

# Driving Employee Performance: The Role of Transformational Leadership, Workload, and Motivation at Malang's Cooperative and Trade Office

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## Abstract

This study explores the dynamics between transformational leadership, workload, and employee performance within the Malang City Office of Cooperatives, Industry, and Trade. Recognizing that performance gaps in the public sector often stem from imbalanced workloads and leadership approaches, this research specifically examines how work motivation acts as a vital bridge in these relationships. Using a quantitative approach and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS), the study analyzed data from 121 civil servants. The findings reveal that transformational leadership and managed workloads are powerful drivers of motivation. Furthermore, the results indicate that leadership, workload, and motivation each have a direct, positive impact on overall performance. Notably, work motivation serves as a key mediator; it is the psychological engine that transforms organizational inputs and leadership guidance into tangible results. The evidence suggests that achieving peak performance requires more than just administrative adjustments. It demands a holistic strategy that balances optimized task distribution with inspiring leadership to foster a motivated workforce. These insights provide a roadmap for public sector organizations to improve productivity through competency-based management and a deeper focus on employee well-being.

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## 1. Introduction

The need for optimizing performance among workers is made even greater due to the transformation currently happening in the public sector as well as the state-owned companies of Indonesia. It was recently discovered through researches that achieving optimal performance among workers requires an even more holistic and strategic approach, especially when it comes to preparing workers for the digital era (Annisa Azzahra et al., 2025). In Diskopindag Malang, for example, it is important for managers to be able to do not only the managerial duties but also help create an environment for continuous improvement of skills. The transformation towards becoming a more dynamic public institution presents another challenge that requires an innovative approach from the leadership in terms of keeping employees motivated to perform. Since many public organizations throughout different regions start to experiment with implementing a more dynamic structure to achieve higher levels of flexibility (Amanda et al., 2025), it will become essential for the leadership to motivate and direct employees to focus on work no matter how the situation changes.

Employee performance is the cornerstone of success for government organizations tasked with delivering high-quality public services. The Office of Cooperatives, Industry, and Trade (Diskopindag) of Malang City holds a strategic mandate to empower Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), foster industrial growth, and regulate trade activities. Given the complexity of these responsibilities, the institution requires a workforce that is not only competent but also

highly motivated and adaptive to ensure that public services remain responsive to the community's evolving needs.

However, current observations suggest that employee performance at Diskopindag has not reached its full potential. A primary issue is the evident workload imbalance between generations of staff. Newer employees often bear the brunt of administrative and operational tasks, while more experienced senior staff occasionally manage lighter loads despite receiving equivalent or higher compensation. This discrepancy fosters a sense of injustice that erodes morale. While several studies (Saiful, 2020; Ramadan & Handayani, 2024; Attawab et al., 2025) suggest that excessive workload stifles motivation, others, such as Muhindra & Suhana (2025), argue that workload has no significant impact. This academic debate highlights a critical need for further investigation within the unique bureaucratic structure of local government.

The operational landscape at Diskopindag Malang has become increasingly complex due to the rapid digitalization of MSME empowerment programs. This technological shift introduces a layer of technical pressure that often leaves employees feeling overextended. When this workload exceeds a manageable threshold, it frequently leads to burnout and a noticeable decline in morale, which ultimately stifles productivity. Interestingly, the academic community remains divided on this issue; while Al Haddad et al. (2023) highlight the detrimental effects of excessive demands, Adisti et al. (2024) suggest that a higher workload can, in certain contexts, actually boost performance. Meanwhile, others find no significant correlation at all (Indriani et al., 2023). These conflicting perspectives suggest that the impact of workload is not absolute, but is instead moderated by critical intervening factors such as leadership quality and internal drive.

To navigate these challenges, leadership serves as a vital strategic lever. Recognizing the limitations of rigid, authoritarian structures, Diskopindag Malang has begun embracing a Transformational Leadership model. This paradigm shift prioritizes inspiration, fostering innovation, and guiding the staff through the nuances of digital transformation. Under this model, leaders are no longer mere supervisors but act as catalysts for growth who empower their teams to take initiative. However, simply changing leadership styles may not be a universal fix; as Riansyah et al. (2023) argue, leadership might not directly enhance performance unless it successfully triggers a psychological response within the employees. The need for upskilling and reskilling has also emerged as an integral part of HR development in regional governments (Utami et al., 2025). In light of changes in the nature of tasks and increased integration of technologies into the delivery of public services, there arises an increased pressure on workers, demanding mental flexibility and motivation at a relatively high level. Through meeting the developmental needs, the organization will make sure that its employees are not just responding to job pressure but have the necessary skills and motivation to perform well.

This psychological bridge is found in Work Motivation. Within the current environment of Diskopindag, employee motivation is in a state of flux, caught between the strain of heavy workloads and a perceived lack of professional recognition. Motivation functions as the internal engine that processes organizational inputs—such as a leader's vision or a specific task assignment—and converts them into tangible excellence. While the prevailing scholarly consensus (Damanik, 2024; Prasetyani, 2025) supports the idea that motivation is the primary driver of performance, dissenting voices like Susanti et al. (2025) remind us that this relationship can vary. Consequently, placing motivation as a mediating variable is essential to unraveling the complex ways in which leadership and workload ultimately influence employee behavior and organizational outcomes.

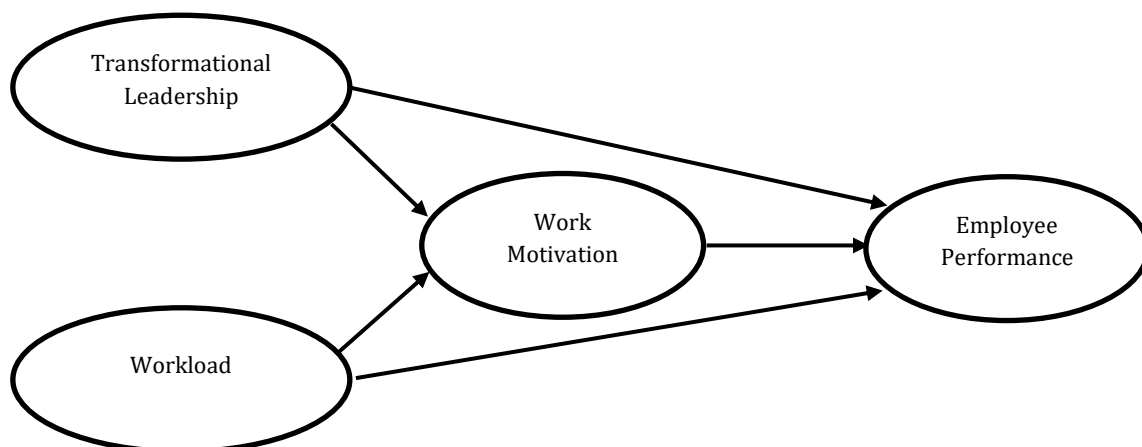
Despite the wealth of existing research, there is a distinct lack of studies that integrate these four variables into a single structural model within the specific context of Indonesian regional government offices. Most previous studies focus on the private sector or analyze these factors in isolation. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining how work motivation mediates the effects of transformational leadership and workload on employee performance at Diskopindag Malang. By doing so, this research offers fresh empirical evidence on how psychological processes help civil servants translate organizational demands into excellence in public service.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to provide a comprehensive framework for optimizing human capital within the public sector, particularly in an era of rapid digital and structural transformation. By investigating the interplay between transformational leadership

and workload, this study goes beyond superficial observations to uncover the underlying mechanisms that drive civil servant productivity. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for government institutions like Diskopindag Malang, as it allows for the development of evidence-based policies that ensure administrative efficiency is not achieved at the cost of employee well-being.

Furthermore, this study serves as a critical diagnostic tool for addressing the growing phenomenon of generational workload disparity and its impact on organizational harmony. In a bureaucratic environment where seniority often dictates status but not necessarily task distribution, identifying how work motivation acts as a mediator can help leaders design more equitable work structures. By clarifying the role of motivation, this research provides actionable insights into how leadership can bridge the gap between heavy organizational demands and the psychological needs of the workforce, ultimately preventing burnout and high turnover rates among talented new personnel.

Ultimately, the findings of this research carry broader implications for the quality of public governance and community welfare. As Diskopindag Malang plays a vital role in local economic development and MSME empowerment, any improvement in employee performance directly translates into more responsive and innovative public services. This study, therefore, does not merely contribute to the academic discourse on organizational behavior but also functions as a strategic guide for regional governments to modernize their leadership approaches. It offers a blueprint for creating a resilient and highly motivated workforce capable of navigating the complexities of modern governance.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework  
Source : Developed in this study (2026).

## 2. Methods

As conceptual explanation, Transformational Leadership is fundamentally characterized by a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and unlock the latent potential of subordinates, driving them to achieve performance levels that surpass organizational expectations. Bass and Riggio (2006) describe this approach as a collaborative synergy between leaders and staff, where individual values are transformed and aligned with collective organizational interests to elevate morale and productivity. Complementing this view, Northouse (2015) emphasizes that the core of transformational leadership lies in building visionary relationships that foster positive organizational change through inspirational influence. Parallel to leadership, Workload serves as a critical determinant of organizational efficiency and employee well-being. Mangkunegara (2019) defines workload as the total volume of tasks assigned to an employee within a specific timeframe, which significantly impacts both their physical and mental state. This is further elaborated by Munandar (2014), who frames workload as a dynamic condition arising from the complex interaction between specific task demands, the work environment, and the individual's

inherent capabilities. The internal driving force behind these dynamics is Work Motivation, which dictates the level of individual productivity. According to Robbins and Judge (2019), motivation is a multidimensional process encompassing the intensity, direction, and persistence of an individual's efforts toward achieving professional goals. Noe et al. (2023) further clarify that motivation results from a strategic blend of internal desires and external incentives that encourage employees to maximize their contributions toward organizational objectives. Ultimately, these factors culminate in Employee Performance, which reflects the tangible success and behavioral output of an individual in alignment with their institutional role (Zainal, 2015). As defined by Mangkunegara (2020), performance is the measurable result of an employee's execution of duties, evaluated through both qualitative and quantitative standards that fulfill their organizational responsibilities.

This research adopted a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to investigate the causal dynamics between transformational leadership, workload, work motivation, and employee performance. The primary objective was to evaluate both the direct pathways and the indirect mechanisms through which work motivation serves as a mediating variable. The study was conducted at the Malang City Office of Cooperatives, Industry, and Trade (Diskopindag), involving a population of 172 civil servants. By applying the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 121 respondents was established. To ensure every department was fairly represented and the results remained unbiased, a simple random sampling technique was utilized.

Primary data were gathered through the distribution of a structured questionnaire tailored to the organizational context of the civil servants. Each of the four research constructs—transformational leadership, workload, work motivation, and employee performance—was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To uphold the academic rigor and content validity of the instrument, all indicators were meticulously adapted from established organizational theories and validated empirical frameworks. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a method chosen for its robustness in predictive analysis and its proficiency in handling complex structural models. The evaluation was carried out in two distinct phases: first, an assessment of the measurement model (outer model) was performed to ensure the validity and reliability of the indicators. Subsequently, the structural model (inner model) was analyzed to test the hypotheses regarding the direct and indirect relationships between the variables. This comprehensive analytical framework allowed for a precise determination of how leadership and work demands ultimately influence performance through the lens of motivation.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

The analysis of the respondent profiles reveals that the Bendo Sub-district apparatus is dominated by personnel with extensive years of service and adequate educational backgrounds. This demographic composition serves as a fundamental asset for fostering a culture of accountability. Based on descriptive statistics, the competence variable (X1) recorded the highest mean score of 4.40, indicating that the officials possess a profound understanding of their primary duties and functions. This result is closely aligned with the findings for organizational commitment (X2) and community participation (X3), which achieved average scores of 4.38 and 4.37, respectively. The high perception across these three independent variables correlates directly with the accountability value (Y), which falls into the "very high" category (4.38). This suggests that, in general, the accountability mechanisms at the research site are functioning in accordance with established standards.

Respondents in this study were civil servants working at the Malang City Office of Cooperatives, Industry, and Trade (Diskopindag), a regional government institution with strategic duties in MSME empowerment, industrial development, and trade supervision. The respondents were actively involved in various operational and administrative functions, making them an appropriate representation for examining leadership, workload, motivation, and performance in the public sector context. The evaluation of the measurement model confirms that all indicators meet the criteria of validity and reliability. Outer loading values for all constructs exceed the minimum acceptable threshold ( $\geq 0.70$ ), while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above

0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values demonstrate strong internal consistency across constructs. These results indicate that the measurement instruments adequately capture transformational leadership style, workload, work motivation, and employee performance in the public sector context.

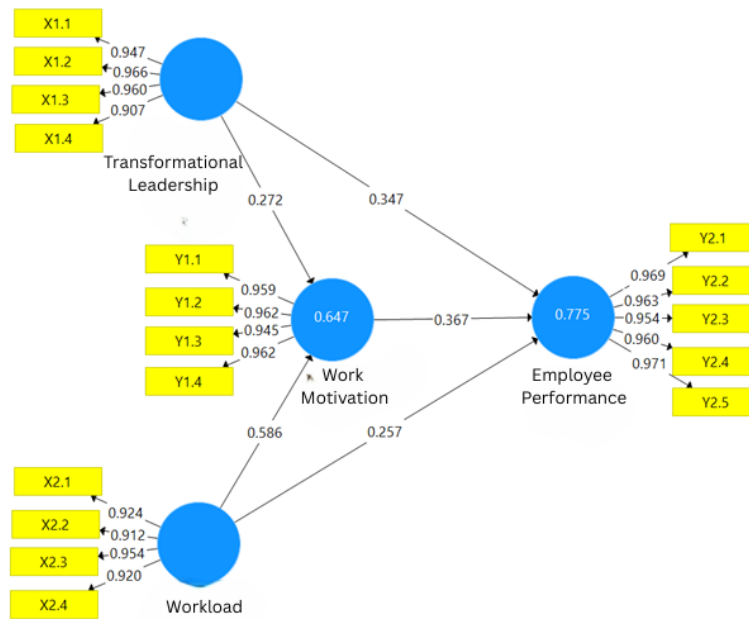
**Table 1.** Validity and Reliability Test of Research Variables

Variable / Indicators	Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>		<b>0.960</b>	<b>0.971</b>	<b>0.894</b>
Idealized Influence (X <sub>1.1</sub> )	0.947			
Inspirational Motivation (X <sub>1.2</sub> )	0.966			
Intellectual Stimulation (X <sub>1.3</sub> )	0.960			
Individualized Consideration (X <sub>1.4</sub> )	0.907			
<b>Workload</b>		<b>0.946</b>	<b>0.961</b>	<b>0.860</b>
Work Volume (X <sub>2.1</sub> )	0.924			
Task Complexity (X <sub>2.2</sub> )	0.912			
Time Pressure (X <sub>2.3</sub> )	0.954			
Extra Task (X <sub>2.4</sub> )	0.920			
<b>Work Motivation</b>		<b>0.969</b>	<b>0.977</b>	<b>0.916</b>
Esteem Needs (Y <sub>1.1</sub> )	0.959			
Social Relationship (Y <sub>1.2</sub> )	0.962			
Need for achievement (Y <sub>1.3</sub> )	0.945			
Commitment for organization (Y <sub>1.4</sub> )	0.962			
<b>Employee Performance</b>		<b>0.981</b>	<b>0.985</b>	<b>0.928</b>
Work Quality (Y <sub>2.1</sub> )	0.969			
Work Quantity (Y <sub>2.2</sub> )	0.963			
Punctuality (Y <sub>2.3</sub> )	0.954			
Job Attendance (Y <sub>2.4</sub> )	0.960			
Cooperation (Y <sub>2.5</sub> )	0.971			

Source: data analyzed (2026).

The structural model analysis reveals that transformational leadership style has a significant positive effect on work motivation. This finding indicates that the leader's ability to inspire, provide role models, and pay attention to individual needs plays a critical role in strengthening employees' motivation in a government office environment. Workload also demonstrates a significant positive effect on work motivation, suggesting that well-managed workload, particularly time pressure perceived as realistic and manageable, can enhance employees' motivation rather than diminish it.

Furthermore, transformational leadership style has a significant positive effect on employee performance. Leaders who can provide inspiration, support, and empowerment to employees are proven to encourage improvements in the quality, quantity, and timeliness of work completion. Workload also shows a significant positive effect on employee performance, indicating that a workload aligned with employee capabilities allows them to work more focused, productively, and with higher quality. Work motivation exhibits a strong and significant influence on employee performance, confirming that employees' motivational level determines their consistency, adaptability, and service performance in a dynamic public service setting.



**Figure 1.** Path Coefficients  
Source: data analyzed (2026).

The results of the study indicate that transformational leadership style has a significant positive effect on work motivation ( $\beta = 0.272$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ). Leaders who effectively articulate an inspiring vision (Inspirational Motivation) and act with consistency (Idealized Influence) create a work environment where employees feel their roles are meaningful and valued. This emotional connection fuels their internal drive to perform, aligning with the core tenets of Bass & Riggio's (2006) transformational leadership theory. This finding supports previous research by Putra & Sudibya (2019), Kartawidjaja (2020), Sitorus & Agustian (2023), Purnamasari & Utari (2024), and Nurlaela et al. (2025), which demonstrated that transformational leadership style positively influences work motivation.

**Table 2.** Direct Effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
Transformational Leadership → Work Motivation	0.272	0.281	0.091	2.973	0.004
Transformational Leadership → Employee Performance	0.347	0.350	0.107	3.250	0.001
Workload → Work Motivation	0.586	0.572	0.092	6.349	0.000
Workload → Employee Performance	0.257	0.257	0.117	2.201	0.030
Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.367	0.362	0.110	3.348	0.001

Source: data analyzed (2026).

Interestingly, workload was found to have a stronger positive influence on work motivation ( $\beta = 0.586$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) than leadership. This suggests that for employees at Diskopindag, a well-managed workload, particularly one where time pressure is perceived as a manageable challenge rather than a source of stress, can be a powerful motivator. When employees feel the demands of their job are within their capacity and that deadlines are realistic, it fosters a sense of competence and accomplishment, thereby enhancing their motivation. This finding supports the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which posits that job demands (like workload) can be motivating when sufficient resources (like clear guidance and a supportive

structure) are present. This result is consistent with Saiful (2020), Wijaya (2020), Ramadan & Handayani (2024), Hardono et al. (2019), Sitorus & Siagian (2023), and Attawab et al. (2025), but contradicts Muhindra & Suhana (2025).

The results also show that transformational leadership style directly affects employee performance ( $\beta = 0.347$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Leaders who inspire and intellectually stimulate their staff empower them to go beyond routine task completion, resulting in higher quality work, better problem-solving, and greater efficiency. This direct effect aligns with findings from Armilasari et al. (2023), Purnamasari & Utari (2024), Nurlaela et al. (2025), Yustika (2025), and Lempoy et al. (2025), reinforcing the role of transformational leaders as direct drivers of performance in the public sector, while contradicting Riansyah et al. (2023).

Workload also directly affects employee performance ( $\beta = 0.257$ ;  $p = 0.030$ ). When employees are not overwhelmed or under-challenged, they can focus their energy on producing high-quality outputs, meeting deadlines, and collaborating effectively. This finding echoes the work of Koesomowidjojo (2019), who emphasized that effective workload management is key to unlocking employee productivity. This result supports Al Haddad et al. (2023), Indrayana & Putra (2024), Hardono et al. (2019), Nurhandayani (2024), Kurnia & Sitorus (2022), and Adisti et al. (2024), but contradicts Nabawi (2019), Indriani et al. (2023), and Muhindra & Suhana (2025).

Work motivation was found to be the strongest predictor of employee performance ( $\beta = 0.367$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). This finding is consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 2020), which emphasizes the role of motivation in adaptation, persistence, and job performance in service environments. This result supports Liana (2021), Utama et al. (2021), Damanik (2024), Muhindra & Suhana (2025), Hardono et al. (2019), Purnamasari & Utari (2024), and Prasetyani (2025), while contradicting Susanti et al. (2025).

### Mediation Effects of Work Motivation

The mediation analysis indicates that work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee performance, as well as between workload and employee performance. These findings suggest that both leadership and workload contribute optimally to job performance when employees have strong motivation to apply their efforts. In public sector operations, work motivation serves as a psychological mechanism that translates organizational inputs into professional service behavior.

**Table 3.** Indirect Effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
Transformational Leadership → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.272	0.281	0.091	2.973	0.004
Workload → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	0.347	0.350	0.107	3.250	0.001

Source: data analyzed (2026).

The results of the mediation test confirmed that work motivation acts as a key mediator. The indirect effect of transformational leadership on employee performance through work motivation ( $\beta = 0.100$ ;  $p = 0.035$ ) and the indirect effect of workload on employee performance through work motivation ( $\beta = 0.215$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ) are both significant. These findings confirm that employee performance in government offices is shaped by the integration of leadership, workload, and internal psychological motivation. Work motivation serves as the "gatekeeper" through which the positive aspects of leadership and workload are channeled into performance, demonstrating that motivation is not just an outcome but a vital process for translating organizational inputs into performance outputs.

### Discussion and Implications

The relevance of this study can be found in the ability to propose a holistic approach for maximizing the effectiveness of human resources in the public sector, especially in the period of fast-paced digitalization and restructuring. The study of the interaction between transformational

leadership and workload will allow going further from a surface level to understanding the inner workings behind the productivity of civil servants. Knowledge about the connection between transformational leadership, workload, and work motivation is essential for governmental organizations such as Diskopindag Malang in terms of ensuring that their administration functions effectively without neglecting the welfare of employees. Besides, the study plays a crucial diagnostic function in solving the problem of generationally imbalanced workload in terms of its influence on organizational cohesion. In a bureaucratic organization, where the level of seniority automatically grants some individuals higher status than others while not always assigning them extra tasks, determining the role of work motivation as a mediator is vital in designing equal distribution of the burden of work.

Ultimately, the findings of this research carry broader implications for the quality of public governance and community welfare. As Diskopindag Malang plays a vital role in local economic development and MSME empowerment, any improvement in employee performance directly translates into more responsive and innovative public services. This study, therefore, does not merely contribute to the academic discourse on organizational behavior but also functions as a strategic guide for regional governments to modernize their leadership approaches. It offers a blueprint for creating a resilient and highly motivated workforce capable of navigating the complexities of modern governance.

This study advances public sector human resource management research by refining the performance framework through a leadership–workload–psychological integration model. The novelty lies in positioning work motivation as a functional mediator rather than a parallel predictor, thereby clarifying why previous studies reported inconsistent findings regarding the effects of transformational leadership and workload on employee performance. By grounding the model in Social Cognitive Theory and testing it within a regional government office setting, this research provides context-specific empirical evidence that strengthens theory applicability in public administration. For government agencies like Diskopindag, the findings imply that human resource management should move beyond routine task allocation toward motivation-oriented development. Leadership training must focus on inspirational motivation and individualized consideration. Similarly, workload management should be aligned with employee capacities and supported by regular workload analysis to reinforce employees' confidence and motivation. For public sector management, this study suggests that effective performance improvement programs should combine leadership development with psychological empowerment strategies. Providing employees with structured autonomy, recognition, and continuous performance feedback can significantly strengthen work motivation, enabling employees to internalize organizational goals and demonstrate higher performance. This approach positions human resource management not merely as administrative compliance, but as a strategic talent development process. This study offers a novel contribution by empirically demonstrating that work motivation is the central psychological mechanism that transforms transformational leadership style and workload into actual employee performance among civil servants in a regional government office context. Unlike previous studies that examined leadership and workload in isolation, this research integrates leadership practices, workload management, and psychological readiness within a single PLS-SEM model.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In view of the empirical findings discussed above, this study finds that transformational leadership as well as strategic workload management forms two pillars of great importance when it comes to ensuring the excellence of public servants. At Diskopindag Malang, the introduction of visionary leadership has been found effective in promoting a proactive attitude among its employees, while workload management acts as an important catalyst for their motivation. This combination of two forces makes sure that workers are not only equipped with technical skills to achieve their goals but also mentally aligned with the broader goals of the organization.

Perhaps the most important takeaway from this study is the need for work motivation to act as an intermediary factor. The analysis shows that while external factors from an organizational perspective, such as effective leadership and task-related pressures, may impact employee performance positively, the latter will only materialize when the intrinsic motivation of

employees is activated. Work motivation functions as the essential psychological engine that transforms input from management into outputs in terms of performance, becoming the necessary mediator through which civil servants attain performance readiness. It thus becomes apparent that in government organizations, psychological motivation should be treated with equal importance as any organizational structure.

In conclusion, this analysis offers a valuable contribution to the theory of Social Cognitive Theory, proving that work motivation in the public sector is a dynamic bridging construct rather than an individual quality. Using empirical data gathered in a unique regional government office setting, this study demonstrates that only under circumstances in which workloads and leadership are aligned in a way that considers psychological variables can sustained performance be reached. Thus, this research offers guidelines for administrators who seek to establish a robust and motivated bureaucratic system in contemporary society.

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