the correlation value between constructs for discriminant validity to be considered good; Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) which assesses the ratio between correlations across different constructs and the correlation of indicators within the same construct, with an HTMT value of less than 0.85 as a sign that the constructs can be clearly distinguished; and Cross-Loading which evaluates whether each indicator has the highest factor loading value on the corresponding construct compared to other constructs, because indicators that have higher loading values on other constructs indicate discriminant validity problems. These three approaches are used to ensure that each construct in the research model can be distinguished appropriately, so that the analysis results become more valid and reliable. In discriminant validity testing, a construct can be declared to have good discriminant validity if the Fornell-Larcker Criterion value is more than 0.7. The results of the discriminant validity test using the AVE value for each research variable are shown as follows:

Table Fornell-Lacker Discriminant Validity Test Results

	Organizational culture	Employee performance	Work motivation
Leadership	0.865		
Employee performance	0.640	0.822	
Motivation	0.624	0.716	0.759

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

Table regarding the results of the discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker approach shows that all variables in this study have discriminant validity values, most of which are

above 0.70. Based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion value in Table, the highest value is shown by the leadership variable, namely 0.865. Based on Table, each question indicator has a more appropriate loading factor value on its respective latent construct, so that each indicator can represent the latent construct well and indicates that all constructs have met the discriminant validity criteria, so that the variables in this study can be stated to have valid discriminant validity values.

Table Discriminant Validity Value (Cross Loading)

Construct	Leadership	Employee performance	Motivation
KE1	0.892	0.542	0.512
KE2	0.854	0.554	0.554
THE 3RD	0.853	0.529	0.505
KE4	0.860	0.585	0.581
KK1	0.550	0.847	0.611
KK2	0.514	0.863	0.581
KK3	0.549	0.832	0.619
KK4	0.538	0.765	0.537
KK5	0.476	0.797	0.590
MO1	0.515	0.581	0.781
MO2	0.536	0.553	0.831
MO3	0.355	0.552	0.725

MO4	0.435	0.506	0.701
MO5	0.509	0.526	0.749

Source: Processed data (2026)

3.3. Construct Reliability

Table Construct Reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Leadership	0.888	0.922
Employee performance	0.879	0.912
Motivation	0.815	0.871

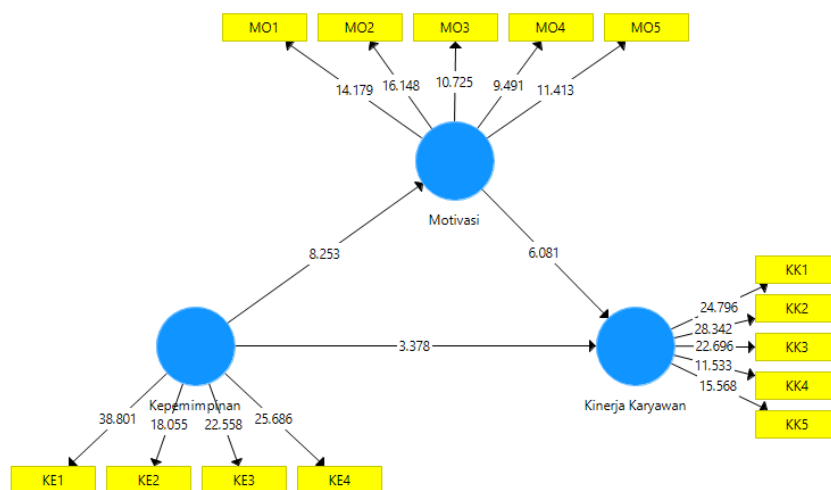
Source: Processed data (2026)

Based on Table 4.8 regarding construct reliability, all variables in this study demonstrated a good level of reliability. The Leadership variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.888 and a Composite Reliability of 0.922, so the measurement instrument can be declared consistent and trustworthy. The Employee Performance variable showed very high reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.879 and a Composite Reliability of 0.912, so this variable has very strong internal consistency. Furthermore, the Motivation variable also met the reliability criteria with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.815 and a Composite Reliability of 0.871, indicating that its measurement is consistent and reliable. Overall, all variables have met the reliability criteria and can be used in the next stage of analysis.

a. Inner Model Testing

Inner model testing is conducted to assess the relationships between latent variables in the research model, including the direct and indirect influences between constructs. This stage begins with a goodness of fit test, which assesses the model's ability to represent the research data. One commonly used measure of goodness of fit is the R-squared (R^2), which indicates how much the independent variables are able to explain variation in the dependent variable. The higher the R^2 value, the better the model's ability to explain the data. Furthermore, a

multicollinearity test is necessary to ensure there is no excessive correlation between the independent variables in the model, as this condition can interfere with the accuracy of the regression coefficient estimation. Multicollinearity testing is generally performed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value, with a VIF value above 5 or 10 indicating a multicollinearity problem that needs to be addressed. Through goodness of fit and multicollinearity testing, researchers can ensure that the inner model used is valid and reliable in explaining the relationships between research variables. Figure 4.2 shows the results of the SEM-PLS model estimation using the bootstrapping technique to obtain the values used in testing the inner model.



Figure

b. Inner Model

• Goodness of Fit Test

The model goodness-of-fit test aims to assess how much variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. The Goodness of Fit test includes the R Square (R^2) and Q-Square tests. The higher the R^2 value, the better the model's ability to explain the relationship between variables. The R Square assessment criteria indicate that the model is classified as strong if the R^2 value is more than 0.75. Furthermore, the model is categorized as moderate if the R^2 value is more than 0.50. Meanwhile, the model is considered weak if the R^2 value is more than 0.25. The results of the determination coefficient test in this study are presented in Table 4.9.

- **R Square**

Mark *R Square* used to assess the contribution of the reward, punishment, job satisfaction, and employee performance variables to the research model. The assessment criteria indicate that an R-square value of 0.75 is considered strong, a value of 0.50 is considered moderate, and a value of 0.25 is considered weak.

Table R-Square Test Results

Variables	<i>R Square</i>	<i>R Square Adjusted</i>
Employee performance	0.574	0.565
Motivation	0.390	0.383

Source: Processed data, 2026.

Based on the results of the determination coefficient test in Table, the R Square value for the employee performance variable is 0.574 or 57.4% and motivation is 0.390 or 39% indicating a moderate relationship.

The next test of goodness of fit is the Q-Square test. A Q-Square value greater than 0 indicates that the research model has predictive relevance, while a Q-Square value less than 0 indicates that the research model lacks predictive relevance. The results of the Q-Square calculation are presented as follows:

$$Q\text{-Square} = 1 - \{(1 - R_{21}) \times (1 - R_{22})\}$$

$$= 1 - \{(1 - 0.574) \times (1 - 0.390)\}$$

$$= 1 - \{(0.461) \times (0.287)\}$$

$$= 1 - 0.132307$$

$$= 0.867693$$

Based on the research results above, the Q-Square value was obtained as 0.867693. This value means that 86.76% of the diversity in the research data can be explained by the research model. Meanwhile, the remaining 13.24% is explained by factors outside the research model. It can be concluded that this research model has a good goodness of fit value.

- **Multicollinearity Testing**

Table VIF Inner Model

	Leadership	Employee performance	Motivation
Leadership		1,638	1,000
Employee performance			
Motivation		1,638	

Source: Processed data, 2026.

The test results in the Inner Model VIF Table indicate that the research model does not experience high multicollinearity problems between constructs. The testing criterion used is Inner VIF Values greater than 1.0. The highest Inner VIF value recorded was 1.638, which is in the relationship between leadership and motivation variables on employee performance. Thus, all constructs in this study can be declared free from multicollinearity problems. This finding indicates that the independent variables in the model do not interfere with or distort each other's influence. This condition also strengthens the possibility of model estimation with a better level of accuracy. Therefore, the results of the structural analysis can be interpreted more confidently.

- **Evaluation of Effect Size**

The effect size test is used to determine the magnitude of the influence of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs in the research model. The criteria for assessing effect size are based on the f-square value, with a value of 0.02 categorized as having a small influence, a value of 0.15 as having a moderate influence, and a value of 0.35 as indicating a large influence. The results of the effect size test in this study are presented in Table 4.11.

Table Effect Size Test Results

	Leadership	Employee performance	Motivation
Leadership		0.640	0.624

Employee performance			
Motivation		0.519	

Source: Processed data, 2026.

Based on the effect size test results in Table, the f-square value of the leadership variable on motivation is 0.624, and the influence of leadership on employee performance is 0.624, thus categorizing it as having a significant influence. The f-square value of motivation on employee performance is 0.519, indicating a significant relationship.

• Hypothesis Testing

This study tested two types of hypotheses: a hypothesis that assesses direct influence and an hypothesis that assesses indirect influence in the form of mediation. Hypothesis testing includes R-Square results, parameter coefficients, and t-statistic values. To determine whether a hypothesis is accepted or rejected, researchers need to pay attention to the significance values between constructs, t-statistics, and p-values. Hypothesis testing in this study used SmartPLS (Partial Least Square) 3.0. Test values were obtained through bootstrapping results. The standard value used in this study was a significance level of 0.05%.

• Direct Effect Testing

In this study, direct effect testing was conducted through a bootstrapping procedure with the criteria that the t-statistic value must be greater than 1.96 and the p-value must be less than 5% or 0.05. The results of the path coefficient test in this study are presented in Table 4.12.

Table Path Coefficients Test Results

Construct	Original Sample	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Value	Information
Leadership → Motivation	0.624	0.629	0.076	8,253	0.000	Accepted
Leadership → Employee Performance	0.316	0.310	0.094	3,378	0.001	Accepted
Motivation → Employee Performance	0.519	0.529	0.085	6,081	0.001	Accepted

Source: Processed data, 2026.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion regarding the influence of leadership on employee performance with motivation as a mediating variable at the Demak Regency Education and Culture Office, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on motivation ($\beta = 0.624$; T-Statistic = 8.253; P-Value = 0.000). The better the leadership implemented, the higher the employee's work motivation. Leadership even has the largest direct influence on motivation in this research model.
2. Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.316$; T-Statistic = 3.378; P-Value = 0.001). Improving leadership quality will improve employee performance, although the direct effect is moderate.
3. Motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.519$; T-Statistic = 6.081; P-Value = 0.001). Motivation is the most dominant determinant of employee performance compared to leadership.
4. Motivation significantly mediates the influence of leadership on employee performance ($\beta = 0.324$; T-Statistic = 4.674; P-Value = 0.000). The form of mediation that occurs is partial mediation, so that leadership influences performance both directly and indirectly through increased work motivation.

Overall, the research model has good predictive ability, as indicated by an R-Square value of 0.574 for employee performance and 0.390 for motivation, as well as a Q-Square value of 0.868, indicating high predictive relevance. Thus, motivation is proven to be a key mechanism bridging the relationship between leadership and employee performance.

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