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LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION, AND WORK MOTIVATION AS DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN LAMPUNG MADRASAH EDUCATION UNITS

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ABSTRAK

Kinerja pegawai pada unit pendidikan madrasah menentukan mutu administrasi, koordinasi program, dan layanan pendidikan Kementerian Agama. Permasalahan penelitian ini adalah kepemimpinan, komunikasi organisasi, dan motivasi kerja tidak selalu memberikan kontribusi langsung dengan kekuatan yang sama terhadap kinerja. Penelitian menguji enam hubungan langsung di antara keempat konstruk pada tiga kantor Kementerian Agama di Provinsi Lampung. Pendekatan kuantitatif dengan survei deskriptif-asosiatif dan analisis jalur digunakan. Dari populasi 528 pegawai, 94 pegawai unit pendidikan madrasah menjadi responden: 36 dari Kantor Wilayah Provinsi Lampung, 32 dari Kantor Kota Bandar Lampung, dan 26 dari Kantor Kabupaten Pesawaran. Data diperoleh melalui kuesioner terstruktur. Kepemimpinan signifikan terhadap komunikasi organisasi (β=0,438) dan kinerja (β=0,718); komunikasi signifikan terhadap motivasi (β=0,213); dan motivasi signifikan terhadap kinerja (β=0,213). Kepemimpinan tidak signifikan terhadap motivasi (β=0,037), sedangkan komunikasi tidak signifikan terhadap kinerja (β=0,020). Kepemimpinan menjadi pengungkit langsung terkuat bagi kinerja, sedangkan komunikasi tampak lebih bermakna ketika memperkuat motivasi. Kantor Kementerian Agama disarankan meningkatkan kepemimpinan direktif, suportif, partisipatif, dan berorientasi prestasi; komunikasi dua arah, umpan balik, dan koordinasi lintas unit; serta motivasi berbasis pencapaian dan afiliasi. Penelitian selanjutnya perlu memperluas sampel, menggunakan desain longitudinal, dan menguji mediasi secara eksplisit.

Keywords:
Leadership; Organizational Communication; Work Motivation; Employee Performance; Madrasah Education

ABSTRACT

Employee performance in madrasah education units influences the quality of administration, program coordination, and educational services within Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs. The research problem is that leadership, organizational communication, and work motivation may not contribute directly to performance with equal strength. This study tests six direct relationships among these four constructs across three Ministry offices in Lampung Province. A quantitative descriptive-associative survey and path analysis were used. From a population of 528 employees, 94 madrasah education-unit employees participated: 36 from the Lampung Provincial Office, 32 from Bandar Lampung City, and 26 from Pesawaran Regency. Data were collected through structured questionnaires. Leadership significantly predicted organizational communication (β=0.438) and performance (β=0.718); communication predicted motivation (β=0.213); and motivation predicted performance (β=0.213). Leadership did not significantly predict motivation (β=0.037), while communication did not significantly predict performance (β=0.020). Leadership is therefore the strongest direct performance lever, while communication appears more consequential when it strengthens motivation. The offices should reinforce directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership, two-way feedback, cross-unit coordination, and achievement-based motivational practices. Future studies should use broader samples, longitudinal designs, and explicit mediation tests to clarify the mechanisms of employee performance.

A. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a central concern in public educational administration because the quality of everyday work determines whether policy, budgeting, data services, teacher support, and institutional coordination are translated into reliable services. In Indonesia, madrasah education units within the Ministry of Religious Affairs combine the demands of public bureaucracy with the mission of Islamic education. Employees therefore work under formal rules while also being expected to demonstrate responsibility, service orientation, coordination, and ethical conduct. The dissertation converted into this article focuses on four constructs: leadership, organizational communication, work motivation, and employee performance. Its practical concern is not whether these factors matter in general, but how strongly they relate to one another in the observed organizational system.

Current public-management evidence makes leadership and motivation plausible determinants of performance, yet it also warns against assuming identical effects in every setting. Public service motivation is positively associated with individual job performance across studies, although cultural conditions influence the magnitude of the relationship (Fan, Blalock, and Lyu 2022). Longitudinal meta-analytic evidence further indicates that motivation is more likely to precede later job performance than to be merely a consequence of performance (Wang, Luan, and Ma 2024). Leadership research in public organizations likewise links servant, transformational, and bureaucratic leadership with job performance, innovative behavior, and public service motivation (Vuong 2023; Pham et al. 2024; Lesmana et al. 2022). Indonesian studies also show that leadership outcomes can depend on discipline, organizational culture, and motivational mechanisms (Handayani and Hakim 2022; Niken, Putra, and Azka 2022).

For Islamic organizations, leadership has an additional ethical and relational meaning. Recent studies indicate that ethical leadership can improve employee outcomes through Islamic work ethics and knowledge sharing, while Islamic work ethics themselves are associated with affective commitment, performance, and organizational climate (Udin 2024; Udin et al. 2022; Badar et al. 2024). Transformational leadership may also operate through knowledge sharing and work passion rather than through a single direct route (Udin and Shaikh 2022). In Islamic banking and Indonesian Islamic workplaces, leadership effects have been connected with job satisfaction, sharia engagement, Islamic work ethics, and employee performance (Sodiq, Ratnasari, and Mawardi 2024; Prasetyo and Fahrullah 2024; Efrina 2022; Rabbad and Astuti 2024). These findings support viewing leadership as a process that can activate communication and motivation, not simply as formal authority.

Organizational communication gives operational meaning to leadership because priorities, task instructions, feedback, coordination, and problem solving are enacted through communication channels. A systematic review of internal communication emphasizes clarity, listening, feedback, responsiveness, and employee voice as important features of an effective internal environment (Santos et al. 2023). Indonesian studies report that communication can strengthen motivation and performance, including through motivational mediation (Dhone and Sarwoko 2022; Damanik and Alfikri 2022; Kuspriyono et al. 2023). In madrasah settings, the communication function of institutional leaders is similarly important for coordinating staff and supporting work performance through formal and informal channels (Lubis et al. 2023; Indriani and Abidin 2024).

Empirical findings, however, are not uniform. Transformational leadership, organizational communication, and motivation have jointly predicted employee performance in an Indonesian education office (Harnani and Rusminingsih 2023), while other recent studies find organizational communication and motivation associated with performance in different organizational contexts (Namaradzani, Jamaludin, and Nandang 2024). Under work-from-home conditions, communication remained significant even when leadership and motivation were not significant in partial tests (Hertina, Agustian, and Kirana 2024). Such variation suggests that communication may sometimes affect performance directly and in other situations operate primarily by improving motivation, role clarity, or coordination.

This issue is relevant to the Ministry of Religious Affairs because work motivation can connect organizational conditions with the effort employees sustain in service delivery. Evidence from the Ministry context has linked motivation with work performance in a model involving workload and stress (Rahim, Sjafrudin, and Prafitaningrum 2022). More recent research also describes work motivation as a bridge between leadership, workspace conditions, and performance (Sumarmi et al. 2025). At the same time, studies from Indonesian public and Islamic organizations show that contextual moderators and mediators can alter the apparent strength of direct leadership effects (Deswan, Jimad, and Hayati 2024; Putri and Sumartik 2024).

Research in Islamic educational management is beginning to connect leadership and management practices with professional performance in schools and madrasahs (Putri et al. 2026; Widodo 2026), but administrative employees in provincial and district/city madrasah education units remain less frequently examined. This study addresses that gap by testing six direct paths: leadership to organizational

communication; leadership to work motivation; organizational communication to work motivation; leadership to employee performance; organizational communication to employee performance; and work motivation to employee performance. The study asks which relationships are statistically supported and what their pattern implies for managing employees in Lampung madrasah education administration.

B. METHOD

The study used a quantitative, descriptive-analytic, associative, and verificative design with cross-sectional survey data. The unit of analysis was the individual employee. The research sites were three Ministry of Religious Affairs offices in Lampung Province: the Lampung Provincial Office, the Bandar Lampung City Office, and the Pesawaran Regency Office. These locations were selected because they represent the organizational setting in which madrasah education services are coordinated at provincial and local levels.

The dissertation reports a population of 528 employees for the three-office setting and an analyzed sample of 94 employees from madrasah education work units. The final sample was distributed proportionally across the three sites: 36 employees from the provincial office, 32 from Bandar Lampung City, and 26 from Pesawaran Regency. The respondent profile shows 36 men (38.29%) and 58 women (61.71%). Educational attainment consisted of 12 senior-high-school graduates (12.77%), 47 bachelor-degree graduates (50.00%), and 35 master-degree graduates (37.23%).

Table 1. Distribution of the Research Sample

Office / Work Unit	Respondents	Percent
Lampung Provincial Ministry Office	36	38.30
Bandar Lampung City Ministry Office	32	34.04
Pesawaran Regency Ministry Office	26	27.66
Total	94	100.00

Source: Dissertation data, processed for this article.

Primary data were obtained through personally administered structured questionnaires using a five-point Likert-type response format. The model contained leadership (X1), organizational communication (X2), work motivation (X3), and employee performance (Y). Performance was operationalized through quality, productivity, job knowledge, reliability, availability, and independence. The dissertation reports that questionnaire items for all four constructs met its item-validity criterion. Reliability coefficients were 0.785 for leadership, 0.615 for organizational communication, 0.617 for work motivation, and 0.749 for employee performance. All 94 distributed questionnaires were returned and processed.

Data analysis combined descriptive statistics with path analysis using IBM SPSS 25. Preliminary procedures in the dissertation included validity and reliability testing and checks of normality, linearity, and homogeneity. Direct-path hypotheses were evaluated with standardized path coefficients and t statistics at $\alpha=0.05$ using the reported critical t value of 1.65. A path was treated as statistically supported when the calculated t value exceeded the critical value. Because the dissertation contains inconsistencies between its abstract/conclusion summaries and its detailed hypothesis

tables, this article uses the Chapter IV hypothesis-testing output, where each coefficient is paired with its t statistic and decision.

The cross-sectional design allows estimation of associations consistent with the proposed causal ordering but does not by itself establish temporal causality. Moreover, the model reported direct paths and did not present bootstrapped indirect-effect tests. Consequently, any interpretation of communication or motivation as an intervening mechanism is presented as a plausible structural pattern rather than as formally demonstrated mediation.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

The 94 usable responses came from all three study sites, producing a complete return rate for the questionnaires distributed to the final sample. The respondent composition indicates a mature public-service workforce and a majority of women, with half of respondents holding a bachelor's degree and more than one-third holding a master's degree. These characteristics provide context for interpreting a model in which formal leadership, information flow, and internal motivation may be experienced differently across ranks, responsibilities, and professional backgrounds.

The detailed path-analysis results support four of the six proposed direct relationships. Leadership significantly predicts organizational communication (β=0.438; t=6.851), organizational communication significantly predicts work motivation (β=0.213; t=4.825), leadership strongly predicts employee performance (β=0.718; t=15.255), and work motivation significantly predicts employee performance (β=0.213; t=4.825). Two paths are not statistically supported: leadership to work motivation (β=0.037; t=0.571) and organizational communication to employee performance (β=0.020; t=0.245). Thus, the largest direct path in the model is leadership to employee performance.

Table 2. Direct Path Analysis

Hypothesized path	β	t	Decision
Leadership → Organizational communication	0.438	6.851	Significant
Leadership → Work motivation	0.037	0.571	Not significant
Organizational communication → Work motivation	0.213	4.825	Significant
Leadership → Employee performance	0.718	15.255	Significant
Organizational communication → Employee performance	0.020	0.245	Not significant
Work motivation → Employee performance	0.213	4.825	Significant

Source: Dissertation data, processed for this article.

First, the positive leadership-to-communication coefficient indicates that employees who perceive stronger leadership also report stronger organizational communication. This relationship is substantively reasonable because leaders establish communication routines, determine how instructions are clarified, open or restrict upward feedback, and shape coordination across units. The result is consistent with the

broader communication literature that treats management responsiveness and feedback as central features of internal communication (Santos et al. 2023) and with madrasah research emphasizing the communication function of institutional leaders (Lubis et al. 2023; Indriani and Abidin 2024).

Second, the direct leadership-to-motivation path is very small and nonsignificant. This means that leadership, as measured in this model, does not reliably explain variation in work motivation after the model's specified relationships are considered. The finding does not imply that leaders are irrelevant to motivation. Rather, it is compatible with research showing that leadership often operates through intervening experiences such as work passion, knowledge sharing, job satisfaction, engagement, organizational climate, or public service motivation (Udin and Shaikh 2022; Sodiq, Ratnasari, and Mawardi 2024; Deswan, Jimad, and Hayati 2024).

Third, organizational communication significantly predicts work motivation. The coefficient is modest, but the statistically supported path is important because it identifies communication as a motivational condition rather than merely a transmission system. Clear task information, accessible supervisors, opportunities to raise problems, coordination among colleagues, and timely feedback can reduce ambiguity and help employees connect daily work with organizational goals. This interpretation is consistent with Indonesian evidence in which internal communication influences motivation and, in some models, performance through motivational mechanisms (Dhone and Sarwoko 2022; Damanik and Alfikri 2022).

Fourth, leadership has the strongest direct association with employee performance. A coefficient of 0.718 is substantially larger than every other direct path reported in the model, indicating that leadership is the most prominent measured performance lever in the three Lampung offices. Comparable public-sector studies report meaningful links between leadership and job performance, though their mechanisms vary across bureaucratic, servant, and transformational approaches (Lesmana et al. 2022; Vuong 2023; Pham et al. 2024). The result also aligns with Indonesian evidence that leadership effectiveness is intertwined with discipline, culture, and performance management (Handayani and Hakim 2022; Niken, Putra, and Azka 2022).

Fifth, organizational communication does not have a statistically significant direct effect on employee performance in the reported path model. The coefficient of 0.020 is close to zero. This finding contrasts with studies that report significant direct communication-performance relationships (Harnani and Rusminingsih 2023; Namaradzani, Jamaludin, and Nandang 2024; Hertina, Agustian, and Kirana 2024). The difference should be treated as context-sensitive evidence rather than as a contradiction to communication theory. In the present model, communication is related to motivation, and motivation is related to performance, so communication may matter through conditions that translate information into sustained effort even though formal mediation was not tested.

Sixth, work motivation significantly predicts employee performance. Employees who report stronger motivation also report better performance outcomes, supporting the view that direction, persistence, and effort remain relevant even in rule-bound public organizations. This result corresponds with meta-analytic evidence that motivation precedes later job performance (Wang, Luan, and Ma 2024) and with public-sector findings connecting motivation with performance and leadership-related

conditions (Fan, Blalock, and Lyu 2022; Rahim, Sjafrudin, and Prafitaningrum 2022; Sumarmi et al. 2025).

Taken together, the results do not support a simple chain in which leadership directly raises motivation and communication directly raises performance. Instead, they show differentiated roles: leadership is strongly associated with performance and communication; communication is associated with motivation; and motivation is associated with performance. This configuration is particularly relevant for administrative reform because it suggests that leaders should not treat communication as an end in itself. Communication practices are more likely to matter when they clarify work, create voice and trust, and strengthen the motivational conditions under which employees perform.

2. Analysis/Discussion

The most consequential finding is the dominance of leadership in the direct prediction of performance. In a public educational bureaucracy, leadership can influence performance through task direction, priority setting, role clarification, monitoring, recognition, and the credibility of managerial decisions. The evidence therefore supports the dissertation's practical emphasis on directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership. Directive behavior is useful when regulations or task procedures require precise interpretation; supportive behavior can reduce interpersonal barriers; participative leadership creates employee voice; and achievement orientation links effort to clear service targets. These practices should be combined rather than treated as mutually exclusive styles.

The communication pattern requires a more nuanced response. Because communication predicts motivation but not performance directly, management should improve the quality and functionality of communication rather than simply increase message volume. Downward communication should clarify duties, policy changes, deadlines, and performance feedback. Upward communication should allow employees to report constraints, submit suggestions, and seek clarification without unnecessary hierarchical barriers. Horizontal and cross-unit communication should facilitate coordination, data exchange, and problem solving. Recent internal-communication and Indonesian organizational studies support this emphasis on feedback, responsiveness, and two-way interaction (Santos et al. 2023; Kuspriyono et al. 2023).

The Islamic educational context strengthens the importance of how leadership and communication are practiced. Ethical conduct, fairness, consultation, responsibility, and service are not only normative ideals; they can shape whether employees trust leaders and interpret organizational messages as credible. Studies of Islamic work ethics and Islamic leadership show that performance-related outcomes are often connected with engagement, job satisfaction, knowledge sharing, and employee-relations climate (Udin 2024; Udin et al. 2022; Badar et al. 2024; Prasetyo and Fahrullah 2024). For madrasah education administration, Islamic organizational values should therefore be translated into transparent decisions, fair task allocation, respectful feedback, dependable follow-up, and recognition of responsible performance.

Motivation should be managed through meaningful work conditions rather than occasional encouragement. The dissertation highlights achievement, influence or responsibility, and affiliation as relevant motivational needs. Managers can respond by setting attainable but challenging targets, recognizing reliable service, assigning

responsibility for improvement initiatives, supporting professional development, and strengthening constructive peer relationships. These actions are consistent with the significant motivation-performance path and with contemporary findings that motivation can connect leadership and workplace conditions with performance (Sumarmi et al. 2025). They also provide a practical route for communication to become behaviorally consequential.

Several limitations should guide interpretation. The study is cross-sectional, uses self-reported questionnaire data, and covers only 94 employees in three offices, so generalization beyond Lampung should be cautious. The dissertation also contains inconsistent intermediate figures, particularly between summary sections and detailed hypothesis tables; this article therefore reports the inferential coefficients from the detailed Chapter IV tables. Future research should use larger multi-province samples, consistent sampling frames, longitudinal or multi-source designs, and structural equation modeling with measurement assessment and bootstrapped indirect effects. Potential mediators include public service motivation, job satisfaction, engagement, organizational commitment, competence, Islamic work ethics, and digital communication quality. Such extensions would connect this administrative evidence with emerging Islamic educational management research (Putri et al. 2026; Widodo 2026).

D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that leadership, organizational communication, and work motivation play different roles in employee performance within Lampung madrasah education units. Four direct paths are statistically supported: leadership to organizational communication (β=0.438), organizational communication to work motivation (β=0.213), leadership to employee performance (β=0.718), and work motivation to employee performance (β=0.213). Leadership to motivation (β=0.037) and organizational communication to performance (β=0.020) are not statistically supported. Leadership is therefore the strongest direct performance factor in the reported model.

The practical implication is to strengthen leadership while connecting communication more deliberately with motivation. Ministry offices should maintain clear direction, supportive supervision, employee participation, and achievement-oriented goals; improve downward, upward, horizontal, and cross-unit communication; and use recognition, responsibility, professional development, and collaborative problem solving to sustain motivation. In an Islamic educational administration setting, these practices should be implemented through fairness, consultation, integrity, responsibility, and service.

Future studies should broaden the geographic scope and sample, apply longitudinal or multi-source data, and test mediation explicitly. Public service motivation, job satisfaction, engagement, organizational commitment, Islamic work ethics, competence, and communication quality are promising extensions. This would clarify not only whether leadership and communication matter, but through which mechanisms they produce durable performance improvements.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author contributions:

Khairul Saleh: conceptualization, investigation, data collection, analysis, and original dissertation writing; journal-article adaptation and final approval by the author.

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Data availability:

The analyzed data are associated with the author's dissertation research and may be requested from the corresponding author, subject to institutional and respondent-confidentiality requirements.

Disclaimer:

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