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Transactional Leadership, Organizational Commitment, and Competence: Effects on Performance via Work Motivation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study analyzes the influence of transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence on employee performance, directly and through work motivation as an intervening variable, at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency.

Methodology: A quantitative design was used, distributing a Likert-scale questionnaire to 144 civil servants and government-contracted employees at the Regional Secretariat, analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling.

Results: Transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence each had a positive but non-significant direct effect on performance ($p = 0.416, 0.561, 0.343$). Each had a positive and significant direct effect on work motivation ($p = 0.006, 0.002, 0.000$), and work motivation had a significant direct effect on performance ($p = 0.000$). Work motivation significantly and fully mediated the effects of all three predictors on performance ($p = 0.014, 0.003, 0.000$).

Conclusions: Work motivation is the decisive mechanism linking leadership style, commitment, and competence to performance, since none of the three predictors significantly improves performance directly, only through strengthened motivation.

Limitations: The study is confined to one regional secretariat and relies on cross-sectional self-reported data, limiting causal inference and generalizability.

Contributions: This research clarifies that work motivation, not leadership style, commitment, or competence alone, is the critical lever for civil servant performance, informing targeted policy in Indonesian regional government.

Keywords: Competence, Employee Performance, Organizational Commitment, Transactional Leadership, Work Motivation

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1. Introduction

Efficient and effective governance has become an essential requirement in the era of globalization, which is characterized by intense competition and increasingly limited resources. These conditions demand professional State Civil Apparatus (ASN) who are capable of carrying out government functions effectively. However, the performance of ASN continues to receive considerable public scrutiny. Various mass media frequently report issues such as low productivity, inefficient use of public funds, lack of discipline, and weak work ethics among government employees. These perceptions are commonly directed toward government institutions across Indonesia. In addition, recurring cases of employee absenteeism during working hours or after national holidays indicate that organizational commitment and responsibility among some ASN have not yet developed into a strong collective culture. These conditions highlight the importance of strengthening human resource management to improve employee performance in the public sector.

Employee performance is influenced by several interrelated organizational factors. Competence, encompassing employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, enables them to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. Meanwhile, work motivation serves as a key mechanism linking leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence with employee performance. Highly motivated employees are more likely to continuously develop their capabilities, strengthen their commitment to organizational goals, and utilize their competencies to achieve better performance. Such motivation may arise from intrinsic factors, such as satisfaction derived from accomplishing meaningful work, as well as extrinsic factors, including recognition and rewards from supervisors. Consequently, leadership style, organizational commitment, competence, work motivation, and employee performance form an interconnected system in which motivation functions as a critical mediating factor. This relationship is consistent with findings from Indonesian public-sector research showing that leadership, organizational commitment, and competence improve employee performance primarily by fostering employees' work motivation ([Yimam, 2022](#)). Furthermore, these interactions reflect the concept of the psychological contract, namely the implicit set of mutual expectations between employees and their organization, whereby unmet expectations regarding leadership, organizational support, or workload may gradually weaken employees' motivation even in the absence of formal complaints ([Coyle-Shapiro, Doden, & Chang, 2019](#)).

In the 2023 Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat Strategic Plan, it is explained that the formulation of the objectives and targets of the Regional Secretariat Renstra must not conflict with and must support the objectives and targets to achieve the Vision and Mission of the Regional Head and Deputy. The fifth mission of the Regional Head and Deputy Head is "Realizing a Professional and Excellent Bureaucracy or Fair in Public Services." Thus, the targets to be achieved by the Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat are: Increasing the Accountability of the Regional Secretary's Performance and Increasing the Quality of Government Administration, through Optimizing the Achievement of Strategic Targets, namely: Improving the Regional Secretariat's personnel services, and Improving the management of general office administration. Aligning individual and organizational objectives in this way is consistent with strategic human resource management perspectives, which hold that public value is created only when personnel policy is deliberately connected to an agency's stated performance targets ([Boselie, Van Harten, & Veld, 2021](#)).

The Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat aims to improve the accountability of its organizational performance and enhance the quality of government administration through two strategic objectives: improving personnel services and strengthening general administrative management. However, performance realization in 2023, from the first through the fourth quarter, indicates that these strategic targets have not yet been achieved optimally. Several organizational issues contribute to this condition. First, employee performance remains below expectations for some personnel, requiring continuous supervision and guidance from leadership. Second, employees' competencies are not always aligned with their assigned responsibilities, leading some employees to feel that they have not been appropriately empowered. This mismatch has reduced their motivation to improve performance because they perceive that their competencies do not correspond to the qualifications

expected by management. Third, although employees expect strong organizational commitment from the institution, their own commitment is often inadequate, as reflected in incomplete personnel administration and a lack of initiative in fostering a professional work environment. Finally, employees demonstrate differing perceptions of leadership. While some believe that leaders provide fair and balanced feedback that encourages higher motivation and improved performance, others perceive leadership less positively, resulting in lower motivation and weaker performance outcomes.

Previous studies have consistently reported that transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and employee competence significantly influence employee performance, with work motivation acting as an important mediating variable in these relationships. Nevertheless, empirical evidence integrating these variables within a single structural framework remains limited, particularly in regional government secretariats that primarily perform administrative coordination and governance support functions rather than direct public service delivery. Given the strategic objective of optimizing personnel services at the Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat, a comprehensive examination of these relationships is therefore warranted.

The novelty of this study lies in testing a unified structural model that simultaneously examines the direct effects of transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence on employee performance, as well as their indirect effects through work motivation, within the institutional context of a regency-level regional secretariat. This setting represents a public-sector organization that has received comparatively limited empirical attention despite its central role in regional governance ([Curado & Santos, 2022](#)). Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the direct and indirect effects of transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence on employee performance through work motivation at the Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving civil servant performance and strengthening human resource management practices in comparable regional government institutions.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Performance

Mangkunegara stated that employee performance is the result of work in terms of the quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out his duties in accordance with the responsibilities given to him ([Sina & Sunarsi, 2021](#)). Meanwhile, according to [Kant and Jaiswal \(2017\)](#), performance is the level of success of individuals or groups in carrying out their duties and responsibilities as well as the ability to achieve the goals and standards that have been set (performance is the level of success of individuals or groups in carrying out their duties and responsibilities and the ability to achieve the goals and standards that have been set ([Gebrehiwot & Elantheraiyan, 2023](#)). Several other experts have stated that performance is the result of work achieved by a person in carrying out a task or the level of success of a person during a certain period in carrying out a task ([Kant & Jaiswal, 2017](#)).

Performance is the result of work or achievement carried out by a person or the level of success of a person during a certain period in carrying out a task. This means that if employees can achieve work results according to the company's wishes, they can be said to have good employee performance ([Sugiono, Efendi, & Afrina, 2021](#)). Performance is the result of what is desired by the organization ([Anwar & Abdullah, 2021](#)). Employee performance is the work result achieved by a person who performs the tasks assigned to them to achieve work targets. Employees can work well if they perform well, so that they can produce good work. Employee performance is one of the factors determining the success of an organization or organization in achieving its goals ([Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023](#)). It was concluded that employee performance in this study is the result of work achievements for one year by employees at the Karimun Regency Regional Government Secretariat ([Herawati, Tan, Lubis, & Hidayat, 2021](#)). Contemporary performance research increasingly frames such outcomes not as a fixed individual trait but as the product of an interaction between organizational context and individual motivation, an interaction that becomes especially salient in bureaucratic settings governed by formal rules and limited discretionary reward ([Bhatti, Soomro, &](#)

[Shah, 2021](#)). A comfortable and well-supported work environment has similarly been shown to be one of the more reliable predictors of both employee performance and motivation in Indonesian public-sector studies, reinforcing the view that performance outcomes depend on organizational conditions as much as on individual traits ([Nabawi, 2019](#)).

2.2 Transactional Leadership Style

According to [Curado and Santos \(2022\)](#), leadership is the ability to influence, guide, direct, and motivate others to work collaboratively toward predetermined organizational goals. Leadership is manifested through a leader's behavioral pattern or leadership style, which reflects how leaders consistently influence, direct, motivate, and control subordinates to accomplish organizational objectives ([Uslu & Terzioglu, 2022](#)). Similarly, [Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, and Lin \(2020\)](#) describe leadership style as the manner in which leaders influence and guide employees so that they can perform their duties effectively and efficiently. [Chen, Ding, and Li \(2022\)](#) further emphasize that leadership style also encompasses a leader's ability to anticipate and manage future organizational challenges through appropriate decision-making and direction.

Among the various leadership styles, transactional leadership is particularly relevant to organizations seeking to achieve operational targets efficiently. [Marcoux, Guihur, and Leclerc \(2021\)](#) argue that transactional leadership motivates and directs employees to accomplish assigned tasks while reinforcing desired behaviors through a system of rewards and sanctions linked to work performance. Likewise, [Cesário and Chambel \(2017\)](#) explain that transactional leadership emphasizes the achievement of organizational objectives by motivating employees through clearly defined responsibilities, performance expectations, and contingent rewards. Consistent with this view, [Sina and Sunarsi \(2021\)](#) state that transactional leadership is based on reciprocal exchanges between leaders and employees, whereby employees receive rewards in return for their contributions and performance, thereby encouraging greater commitment to organizational goals ([Purnomo, Eliyana, & Pramesti, 2020](#)).

From the theories above, it is concluded that what is meant by transactional leadership in this study is the style of leadership elements in the Karimun Regency Regional Government Secretariat in fostering, guiding, directing, and motivating employees so that they can work together to achieve the set goals ([Sulila, 2019](#)). This exchange-based conception of transactional leadership has been extensively validated in recent leadership research, which finds that clearly specified rewards and corrective feedback can reliably shape short-term task performance, though the durability of this effect depends heavily on whether it is reinforced by employees' broader motivational state ([Lai et al., 2020](#)).

2.3 Organizational Commitment

According to [Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019](#)), organizational commitment refers to an employee's willingness to remain a member of an organization and fulfill responsibilities toward organizational goals. Similarly, [Harten, and Veld \(2021\)](#) define organizational commitment as the degree to which employees identify with their organization and its objectives, while [Elrehail, Harazneh, Abuhjeeleh, Alzghoul, Alnajdawi, and Ibrahim \(2020\)](#) emphasize employees' decision to remain with the organization. [Widiastuti, Riauwanto, and Harwati \(2022\)](#) further explain that organizational commitment encompasses employees' identification with organizational values, their willingness to contribute high performance, and their acceptance of organizational goals. Likewise, [Sulila \(2019\)](#) highlights the psychological attachment that encourages employees to remain part of the organization. Accordingly, organizational commitment in this study is defined as employees' psychological attachment and sense of responsibility toward their institution, which motivate them to remain with the organization and perform their duties conscientiously ([Jumady & Lilla, 2021](#)).

The importance of organizational commitment extends beyond employees' intention to remain with the organization, as it also shapes their attitudes and work behavior. Employees with stronger organizational commitment are generally more willing to devote effort to achieving organizational objectives, demonstrate higher levels of work motivation, and actively contribute to organizational success. Consequently, organizational commitment serves as an important antecedent of both work motivation and employee performance. Rather than influencing performance solely through a direct

mechanism, organizational commitment often exerts its effects indirectly by strengthening employees' psychological engagement and work motivation, which subsequently improve individual performance ([Cesário & Chambel, 2017](#); [Marcoux, Guihur, & Leclerc, 2021](#)).

2.4 Competence

Competence is the ability of an individual to carry out a job correctly, and has advantages based on matters relating to knowledge, skills, and attitudes ([Elrehail, Harazneh, Abuhjeeleh, Alzghoul, Alnajdawi, & Ibrahim, 2020](#)). According to ([Kant & Jaiswal, 2017](#)), competence is an ability that is based on skills and knowledge supported by work attitudes, and its application in carrying out tasks and work in the workplace, with reference to the work requirements set ([Widiastuti, Riauwant, & Harwati, 2022](#)). [Gebrehiwot and Elantheraiyan \(2023\)](#) stated that competence is a basic characteristic or part of a person's personality in the form of knowledge and skills to be able to perform a job based on their knowledge and skills. Competence is a crucial trait one must have to fulfill a specific job's duties. It is concluded that competence in this study is the ability possessed by employees of the Karimun Regency Regional Government Secretariat with all the knowledge and skills they have ([Bilderback & Miller, 2023](#)). Recent competency research further emphasizes that the practical value of employee competence depends on whether organizations actively match competencies to assigned roles, since a mismatch between an employee's actual skill set and their job demands can neutralize the performance benefits that competence would otherwise generate ([Deku, Wang, & Preko, 2024](#)).

2.5 Motivation

[Bytyqi \(2020\)](#) generated heat generators that cause intensity, continents to achieve goals. The work motivation supports and drives human behavior to act in a certain way or at least develop a trend. If someone has high motivation, he will do the job optimally and vice versa; if someone does not have motivation to work, there will be no new things that can be done to achieve the company's targets. The motivation is one of the factors that influence human behavior. Motivation is also known as a driver of desire, supporters, or needs that can make someone excited and motivated to reduce and fulfill their own drives, so that they can act in certain ways that will lead to the optimal direction ([Maryani, Entang, & Tukiran, 2021](#)).

Motivation is a very important factor that someone must have in the process of achieving a goal. Motivation is a very important factor that someone must have in the process of achieving a goal. High motivation will make someone enthusiastic to work hard to achieve a goal so that the productivity of the person will increase. The work motivation is a condition that encourages and moves someone from within themselves or from outside themselves with the skills and abilities they have to carry out an activity in order to get good work results and achieve a goal. Motivation is the primary driving force that drives people, or the desire to devote all their energy to a goal. (Motivation is the main driving force that drives people or their desire to devote all their energy to a goal). It was concluded that motivation in this study is a series of processes that arouse, direct, and maintain the behavior of Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat employees towards achieving performance goals ([Siswanto, Masyhuri, Maksum, & Murdiansyah, 2020](#)). This motivational perspective is consistent with evidence that intrinsic rewards, such as a sense of accomplishment and recognition, can meaningfully improve employee performance specifically by first strengthening employees' underlying motivation, underscoring motivation's role as a psychological conduit rather than a mere additive factor ([Manzoor, Wei, & Asif, 2021](#)). This mixed picture is consistent with evidence that public service motivation, self-efficacy, and competency jointly, rather than independently, shape the performance of civil apparatuses, underscoring why competence and commitment alone were insufficient to directly elevate performance in the present study ([Perizade, 2023](#)).

2.6 Framework of Thinking

In accordance with the objectives of the study, and referring to the conclusions of previous researchers, who concluded that there is a relationship between transactional leadership style and performance. Then related to the relationship between competence directly and work motivation and performance directly, or indirectly the relationship between organizational commitment and

competence to performance through work motivation, there are two different opinions, then the framework diagram of this research is described as follows:

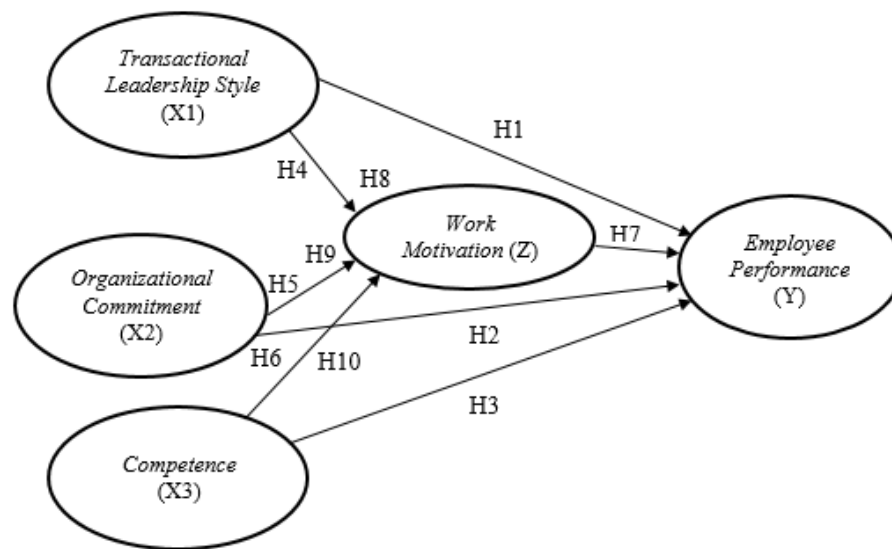


Figure 1. Thinking Framework Chart

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study, depicting transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence as exogenous variables hypothesized to influence employee performance both directly and indirectly through work motivation as an intervening variable. The diagram distinguishes seven direct relationships, namely the effects of the three exogenous variables on both work motivation and performance, together with the direct effect of work motivation on performance, from three additional indirect relationships in which work motivation mediates the link between each exogenous variable and performance. This structure allows the study to determine whether leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence influence performance primarily through a direct channel, through employees' motivational state, or through both simultaneously, and it provides the structural basis for the ten hypotheses developed in the following section.

2.7 Research Hypothesis

Drawing upon the literature review, theoretical arguments, and the proposed research framework, this study examines the direct effects of transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence on employee performance, as well as their indirect effects through work motivation as a mediating variable. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: The transactional leadership style has a significant direct influence on employee performance at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₂: Organizational commitment has a significant direct influence on employee performance at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₃: Competence has a significant direct influence on employee performance at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₄: The transactional leadership style has a significant direct influence on employee work motivation at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₅: Organizational commitment has a significant direct influence on employee work motivation at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₆: Employee competence has a significant direct influence on work motivation at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₇: Work motivation has a significant direct influence on employee performance at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₈: Transactional leadership style has a significant influence on performance in intervening work motivation of employees of the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₉: Organizational commitment has a significant influence on employee performance in intervening in the work motivation of employees of the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

H₁₀: Competence has a significant influence on performance in intervening work motivation among employees of the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey questionnaire distributed to Civil Servants (PNS) and Government-Contracted Employees (PPPK) at the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency, a design well suited to testing the hypothesized direct and mediated relationships among transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, competence, work motivation, and employee performance (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). The criteria used to determine the population in this study are listed in the following table. The choice of a quantitative, questionnaire-based design is also consistent with broader public-sector leadership research, which similarly relies on structured survey instruments to capture staff perceptions of leadership behavior and its organizational consequences (Uslu & Terzioglu, 2022).

Table 1. Number of employees in the regional secretariat of karimun regency based on employee status

Information	Employee Status	Employee Status
Status	PNS	PPPK
Sum	127	33
Total of all PNS and PPPK employees	160	160

Table 1 shows that the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency employed a total of 160 personnel at the time of the study, comprising 127 Civil Servants (PNS) and 33 Government-Contracted Employees (PPPK), providing the sampling frame from which respondents meeting the study's inclusion criteria were subsequently drawn.

The data on the total number of ASN and PPPK employees at the Karimun Regency Regional Government Secretariat, based on positions that meet the criteria as samples, are shown in the following data table:

Table 2. Respondent demographics

Age Group	Sum	Percent
19 Years to 35 Years	39	27.08%
36 Years to 45 Years	44	30.56%
46 Years to 55 Years	36	25.00%
56 Years and Over	25	17.36%
Total	144	144
Gender	Sum	Percent
Male	Male	64
Female	Female	80
Total	Total	144
Employee Status	Sum	Percent

Age Group	Sum	Percent
PNS	102	70.83%
PPK	42	29.17%
Total	144	100%

Table 2 shows that the 144 respondents included in the final sample are reasonably distributed across age bands, with the largest group aged 36 to 45 years (44 people, 30.56%), followed by 19 to 35 years (39 people, 27.08%), 46 to 55 years (36 people, 25.00%), and 56 years and above (25 people, 17.36%), indicating a workforce spanning early-career to senior civil servants. By gender, women make up a slight majority of respondents (80 people, 55.56%) compared to men (64 people, 44.44%). By employment status, the sample is dominated by Civil Servants (PNS) at 70.83% (102 people), with the remaining 29.17% (42 people) holding Government-Contract (PPPK) status, a composition that closely mirrors the overall employee population reported in Table 2 and supports the representativeness of the sample for the Regional Secretariat as a whole.

3.2 Operational Definition of Variables

Table 3. Operational Definition of Exogenous Variables

Variable	Indicators	Questionnaire Items	Scale
Transactional Leadership Style (X1)	Contingent Reward	1–5	Likert Scale (STS = 1, SS = 5)
	Management by Exception – Active	6–10	
	Management by Exception – Passive	11–15	
	Laissez-faire	16–20	
Organizational Commitment (X2)	Affective Commitment	1–5	Likert Scale (STS = 1, SS = 5)
	Continuance Commitment	6–10	
	Normative Commitment	11–15	
Competence (X3)	Knowledge and Ability	1–3	Likert Scale (STS = 1, SS = 5)
	Expertise and Skills	4–6	
	Willingness and Initiative	7–9	
	Ability to Identify Problems and Solutions	10–12	
	Friendliness and Politeness	13–15	
Work Motivation (Z)	Physiological Needs	1–3	Likert Scale (STS = 1, SS = 5)
	Safety Needs	4–6	
	Social Needs	7–9	
	Self-Actualization Needs	10–12	
	Esteem Needs	13–15	

Variable	Indicators	Questionnaire Items	Scale
Employee Performance (Y)	Ability to Increase the Target Number of Jobs	1–3	Likert Scale (STS = 1, SS = 5)
	Ability to Create Innovation and Creativity	4–6	
	Ability to Minimize Work Errors	7–9	
	Attendance Compliance According to Work Schedule	10–12	
	Ability to Work with Other Employees	13–15	

Table 3 presents the operational definitions, indicators, and questionnaire items used to measure the four latent variables in this study, namely transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, competence, and work motivation, together with employee performance as the outcome variable. Each construct is broken down into specific, behaviorally anchored indicators, such as contingent reward for transactional leadership style, affective, continuance, and normative commitment for organizational commitment, and knowledge, skills, and problem-solving ability for competence, with every item measured on a five-point Likert scale. This detailed operationalization provides the conceptual and measurement foundation for the validity and reliability testing reported in Section 4.

Table 4. Alternative likert scale answers

Alternative Answers	Weight of Value
Strongly disagree (STS)	1
Disagree	2
Quite agree	3
Agree	4
Strongly agree (SS)	5

Table 4 presents the five-point Likert scale scoring key applied to every questionnaire item across all constructs, ranging from a weight of 1 for strongly disagree to a weight of 5 for strongly agree, providing the numerical basis on which respondents' ratings were aggregated and subsequently analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Validity and Reliability Test Results: Validity

The evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement indicators used to represent each latent construct in the study. This evaluation was performed using the SmartPLS software by examining the outer loading values of each indicator. The outer loading values indicate the strength of the relationship between the observed indicators and their respective latent variables, thereby providing evidence of indicator reliability and convergent validity. The results of the outer model evaluation are presented in the following figure and table.

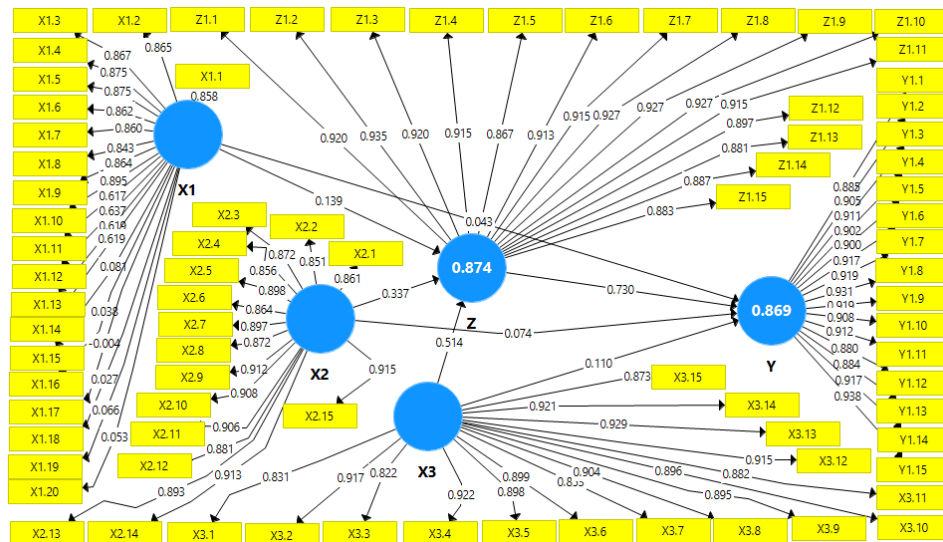


Figure 2. Initial Stage Outer Model Test Results

Figure 2 presents the initial-stage outer model diagram generated by SmartPLS, displaying the outer loading value connecting each observed indicator to its corresponding latent construct, namely transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, competence, work motivation, and employee performance. The visual layout allows indicators with comparatively weak loadings to be identified at a glance before the numerical convergent and discriminant validity results are examined in detail in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Construct reliability and validity of advanced analysis results

	Cronbach Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
X_1	0.956	0.963	0.962	0.647
X_2	0.981	0.981	0.982	0.787
X_3	0.981	0.982	0.983	0.794
Z	0.985	0.985	0.986	0.826
Y	0.985	0.985	0.986	0.826

Table 5 shows that the item values produced by the construct of all variables are declared valid, with Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values for each of the five constructs, transactional leadership style (X_1), organizational commitment (X_2), competence (X_3), work motivation (Z), and employee performance (Y), all exceeding 0.7, and Average Variance Extracted values above 0.5 in every case. These results indicate that, at this initial analysis stage, each construct's indicators are strongly correlated with one another and adequately capture the underlying construct they are intended to measure, providing an initial basis of confidence before the more detailed discriminant validity assessment reported in Table 6.

The results of the Discriminant Validity test by looking at the cross-loading factor value, which is useful for determining whether the construct has adequate discriminant, with the provision that the loading value on the intended construct is greater than the other values, and the standard value for each construct is greater than 0.7. The results of the test still had values below standard 0.7, so it was necessary to re-analyze the data. The results of the re-analysis did not include those that did not meet the criteria, namely $X_1.11$, $X_1.12$, $X_1.13$, and $X_1.14$. are listed in the following table:

Table 6. Cross loading values from re-analysis results

	X_1	X_2	X_3	Z	Y
$X_{1.1}$	0.892	0.708	0.592	0.705	0.670
$X_{1.2}$	0.889	0.696	0.572	0.663	0.627
$X_{1.3}$	0.882	0.669	0.546	0.619	0.602
$X_{1.4}$	0.902	0.665	0.536	0.609	0.594
$X_{1.5}$	0.879	0.652	0.612	0.655	0.618
$X_{1.6}$	0.897	0.653	0.564	0.656	0.639
$X_{1.7}$	0.890	0.607	0.549	0.617	0.595
$X_{1.8}$	0.870	0.638	0.597	0.666	0.622
$X_{1.9}$	0.892	0.669	0.614	0.688	0.672
$X_{1.10}$	0.919	0.682	0.628	0.703	0.694
$X_{2.1}$	0.602	0.861	0.741	0.746	0.679
$X_{2.2}$	0.604	0.851	0.735	0.733	0.684
$X_{2.3}$	0.618	0.872	0.743	0.775	0.732
$X_{2.4}$	0.588	0.856	0.738	0.716	0.716
$X_{2.5}$	0.689	0.898	0.773	0.774	0.736
$X_{2.6}$	0.662	0.864	0.750	0.746	0.714
$X_{2.7}$	0.698	0.897	0.807	0.817	0.782
$X_{2.8}$	0.681	0.872	0.795	0.831	0.803
$X_{2.9}$	0.660	0.912	0.820	0.836	0.787
$X_{2.10}$	0.648	0.908	0.781	0.834	0.822
$X_{2.11}$	0.714	0.906	0.749	0.817	0.800
$X_{2.12}$	0.701	0.881	0.737	0.773	0.760
$X_{2.13}$	0.706	0.893	0.833	0.823	0.772
$X_{2.14}$	0.665	0.913	0.778	0.814	0.787
$X_{2.15}$	0.668	0.915	0.851	0.856	0.809
$X_{3.16}$	0.538	0.740	0.831	0.716	0.718

Table 6 shows that, following re-analysis with four weak transactional leadership indicators removed ($X_{1.11}$, $X_{1.12}$, $X_{1.13}$, and $X_{1.14}$), the values of all loadings on their intended construct are greater than their cross-loadings on every other construct, and the standard value for each construct exceeds 0.7. This confirms that transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, competence, work motivation, and employee performance are empirically distinguishable from one another, satisfying the discriminant validity criterion and eliminating the need for further re-analysis (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

4.2 Reliability

Composite reliability was assessed to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of each latent construct in the measurement model. A construct is considered reliable when its composite reliability value exceeds the recommended threshold, indicating that the indicators consistently measure the same underlying construct. The results of the composite reliability assessment are presented in the following table.

Table 7. Construct reliability and validity of advanced analysis results

	Cronbach Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
X_1	0.971	0.972	0.975	0.795
X_2	0.981	0.981	0.982	0.787
X_3	0.981	0.982	0.983	0.794
Z	0.985	0.985	0.986	0.826
Y	0.985	0.985	0.986	0.826

Table 7 shows that all variable values in the reliability test, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, have values above 0.7, and Average Variance Extracted has a value of more than 0.5 for every construct. Thus, it is concluded that transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, competence, work motivation, and employee performance are all valid and reliable, and structural model testing can therefore be carried out (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019).

4.3 Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

The R Square or Determinant coefficient value (the magnitude of the influence) and Q_2 Predictive Relevance or how good the observation value can be seen in the following table:

Table 8. R Squares

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Work Motivation (Z)	0.879	0.876
Employee Performance (Y)	0.869	0.865

Table 8 shows that the R Square value of Work Motivation is 0.879, meaning that the work motivation variable (Z) is 87.9% influenced by the Transactional Leadership Style variable (X_1), Organizational Commitment (X_2), and competence, while 12.1% is influenced by other factors outside the variables studied.

Table 9. Model fit/model goodness of fit (NFI value))

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.048	0.048
d_ ULS	5.693	5.693
d_ G	15.778	15.778
Chi-Square	8086.482	8086.482
NFI	0.633	0.633

Table 9 shows that the Normed Fit Index (NFI) value is 0.633, close to the 0.67 threshold, so it can be concluded that the goodness of the model is reasonably strong, though not without room for improvement. Thus, after meeting the requirements above, it can be concluded that the model can be continued for the next test, namely the hypothesis test. According to Hair et al. (2019), if the correlation coefficient value of variable X to Y has a T-Statistic value greater than 1.96 and a P-Value less than 0.05, then the relationship can be concluded to be significant. The results of the Path Coefficient test with bootstrapping are presented in Table 9.

Table 10. Path coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
$X_1 - > Y$	0.047	0.044	0.057	0.814	0.416
$X_1 - > Z$	0.162	0.169	0.059	2.763	0.006
$X_2 - > Y$	0.073	0.086	0.125	0.582	0.561
$X_2 - > Z$	0.314	0.304	0.100	3.130	0.002
$X_3 - > Y$	0.118	0.106	0.124	0.950	0.343
$X_3 - > Z$	0.526	0.528	0.083	6.354	0.000
$Z - > Y$	0.722	0.724	0.120	6.033	0.000

Table 10 shows that all original sample values are positive, indicating a positive relationship pattern across every path tested. The influence of transactional leadership (X_1) on employee performance (Y) is 0.047 ($p = 0.416$), and on work motivation (Z) is 0.162 ($p = 0.006$). The influence of organizational commitment (X_2) on employee performance (Y) is 0.073 ($p = 0.561$), and on work motivation (Z) is 0.314 ($p = 0.002$). The influence of competence (X_3) on employee performance (Y) is 0.118 ($p = 0.343$), and on work motivation (Z) is 0.526 ($p = 0.000$). The influence of work motivation (Z) on employee performance (Y) is 0.722 ($p = 0.000$). Only the paths involving work motivation as either predictor or outcome reach statistical significance, while all three direct paths from the exogenous variables to performance remain non-significant.

Table 11. Specific indirects effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
$X_1 - > Z - > Y$	0.117	0.122	0.048	2.458	0.014
$X_2 - > Z - > Y$	0.227	0.218	0.077	2.958	0.003
$X_3 - > Z - > Y$	0.380	0.384	0.095	4.006	0.000

Table 11 shows that all the original sample values for the specific indirect effects are positive and statistically significant. The influence of transactional leadership (X_1) on employee performance (Y) through work motivation (Z) is 0.117 ($p = 0.014$). The influence of organizational commitment (X_2) on employee performance (Y) through work motivation (Z) is 0.227 ($p = 0.003$). The influence of competence (X_3) on employee performance (Y) through work motivation (Z) is 0.380 ($p = 0.000$), the largest of the three indirect effects. Because the corresponding direct effects reported in Table 10 are non-significant while these indirect effects are significant, work motivation functions as a full, rather than partial, mediating variable for all three exogenous constructs.

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 The Absence of Direct Effects on Performance

The finding that transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence each exert a positive but statistically non-significant direct effect on employee performance is a notable departure from the theoretical expectation embedded in H_1 through H_3 . This pattern suggests that, within the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency, none of these three organizational factors is sufficient on its own to move the needle on performance unless it first translates into stronger employee motivation. This finding echoes evidence from other transactional leadership studies in which contingent reward and corrective supervision shape short-term compliance but do not reliably convert into improved task performance without an accompanying motivational mechanism ([Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, & Lin, 2020](#)). It is also consistent with commitment research showing that organizational commitment predicts performance far more consistently when routed through an intervening psychological state, such as engagement or motivation, than when modeled as an unmediated predictor ([Cesário & Chambel, 2017](#); [Marcoux, Guihur, & Leclerc, 2021](#)).

4.4.2 Work Motivation as the Decisive Mediating Mechanism

In contrast to the non-significant direct effects, all three exogenous variables exert a significant direct effect on work motivation, and work motivation itself exerts the strongest direct effect on performance of any construct in the model ($\beta = 0.722, p = 0.000$). Combined with the significant indirect effects reported in Table 12, this pattern indicates that work motivation functions as a full mediator: transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence do not bypass work motivation to influence performance directly, but instead operate almost entirely through it. This is consistent with motivational theory holding that intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of effort function as the proximate cause of performance, with upstream organizational factors serving mainly to shape the intensity and direction of that motivation rather than acting on performance independently ([Manzoor, Wei, & Asif, 2021](#)). The comparatively larger indirect effect of competence (0.380) relative to organizational commitment (0.227) and transactional leadership style (0.117) further suggests that, in this technical administrative setting, employees' sense of being adequately skilled for their assigned duties is a particularly potent driver of the motivation that ultimately shapes their performance ([Chen, Ding, & Li, 2022](#)).

4.4.3 Comparison with the Broader Leadership and Motivation Literature

These findings both align with and refine the broader literature on leadership, commitment, competence, and performance in public-sector organizations. Consistent with evidence that transactional leadership's influence on performance is frequently indirect rather than direct ([Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, & Lin, 2020](#)), and that organizational commitment shapes performance primarily through motivational and engagement-related pathways ([Cesário & Chambel, 2017](#)), this study extends that evidence to a specifically Indonesian regional government context, where formal civil-service structures may further dampen the direct behavioral influence of leadership and commitment relative to more flexible private-sector settings ([Sabani, 2021](#)). The unusually strong and fully mediating role of work motivation observed here also resonates with intrinsic-reward research showing that psychological drivers of effort can outweigh the influence of structural or relational organizational factors when it comes to shaping day-to-day task performance ([Manzoor, Wei, & Asif, 2021](#)).

4.4.4 Practical and Managerial Implications

For the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency, these findings imply that performance improvement initiatives should not rely on leadership style adjustments, commitment-building programs, or competency development in isolation, since none of these interventions is likely to yield significant performance gains unless it is explicitly designed to strengthen employee motivation as an intermediate outcome. Practical measures such as performance-linked recognition, transparent and fair task allocation aligned with employee competencies, and structured feedback on performance achievement are more likely to succeed when framed explicitly as motivation-building interventions rather than as ends in themselves ([Turner, Prasajo, & Sumarwono, 2022](#);

[Ingsih, Astuti, & Riyanto, 2024](#)). This reframing directly supports the recommendations proposed by the Head of the Regional Secretariat in the concluding section of this study.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

The findings indicate that transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, and competence do not have significant direct effects on employee performance at the Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat. However, each of these variables has a significant positive direct effect on employees' work motivation, while work motivation itself significantly influences employee performance. Furthermore, work motivation serves as a perfect mediating variable in the relationships between transactional leadership style and employee performance, organizational commitment and employee performance, and competence and employee performance. These results suggest that improvements in employee performance are not achieved directly through leadership style, organizational commitment, or competence alone, but rather through their ability to enhance employees' work motivation, which subsequently drives higher performance.

5.2 Research Limitations

The first, it is confined to a single regional secretariat, and its associative causal design, while capable of testing hypothesized relationships, cannot rule out the possibility that observed associations reflect coincidental rather than strictly causal patterns, a limitation inherent to cross-sectional survey research more generally. Second, all constructs were measured through self-reported perceptions collected via a single questionnaire administered at one point in time, which may introduce common method bias and cannot capture how transactional leadership style, organizational commitment, competence, work motivation, and performance evolve over time within the same individuals. Third, because this study is limited to the institutional environment of a single regency's regional secretariat, various unobserved local factors may also influence the relationships tested, and caution should be exercised in generalizing these findings to other regional government agencies operating under different administrative or resource conditions.

5.3 Directions and Future Study

Future research should extend this study by incorporating qualitative interviews alongside the survey instrument to capture richer detail on how employees at the Regional Secretariat experience the interplay between leadership, commitment, competence, and motivation, by expanding the sample to include other regency secretariats for cross-regional comparison, and by testing additional mediating or moderating variables such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, or perceived organizational support, which may further explain variance in performance not captured by the present model. Based on the conclusions of this study, the following practical recommendations are proposed for the Head of the Regional Secretariat of Karimun Regency: Given the growing role of digital platforms in citizen-facing public services, future studies might also examine how employees' digital skills interact with leadership, commitment, and competence to shape motivation and performance, since digital proficiency increasingly complements traditional human resource capabilities in government settings.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Head of the Karimun Regency Regional Secretariat strengthen human resource management by adopting a leadership style that effectively enhances employees' work motivation and performance. Leaders should reinforce supervision and coaching while providing balanced and constructive feedback to encourage employees to achieve performance targets, complete tasks on time, foster innovation and creativity, minimize attendance-related violations, and strengthen teamwork. In addition, organizational commitment should be cultivated through initiatives that promote employees' sense of belonging, responsibility, and engagement with organizational goals. Employee competence should also be optimized by ensuring that personnel are assigned and empowered according to their competencies in a fair and professional manner, thereby enabling them to perform their duties more effectively. Given the mediating role of work motivation, the organization should implement motivational strategies that recognize employee contributions, support professional development, and create a positive work environment. Collectively, these efforts are expected to improve employee

performance and contribute to the achievement of the Regional Secretariat's organizational objectives.

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