



The effect of servant leadership and non-physical work environment on employee performance with motivation as mediation at the nusakambangan open correctional institution

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to examine the influence of the non-physical work environment and servant leadership on employee performance in the Nusakambangan open prison, with motivation as a mediating variable. Servant leadership emphasizes a leadership style that prioritizes service to subordinates, while the non-physical work environment includes psychological and social aspects that can affect employee comfort and productivity. This descriptive study used a quantitative approach. This study involved 68 people working at the Nusakambangan Open Prison. Sampling saturation was used to cover the entire population, consisting of 68 employees. In this study, interviews, observations, and questionnaires were used to collect data. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares (PLS) was used to conduct data analysis. The research findings indicate that servant leadership has an impact on motivation, as does the non-physical work environment; both affect performance through motivational mediation. The results suggest that a leadership style that prioritizes service and a psychologically supportive work environment can increase employee motivation, which in turn can lead to better performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is crucial to the success of public sector organizations, particularly in institutions like correctional facilities, which have complex social, legal, and moral responsibilities. Success in the development, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of inmates are two indicators of correctional facility performance. Because of this complexity, human resource management in correctional facilities differs from that of other public institutions.

One correctional institution in Indonesia that implements an open and social reintegration approach is the Nusakambangan Open Penitentiary. Unlike closed prisons, open prisons prioritize job training, independence, and inmate involvement in productive

activities closer to the community. Because of this, staff must function as supervisors, facilitators, and motivators. Their performance is crucial to the success of the According to several studies on public administration and human resource management, several factors influence the performance of public sector employees. These factors include leadership, the work environment, and motivation to perform at work. According to Perry and Wise (2019) and Wright and Pandey (2018), supportive working conditions and leadership style play a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of employee performance. However, empirical research specifically examining correctional institutions, particularly open correctional institutions, remains very limited.

The complex social characteristics of correctional institutions include high levels of social interaction, psychological stress, security risks, and moral responsibility for changing inmates' behavior. Therefore, the limitations of this study indicate a research gap that needs to be addressed. Therefore, research is needed that specifically examines aspects that influence employee performance in correctional settings. This must be done in a manner that is appropriate to the characteristics of the organization.

In this context, the leadership approach known as servant leadership positions leaders as servants to their subordinates. This approach emphasizes the principles of empowerment, empathy, and individual development, as well as a commitment to employee growth and well-being (Greenleaf, 1977; Eva et al., 2019). Servant leadership differs from conventional leadership styles that emphasize authority and control. This style focuses more on building, supporting, and creating strong relationships between leaders and their subordinates.

In the context of public organizations, particularly correctional institutions, servant leadership is crucial because it emphasizes humanitarian values, justice, and social responsibility in addition to productivity. Previous research has shown that employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, and performance are positively influenced by servant leadership (Liden et al., 2014; Sendjaya et al., 2019; Yemseran et al., 2023). However, this research is expected to broaden the empirical scope of servant leadership theory because studies on servant leadership are still rare in organizational environments with high social complexity such as correctional institutions. Besides leadership, the work environment is another important component that influences employee performance. According to Chiaburu and Harrison (2008), the work environment encompasses not only physical elements, such as facilities and infrastructure, but also non-physical elements, such as social interactions and psychological conditions within the organization, communication, emotional support, and relationships between employees.

The non-physical aspects of the work environment in correctional institutions are crucial because employees often face stressful work situations, conflict, and emotional stress due to their interactions with inmates. A workplace lacking physical contact can cause stress, reduce work comfort, and ultimately negatively impact employee performance. Conversely, a friendly and harmonious work environment can increase psychological safety, enhance cooperation, and encourage more optimal performance (Handayani & Fauzan, 2022; Listiana, 2023). However, previous research on the direct influence of the non-physical work environment on performance has yielded mixed results. These results suggest that other factors influence this relationship. Work motivation, as an intervening variable in this context, is important to study.

Internal and external factors known as work motivation drive people to act, maintain behavior, and strive to achieve organizational goals. In correctional institutions, motivation to work is linked to moral calling, a sense of social responsibility, and a commitment to public service. Motivation to work is also linked to material incentives. Correctional officers not only carry out administrative tasks but also serve as social change agents, helping inmates behave better. This study attempts to explain how servant leadership and the non-physical work environment influence performance

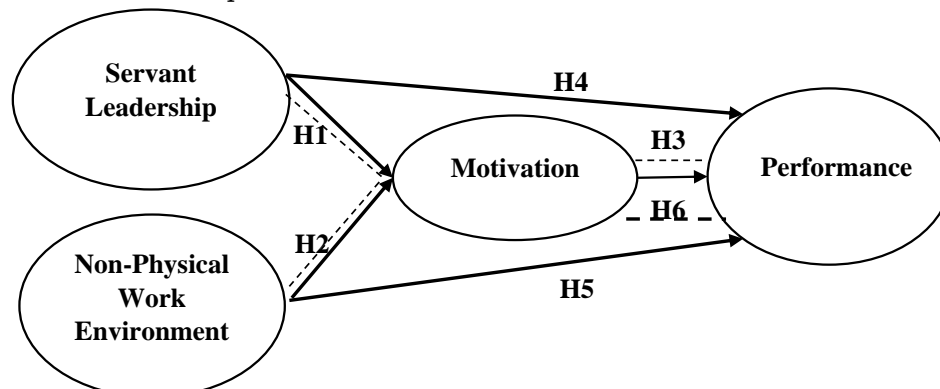
through individual psychological mechanisms, using motivation as a mediating variable. Most people believe that good leadership and a pleasant work environment can increase employee motivation, which in turn leads to improved performance. Effective leadership and a supportive work environment do not necessarily lead to optimal performance.

In this study, we selected the variables of servant leadership, the non-physical work environment, motivation, and performance. We believe that these four variables form a minimal framework sufficient to explain employee performance in organizations with high social complexity such as correctional institutions. Performance is an integrative outcome of the entire process; the non-physical work environment reflects the socio-psychological conditions of the company; motivation reflects the individual's internal mechanisms; and servant leadership reflects the structural and moral dimensions of leadership. This framework combines three main dimensions of organizational behavior: the individual (drive and commitment), the environment (social and psychological context), and leadership (structure and values). Other factors, such as training, compensation, and corporate culture, are still important, but theoretically can be considered as part of the main elements.

Therefore, this research provides both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research extends its application to the context of correctional institutions—public organizations with a high level of social and moral complexity. This enhances the literature on servant leadership. Furthermore, this research enhances our understanding of the function of motivation as a mediating mechanism between organizational elements and employee performance. Practically, this research is expected to help correctional institution leaders and managers develop human resource management policies and strategies, particularly those related to developing a servant leadership style and creating a pleasant work environment. Therefore, the success of inmate development and the quality of public services can be consistently improved through enhanced employee performance and motivation.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was carried out at the Nusakambangan Open Prison and focused on the relationship between servant leadership and the non-physical work environment on employee performance. The objective to be achieved in this study is to determine the extent to which the application of servant leadership and non-physical work environment can influence employee motivation and performance by using work motivation as a mediating factor between the two. The following empirical model was then used to demonstrate the relationship between these variables:



Hypothesis

H1: Workplace motivation is positively and significantly impacted by servant leadership.

H2: Workplace motivation is positively and significantly impacted by the non-physical workplace.

H3: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance

H4: Servant Leadership has a positive effect on employee performance

H5: The non-physical work environment has a positive effect on employee performance

H6: The function of job motivation as a mediator in the connection between employee performance and servant leadership

H7: Motivation's mediation function in the connection between performance and the non-physical workplace

This study applies a quantitative approach to examine how servant leadership and the non-physical work environment influence employee performance. This research is exploratory in nature and tests causal relationships between variables developed based on existing theory. The study population included all 68 employees of the Nusakambangan Open Penitentiary. This study uses a saturated sampling technique that involves every individual in the population because the population is relatively small. Therefore, the number of respondents in this study was 68.

The variables studied included: (1) servant leadership and the non-physical work environment as independent variables; (2) motivation as a mediating variable; and (3) employee performance as the dependent variable. In this study, data were collected through a questionnaire designed based on the theoretical indicators of each variable. A five-point Likert scale was used. Prior to data analysis, the research instrument was tested to ensure that each statement was correct. To conduct the data analysis, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) was used, provided by SmartPLS software. The model estimation process consists of two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). Convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability were evaluated by the measurement model.

This analysis technique was selected because it can look at intricate connections between latent variables, accommodates relatively small sample sizes, and is appropriate for the nature of psychological variables that are difficult to measure directly. To ensure the accuracy of the model evaluation results, a bootstrapping technique was used in SmartPLS.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the measurement model testing indicate that all constructs in this study have adequately met the reliability and feasibility criteria of the instrument. The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values of all variables are above the minimum limit of 0.70, namely employee performance ($\alpha = 0.813$; CR = 0.909), non-physical work environment ($\alpha = 0.868$; CR = 0.904), motivation ($\alpha = 0.989$; CR = 0.992), and servant leadership ($\alpha = 0.852$; CR = 0.894). These values indicate that the indicators used have high internal consistency and are able to measure the latent constructs stably and accurately. Thus, the research instrument can be declared reliable and suitable for use as a basis for analyzing structural relationships between variables.

In addition to reliability, the model's feasibility was also tested by multicollinearity between constructs using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The results showed that all VIF values ranged from 2.297 to 2.799, well below the critical limit of 5. This indicates that there was no excessive correlation between the independent variables in the model, thus the path coefficient estimates can be considered stable and unbiased. The absence of multicollinearity strengthens the validity of the structural model used in this study.

According to the structural model evaluation, the model is considered very strong in explaining endogenous variables. The coefficient of determination (R²) value of the

employee performance variable is 0.815 (adjusted R² = 0.806), which indicates that motivation, non-physical work environment, and employee leadership can explain 81.5% of the variation in employee performance. On the other hand, the R² value of the motivation variable is 0.608 (adjusted R² = 0.596), which indicates that 60.8% of the variation in work motivation is influenced by the non-physical work environment and employee leadership. The model used has high explanatory power for the phenomena studied because, in the context of social and organizational behavior research, an R² value above 0.60 is considered strong.

The model's predictive ability is further strengthened by the Q² values obtained through the blindfolding procedure, which are 0.475 for employee performance and 0.573 for motivation. A Q² value greater than zero indicates that the model is not only able to explain the relationship between variables theoretically but also has good predictive relevance empirically. By fulfilling the reliability criteria, the absence of multicollinearity, and high R² and Q² values, the SEM-PLS model used in this study can be declared to have good fit, so that the results of the interpretation of the relationship between variables can be scientifically justified.

The results of the structural path test indicate that the non-physical work environment has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a coefficient of 0.327 ($t = 2.677$; $p = 0.007$). This indicates that the quality of work relationships, communication, and mood in the workplace are positively correlated with the level of employee productivity in open correctional institutions. In addition, the non-physical work environment is also proven to have a positive and significant effect on work motivation ($\beta = 0.389$; $t = 2.026$; $p = 0.043$). This indicates that having a peaceful and supportive work environment can help employees be more enthusiastic in completing their tasks.

Work motivation was further proven to be the strongest determinant of employee performance, with an influence coefficient of 0.721 ($t = 6.672$; $p = 0.000$). This value is significantly higher than the direct influence of other variables on performance, indicating that employee performance in correctional institutions is highly determined by the level of work motivation. In an organizational context with social complexity and high work pressure, such as open correctional institutions, work motivation is related not only to material incentives but also to employees' sense of moral responsibility, commitment to public service, and perceived meaning of work.

In contrast to the non-physical work environment, servant leadership was not proven to have a significant direct effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.106$; $t = 1.380$; $p = 0.168$). This finding suggests that servant leadership does not necessarily improve employee performance directly. Nevertheless, servant leadership had a positive and significant effect on work motivation ($\beta = 0.444$; $t = 2.263$; $p = 0.024$), confirming that servant leadership's primary role lies in its ability to inspire employee enthusiasm, meaning in work, and psychological commitment, rather than in direct control of work output.

The analysis of indirect effects clarified the strategic role of motivation as a mediating variable in this research model. The effect of the non-physical work environment on performance through motivation had a coefficient of 0.281, with a total effect of 0.608, resulting in a Variance Accounted For (VAF) value of 46.2%. This value indicates that almost half of the effect of the non-physical work environment on performance is channeled through increased work motivation, meaning motivation acts as a partial mediator in the relationship.

Furthermore, the effect of servant leadership on performance through motivation had an indirect coefficient of 0.324, with a total effect of 0.430, resulting in a VAF value of 75.3%. This value indicates that most of the influence of servant leadership on performance occurs through motivation, rather than directly. Thus, motivation plays a very dominant role as a psychological mechanism bridging servant leadership with

employee performance. This finding reinforces the view that servant leadership works primarily by fostering positive psychological states in employees, such as engagement, trust, and commitment to their work.

Substantively, the results of this study provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of employee performance in the context of open correctional institutions. A conducive non-physical work environment is proven to play a significant role both directly and through motivation, indicating that in organizations with high levels of social interaction, the quality of work relationships and the psychological climate are strategic factors that cannot be ignored. Servant leadership, on the other hand, proved relevant, but its influence is more indirect through increased work motivation, rather than through direct control or instruction of performance.

The dominance of motivation as a mediating variable emphasizes that efforts to improve employee performance in correctional institutions cannot be achieved simply by improving systems, structures, and leadership but must be accompanied by strategies that explicitly foster employee work motivation. These strategies can include empowerment, recognition, strengthening the meaning of work, and creating a fair and supportive work climate.

Thus, this study not only provides empirical evidence regarding the validity of the SEM-PLS model used but also enriches the literature on servant leadership and performance in the context of public organizations with high social complexity. These findings broaden the generalizability of servant leadership theory and provide a scientific basis for correctional institution administrators in designing more humanistic human resource management policies oriented towards strengthening work motivation as the key to improving employee performance.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of servant leadership and the non-physical work environment on employee performance, with motivation as a mediating variable at the Nusakambangan Open Penitentiary. Based on the results of the SEM-PLS analysis, it can be concluded that the non-physical work environment has a significant direct and indirect influence on employee performance. While servant leadership does not directly influence performance, it does significantly influence it through increased work motivation. Motivation has been proven to be the strongest determinant of employee performance and is the primary psychological mechanism bridging the influence of organizational factors on performance. The primary theoretical contribution of this study lies in strengthening the concept of "motivation as a bridge," namely that motivation is not simply an intermediary variable but rather the primary psychological bridge that transforms servant leadership values into productive work behaviors. These findings broaden the understanding of servant leadership theory, which has often been assumed to have a direct impact on performance (Liden et al., 2014; Eva et al., 2019). This research demonstrates that in the context of public organizations with high social complexity such as correctional institutions, servant leadership only impacts performance when the values of service, empathy, and empowerment are successfully internalized in employee work motivation. Thus, motivation acts as a conversion mechanism between the moral dimension of leadership and organizational performance output.

From the perspective of developing organizational behavior theory, these findings shift the understanding of the leadership-performance relationship from a structural-instrumental approach to a psychological-mechanistic approach, where leadership success is measured not solely by the leader's actions, but by the extent to which that leadership is able to mobilize employees' internal drive. This strengthens the self-determination theory framework, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic

motivation as a primary driver of sustainable performance (Ryan & Deci, 2020), while also contextualizing servant leadership within the realities of Indonesian public organizations.

However, this study has several limitations that affect the generalizability of the findings. First, the study was conducted only at a single institution, the Nusakambangan Open Penitentiary. Therefore, the characteristics of the organization, work culture, and local management systems may significantly influence the results. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be broadly generalized to all correctional institutions or other public organizations without caution.

Second, the relatively limited sample size, relative to the number of employees available at a single institution, also limits the model's inferential power. Although SEM-PLS allows for analysis on small to medium samples, a larger number of respondents in further research would improve the stability of the estimates and the generalizability of the findings.

Third, the data source for this study was entirely self-reported data from respondent perception questionnaires, which potentially contain subjectivity, social bias, and common method bias. Although reliability and validity have been tested, the use of a single data source remains a limitation that requires consideration in interpreting the results.

Based on these limitations, the most logical direction for further research is to replicate the study in various correctional institutions with different characteristics, including closed correctional institutions, detention centers, and correctional centers. This allows for the consistent testing of motivation's role as a mediator across various correctional contexts. Comparative research across institutions and regions would be crucial to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

Furthermore, it is recommended that future research expand the model by including other variables such as organizational culture, organizational justice, affective commitment, or job satisfaction as additional moderating or mediating variables. The use of mixed methods, combining quantitative surveys with in-depth interviews, is also recommended to delve deeper into psychological processes and social dynamics that cannot be fully explained through quantitative approaches.

Thus, this research makes important contributions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research strengthens the position of motivation as a key bridge in the relationship between servant leadership and employee performance. Practically, the results of this study confirm that strategies to improve employee performance in correctional institutions cannot simply focus on improving leadership structures and styles, but must explicitly focus on strengthening work motivation as the core of management.

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