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The Influence of Department Head Leadership and Employee Work Motivation on the Quality of Public Service Delivery at the Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency

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Abstract

The suboptimal quality of public service delivery at the Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency of Majalengka Regency is presumed to be influenced by the leadership of the department head and employees' work motivation. This study aims to analyze the effect of leadership and work motivation on public service quality, both partially and simultaneously. A quantitative approach was employed using a survey method involving 87 service staff as respondents. Data were collected through observation and questionnaires, and analyzed using multiple linear regression, including partial (t-test) and simultaneous (F-test) analyses. The results indicate that, descriptively, leadership, work motivation, and public service quality are categorized as good, although several aspects still require improvement. Verificatively, department head leadership has a significant effect on public service quality by 4.2%, while employee work motivation has a greater effect of 42.5%. Simultaneously, both variables contribute 62.4% to public service quality. These findings reveal that work motivation has a more dominant influence compared to leadership in improving public service quality. Therefore, efforts to enhance service quality should prioritize strengthening

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employee motivation while also optimizing leadership roles within the organization.

Keywords: Public Service Quality; Leadership; Work Motivation; Public Sector Management

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUTR) plays a crucial role in developing infrastructure that supports economic growth and public welfare, while also ensuring the optimal and sustainable utilization of spatial planning. The PUTR Department actively implements various infrastructure projects, including the construction and maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure such as roads, bridges, irrigation systems, drainage systems, and other related facilities. The implementation of its primary responsibilities is carried out across several sub-districts through Technical Implementation Units (Unit Pelaksana Teknis/UPT) for Road, Building, and Spatial Planning Maintenance, which are responsible for conducting operational technical activities in the fields of road infrastructure maintenance, building maintenance, and spatial planning management. In other words, the quality of the PUTR Department constitutes one of the key indicators used to measure the success of governance, development, and community services. Meanwhile, the quality of public services delivered by the PUTR Department is strongly influenced by the quality of the human resources within the institution.

Human Resources (HR) are no longer merely regarded as operational assets, but rather as fundamental capital that determines the sustainability and viability of an institution's vision. The existence of advanced physical facilities and sophisticated infrastructure is inherently static; meanwhile, human resources represent the dynamic element that mobilizes all organizational resources toward the achievement of strategic objectives. Empirical evidence indicates that individual performance serves as a decisive determinant of success within public service organizations. Public services, including health, education, and welfare, rely heavily on the performance of public employees; consequently, the quality of the welfare state is largely dependent upon them (Jalloh & Ming., 2020; Knies et al. 2024; Nafari & Rezai, 2022). Human capital is widely recognized as a strategic asset and a primary source of value creation, innovation, and productivity in public administration (Kraja & Spahija, 2023; Nwazufu & Abah, 2025; Vermeeren, 2017).

The effectiveness of human resource utilization is primarily determined by the leadership of the department head and employees' work motivation. As the highest-ranking leader within a regional government institution, the department head holds substantial control over the

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organizational motivational ecosystem. Various studies on public organizations in Indonesia demonstrate that leadership influences employee performance through work motivation as a mediating factor, which ultimately contributes to improved organizational performance (Scimpshire at al., 2025; Ahmadlyah et al., 2024). Leadership refers to an individual's ability to influence the behavior of others in order to mobilize, empower, and direct resources effectively and efficiently toward the achievement of organizational objectives. A leader must be capable of integrating the roles of problem solver and effective communicator. An ideal leader should maintain a democratic work culture by being open to suggestions and feedback, while simultaneously remaining critical and assertive in addressing subordinates who violate established procedures.

As the highest leader within a regional government institution, the department head plays a central role in shaping the organizational motivational ecosystem. Within the context of public service in Indonesia, motivation has evolved into a measurable indicator of organizational performance. Work motivation plays a vital role in organizational effectiveness and must be fostered by leadership. Motivation is not merely a psychological factor; rather, it is directly associated with employee performance and the quality of public services. Leadership becomes a key determinant because much of the influence of motivation is mediated through leadership style and managerial practices. In several government institutions, motivation has been shown to exert a positive and significant influence on employee performance, often emerging as a stronger predictor than competence or compensation (Kusumaningtyas et al., 2022; Sumarni et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2025). When motivation is not adequately reflected in employee performance, researchers emphasize the importance of leaders in encouraging, directing, and managing motivation so that it can be transformed into optimal work behavior (Karepesina, 2023).

Based on observations conducted during public service activities at the Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUTR) of Majalengka Regency, it was evident that the delivery of services to the community has not yet been fully optimal. Several employees were found to perform their duties in ways that did not comply with the established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) within the governmental divisions of the Department of Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUTR) of Majalengka Regency. In addition, some employees experienced delays in completing their assigned tasks, such as the delayed resolution of road repair complaints, which were not completed in accordance with the predetermined targets, particularly in the development sector. These issues are presumed to be associated with the fact that the Head of the Department has not fully implemented the fundamental principles of motivation, including

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the principles of recognition, fairness and appropriateness, and reciprocal attention, in motivating employees

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a descriptive-verificative approach. The selection of this method was based on the consideration that the variables under investigation required both descriptive explanation and examination of their relationships and influences, thereby enabling the presentation of a structured and accurate depiction of the phenomena studied. The descriptive method was applied to identify and explain the characteristics of the variables within a particular context (Sekaran, 2011). Meanwhile, the verificative approach was utilized to examine the validity of assumptions and to test whether approaches that had been implemented elsewhere, with or without modification, could effectively address similar problems in real-life situations (Mashuri, 2019). The application of the verificative method aimed to explain and summarize various conditions, situations, and variables emerging within society that constituted the object of the study, based on actual occurrences. Furthermore, this approach was intended to describe the characteristics and conditions of the variables under investigation, as well as to analyze the influence of the Head of Department's leadership and employee work motivation on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency.

The implementation of the descriptive-verificative research method in practice required a research design that was aligned with the characteristics and depth of the study. The research process involved the following stages: (1) identifying the problem; (2) selecting the research problem; (3) selecting a conceptual framework for the research problem and examining its relationship with previous studies; (4) formulating the research problem, including specifying objectives, scope, and hypotheses to be tested; (5) designing and conducting the investigation; (6) selecting and defining the measurement of variables; (7) determining the sampling procedures and techniques employed; (8) selecting and establishing data collection techniques and instruments; (9) coding, editing, and processing the data; (10) analyzing the data and selecting appropriate statistical procedures for generalization and statistical inference; (11) drawing conclusions; and (12) preparing the research report.

The research data were collected through document study techniques by examining documents, records, and archives related to public services. In addition, observations were conducted to examine various phenomena associated with public services, departmental

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leadership, and employee work motivation within the PUTR Department. Questionnaires were also distributed to collect data related to employee work motivation.

The collected data were processed using both descriptive and verificative approaches. Descriptive data processing was conducted using Microsoft Excel to calculate percentages, while descriptive interpretations were based on a data interpretation table. The process involved the following procedures:

1. The substance of the questionnaire statements was developed based on theoretical references and adjusted to the dimensions and indicators of the variables as described in the operational definitions, in order to provide clarity for respondents and enable objective and accurate responses.
2. Each questionnaire form was assigned a serial number and provided with five categories of responses, allowing respondents to select the most appropriate answer.
3. Each completed questionnaire item was transferred into a response score format containing the questionnaire items and respondents' scores, after which the scores for each variable were summed.
4. To facilitate further analysis, the total scores for each variable from all returned questionnaires were compiled into a recapitulation format of response scores.

Data processing using the verificative approach was conducted through a parametric statistical approach. The application of parametric statistics required several prerequisites, including data validity, reliability, and normality. The data processing procedures were carried out using SPSS version 27.0 for Windows. After processing and analysis, the data were presented in tabular form to facilitate interpretation and were subsequently explained descriptively. To examine the partial influence of independent variables on the dependent variable, the t-test was employed using the following decision criteria: if t-count < t-table, H0 was accepted and H1 was rejected, indicating that the independent variable had no significant influence on the dependent variable. Conversely, if t-count > t-table, H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted, indicating that the independent variable significantly influenced the dependent variable.

To examine the simultaneous influence of X1 and X2 on Y, the F-test was employed using the following criteria: if F-count < F-table, H0 was accepted and H1 was rejected, indicating that the independent variables collectively had no significant influence on the dependent variable. Conversely, if F-count > F-table, H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted, indicating that the independent variables collectively exerted a significant influence on the dependent variable.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The influence of the Head of Department's leadership, based on respondents' perceptions, was categorized as being in a good condition, particularly on the indicator stating that the Head of Department consistently strives to provide guidance and direction to employees in carrying out their duties. However, weaknesses were still identified in the aspect of fostering employee discipline. This finding represents an empirical observation regarding the leadership variable of the Head of Department, which may serve as a consideration for the relevant authorities in efforts to improve the leadership process more effectively.

In the research data concerning the influence of the Head of Department's leadership on the quality of public services, a statistical test was conducted. The results indicated that the correlation coefficient (r) was 0.586. To determine its level of significance, a t-test was performed, yielding a calculated t-value of 2.508, while the critical t-table value with 87 degrees of freedom (df) at α = 0.05 was 1.663. Since the calculated t-value (2.508) was greater than the t-table value (1.663), it can be concluded that the leadership of the Head of Department significantly influences the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency.

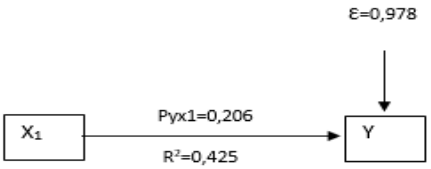


Figure 1. Structure 1 Variable X1 against Y

Since the calculated t-value was proven to be greater than the t-table value, it can be concluded that the leadership of the Head of Department has a significant influence on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency.

Furthermore, to examine the influence of employee work motivation on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency, correlation testing and coefficient (t-test) analysis were conducted, as illustrated in Structural Model 2 below.

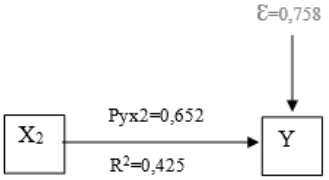


Figure 2. Structure of 2 Variables X2 against Y

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The correlation coefficient (r) was found to be 0.643. To determine its level of significance, a t-test was conducted, resulting in a calculated t-value of 7.926, while the critical t-table value with 87 degrees of freedom (df) at α = 0.05 was 1.663. Since the calculated t-value (7.926) was greater than the t-table value (1.663), it can be concluded that employee work motivation significantly influences the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency.

The simultaneous influence of the Head of Department's leadership and employee work motivation on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency can be observed from the correlation coefficient (R) in the Model Summary, which was 0.790. The calculated F-value was 69.761, while the critical F-table value with 2 and 87 degrees of freedom (df) at α = 0.05 was 3.11. Since the calculated F-value was greater than the F-table value, it can be concluded that the variables of the Head of Department's leadership and employee work motivation simultaneously exert a significant influence on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency.

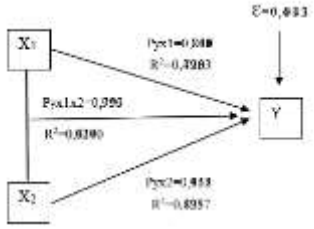


Figure 3. Structure 3, Variables X1 and X2 against y

The leadership of the Head of Department and employee work motivation simultaneously exert a significant influence on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency, with a contribution effect of 62.4%, while the remaining 37.6% is influenced by other factors not included in the model, such as leadership, organizational coordination, organizational climate, and employee career development. The level of significance was confirmed through hypothesis testing using the F-test, which indicated that the calculated F-value was greater than the critical F-table value. Therefore, both individually and simultaneously, the variables of the Head of Department's leadership and employee work motivation significantly influence the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the verificative analysis using statistical data and a parametric statistical approach, the following conclusions were obtained. The leadership of the Head of Department

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has a significant influence on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency, with an effect contribution of 4.2%. The level of significance was confirmed through hypothesis testing using the t-test, which indicated that the calculated t-value was greater than the critical t-table value. Employee work motivation also has a significant influence on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency, with an effect contribution of 42.5%. The significance level was demonstrated through hypothesis testing using the t-test, which showed that the calculated t-value exceeded the t-table value.

Furthermore, the leadership of the Head of Department and employee work motivation simultaneously exert a significant influence on the quality of public services at the PUTR Department of Majalengka Regency, with a combined effect contribution of 62.4%, while the remaining 37.6% is influenced by other factors not included in the model, such as leadership, organizational coordination, organizational climate, and employee career development. The level of significance was verified through hypothesis testing using the F-test, which demonstrated that the calculated F-value was greater than the critical F-table value.

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