Synergy of Leadership and Communication in Encouraging the Employees Performance of Yogyakarta Narcotics Prison: The Important Role of Work Motivation

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ABSTRACT

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| This study aims to analyze the influence of leadership and communication on employee performance, and to look at the role of work motivation as a mediating variable in this relationship. This research method uses quantitative. Data collection techniques use surveys and analysis of several literatures or other references. The research objects used are employees/staff Narcotics Prison Class II A Yogyakarta. The sample selection technique uses a saturated sampling technique. In the saturated sampling technique, all individuals in the population are selected as samples, without exception and obtained as many as 126 respondents. The analysis method in this study uses the Partial Least Square method through the structural equation modeling statistical test tool. Using Expectancy Theory as a framework, this study found that communication and work motivation significantly improve employee performance, while leadership exerts an indirect effect through motivation. This finding implies that organizations need to improve the quality of leadership and the effectiveness of internal communication as a strategic effort in encouraging work motivation and improving employee performance. Theoretically, these findings contribute to the development of leadership and motivation theory by confirming the mediating role of work motivation in improving performance. Practically, the study suggests that organizations, especially correctional institutions, should enhance leadership quality, optimize internal communication, and strengthen motivation programs to achieve better employee performance. |

*Keywords: Employee performance; Leadership synergy; Leadership; Communication; Human resource management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Correctional System in Indonesia is an implementation of the mandate of Law Number 22 of 2022 concerning Corrections. This system aims to guide Correctional Inmates (WBP) so that they regret their actions and are able to become productive individuals and contribute to development. The Ministry of Immigration and Corrections through the Directorate General of Corrections carries out this task through various work units, including the Class IIA Yogyakarta Narcotics Correctional Institution (Lapas). As one of the technical implementing units, the Class IIA Yogyakarta Narcotics Correctional Institution plays a strategic role in implementing guidance for narcotics case prisoners. This agency also has a public service function and management support which includes personnel, financial, and security affairs. To realize the government's vision and mission optimally, employee performance as human resources (HR) is a key factor(Sa'diyah & Yuhertiana, 2021). Without competent and motivated human resources, the implementation of tasks cannot run effectively and efficiently.(Hajiali et al., 2022).

Improving the quality of human resources (HR) in government organizations is not a simple matter.(Agusman Aris et al., 2019; Mashuddin, 2022; Taufiqurokhman et al., 2023). This process requires continuous hard work, targeted strategies, and active involvement from all stakeholders, both internal and external.(Vithana et al., 2021). Human resources are the main asset that determines the success of implementing organizational tasks and functions.(Becker, 2021). Without quality human resources, the vision and mission of the institution are difficult to realize optimally. Employee performance, in this case, is not only a benchmark for the success of the organization administratively, but also reflects the effectiveness in managing and empowering human resources themselves.(Hanafi et al., 2019; Hastuti et al., 2020; Tarmizi & Hutasuhut, 2021).

The success of a government institution in facing the challenges of the times depends greatly on the quality, competence and professionalism of its employees.(Agusman Aris et al., 2019). Organizations no longer only need employees who are technically competent, but also adaptive, collaborative, and have integrity.(Sumantri, 2017). Dynamic, fast-changing, and stressful work environments require employees to continuously improve their capacity and flexibility. In situations like this, there are a number of factors that greatly influence employee performance, including the leadership style applied by superiors, the effectiveness of communication within the organization, and the level of work motivation possessed by each individual.(Hanafi et al., 2019; Prayudi, 2020; R. Sapu et al., 2023; Tarmizi & Hutasuhut, 2021). These three factors are interrelated and can be a driver or a barrier to achieving organizational goals. Therefore, understanding and managing all three properly is key to creating a productive and results-oriented work environment.

Leadership is a process of influencing, guiding and directing others to be willing to work together to achieve goals that have been set together.(Alkadash et al., 2021). Leadership does not only focus on formal power, but also on a leader's interpersonal skills in building trust, providing clear direction, and encouraging employee morale. An effective leadership style can create a conducive work climate and arouse employee enthusiasm to work better.(Hajiali et al., 2022; O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020; S. Wang & Huang, 2022).

Apart from leadership, communication also plays a central role in supporting employee performance.(Franciska & Tupti, 2020). Effective communication does not only occur between superiors and subordinates, but also between employees and between employees and the community.(Sahoo et al., 2023; Usnan, 2023). An open, clear, and two-way communication process allows for shared understanding, good coordination, and minimal misunderstanding in carrying out tasks. Smooth communication will facilitate teamwork, speed up problem solving, and increase overall work efficiency.

Another factor that is no less important is work motivation. Motivation is an internal drive that arises within a person, either consciously or unconsciously, to take action to achieve a certain goal.(Hajiali et al., 2022). In the context of work, motivation becomes a driving force that makes employees work with full responsibility, discipline, and dedication. As stated by Herzberg (1953), work motivation is "a driving force within a person to behave and work well in accordance with the responsibilities and obligations that have been given to him"(Hajiali et al., 2022). Therefore, organizations need to ensure that each employee has a high level of motivation, including through providing awards, recognition, and a work environment that supports growth and self-development.(Hanafi et al., 2019).

Class IIA Yogyakarta Narcotics Prison has the main task of fostering narcotics case prisoners, including personality and independence development, health and rehabilitation services, security management, and administrative affairs. Although in the past it has received various awards, such as the Second Best National Prison in development (2022) and the best award in security and provincial-level personnel, the performance achievement trend shows a decline. In the financial sector, for example, the budget management achievement which was previously ranked second in 2022 and 2023, fell to third in 2024. In addition to the decline in performance, the prison also faces internal communication problems. There is a communication gap between superiors and subordinates which often leads to misunderstandings. Changes in leadership also bring changes in leadership style and communication methods, which ultimately affect employee work motivation. Some employees feel underappreciated or underappreciated, which has an impact on low work enthusiasm and decreased productivity. This phenomenon is a signal of the need for comprehensive improvement, especially in the aspects of leadership, communication, and motivation. Support from the leadership is needed to create a conducive work environment and encourage improved employee performance.

Although various previous studies have discussed the influence of leadership, communication, and work motivation on employee performance(Agusman Aris et al., 2019; Hajiali et al., 2022), but most of these studies were conducted in the context of private organizations or the government sector in general, not specifically in the correctional environment. In fact, prisons have very unique organizational characteristics, with high work pressure, tight security systems, and social responsibility in fostering prisoners. Studies on how leadership style and internal communication patterns affect employee motivation and performance in prisons are also still limited, especially in narcotics prisons which have higher task complexity due to the burden of rehabilitation and intensive supervision. In addition, there have not been many studies that examine the role of work motivation as a mediating variable between leadership and communication on performance in this context. Previous studies tend to look at the relationship between these variables separately, without integrating the three in a complete analysis model.(Cahyadi et al., 2022; Cahyati & Adelia, 2024; Hajiali et al., 2022; Jatiningrum et al., 2024; O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020; Putra & Sry, 2023). Therefore, there is a research gap that needs to be filled through a comprehensive approach that considers the characteristics of the prison and the internal dynamics of its employees. This study is here to answer this gap by testing the direct and indirect effects of leadership style and communication on employee performance through work motivation as a mediating variable.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of leadership and communication on employee performance, and to see the role of work motivation as a mediating variable in the relationship. Specifically, this study wants to find out to what extent effective leadership and communication can increase work motivation, which ultimately has an impact on improving employee performance at Class II A Narcotics Prison Yogyakarta. This study also aims to simultaneously and partially test the influence of each independent variable (leadership and communication) on the dependent variable (performance), both directly and through the intermediary variable (work motivation).

The implications of this study are divided into two, namely theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of organizational behavior science, especially in understanding the relationship between leadership style, communication effectiveness, and work motivation in influencing employee performance in the public sector. These findings can enrich the literature on human resource management, especially in the context of government institutions that have high workloads such as correctional institutions. Practically, the results of this study are expected to be a consideration for prison leaders in formulating managerial policies, such as developing more participatory leadership, increasing the effectiveness of internal communication, and creating a sustainable motivation system to support employee work productivity.

The novelty of this study lies in the testing of an integrative model that combines the influence of leadership and communication on performance through the mediating role of work motivation in the context of Narcotics Prisons. This kind of research is still rarely conducted, especially in the correctional environment which has unique work characteristics and high operational pressure. In addition, this study offers a new approach in understanding how motivation not only functions as a direct driver of performance, but also as a connecting mechanism (mediator) that can strengthen the relationship between leadership, communication, and employee work results. Thus, this study is expected to be able to provide a new perspective in the management of human resources in the public sector that is more strategic and evidence-based.

2. material and methods

This research is based on the Expectancy Theory put forward by Victor Vroom, which explains that a person's work motivation is formed from their belief that the effort they make will result in good performance, and that performance will lead to desired or valuable results.(Vroom et al., 2015). This theory consists of three main components: expectancy, which is the hope that the effort given will result in good performance; instrumentality, which is the belief that the performance will result in certain rewards; and valence, which is the extent to which an individual values ​​the rewards or results.(Vroom et al., 2015). In the context of an organization such as the Yogyakarta Narcotics Penitentiary, effective leadership plays an important role in increasing employee expectancy by providing adequate direction, guidance, and support. Open and clear organizational communication is also key to strengthening instrumentality, as it helps employees understand the relationship between performance and the rewards they will receive.(Kumar & Pradesh, 2018). When this hope is built positively, high work motivation will emerge, which ultimately encourages increased employee performance.(Rehman et al., 2019). Thus, this theory provides a complete framework in understanding how the synergy between leadership and communication can influence work motivation, which in turn impacts employee performance in the Narcotics Prison environment.

**2.1. Concept of Leadership**

Leadership is a process that involves an individual's ability to influence, direct and motivate others to work together to achieve predetermined goals.(Khan & Wajidi, 2019). A leader is not only required to have formal authority, but also interpersonal skills, such as effective communication, empathy, and wise decision making.(Umesi, 2023). An effective leader will be able to unite the team, maintain focus on the end result, and manage the process in an ethical and wise manner.(Klosel, 2021). In general, an ideal leader must have several important characteristics. First, the leader must be able to analyze problems and situations accurately and draw logical conclusions. Second, the leader must have the ability to organize, select, and place employees in appropriate positions. Third, the leader is also required to ensure that the organization runs effectively in order to achieve the vision and mission that have been determined.

Meanwhile, leadership style is a method or approach used by a leader to influence his subordinates.(Shahzad et al., 2021). Some important indicators of leadership include: (1) interpersonal relationships that demonstrate empathy and understanding towards subordinates; (2) exemplary behavior and real actions; (3) persuasion that encourages awareness without coercion; and (4) the use of clear and effective communication in conveying information and building shared perceptions.

**2.2. Communication Concept**

Communication is the main foundation in carrying out social interactions, including in organizational environments.(Dahal et al., 2023). Without effective communication, organizations will have difficulty coordinating tasks, conveying visions and missions, and building cooperation between individuals.(Bamrara et al., 2013). Communication is not only limited to conveying information, but also creating meaning that can be understood together by all parties involved in the organization. Thus, communication is a process of sharing meaning through verbal and non-verbal behavior between two or more people.(Krmela et al., 2022). In the context of an organization, communication serves as a link between units, between employees, and between leaders and subordinates. The ability to listen actively, provide constructive feedback, and convey messages in a clear manner are essential communication competencies in the modern work environment.

Poor communication can cause various negative impacts such as conflict between employees, misunderstandings in carrying out tasks, and loss of trust in management.(de Jong & van der Meer, 2017). Therefore, organizations need to build a culture of open, honest, and respectful communication. Responsive two-way communication and transparency in conveying organizational policies and information can increase employee trust and engagement in achieving common goals.

**2.3. Work Motivation**

Work motivation is a very important psychological element in determining employee behavior, enthusiasm and productivity.(Hajiali et al., 2022). Employees who have high motivation will show optimal performance, be responsible for their duties, and actively contribute to achieving organizational goals. Conversely, lack of motivation can lead to low work enthusiasm, increased absenteeism, and high employee turnover rates.(Hanafi et al., 2019). Motivation can arise from two main sources, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.(Umesi, 2023). Intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual, such as a desire to develop, a feeling of satisfaction after completing a task, or personal values ​​that are in line with the job. While extrinsic motivation comes from outside, such as salary, awards, job promotions, or threats of sanctions. Both are important and need to be managed in a balanced way so that employees remain enthusiastic and loyal to the organization.

In the world of work, motivation is an important indicator of the quality of the organizational environment.(Hajiali et al., 2022). Supportive leadership, open communication, and a fair reward system will significantly increase work motivation.(Kumar & Pradesh, 2018). Therefore, the Organization needs to create a work climate that supports professional growth, provides recognition for individual achievements, and opens up a dialogue space to hear employee aspirations.

**2.4. Employee/Staff Performance**

Employee performance is a concrete manifestation of an individual's contribution to achieving organizational goals.(Alkadash et al., 2021). Performance is not only seen from the final result, but also from the process, discipline, and consistency in completing tasks.(Nakuloadi et al., 2024). High performing employees will demonstrate responsibility, initiative, and the ability to work in a team. Performance can be measured through various indicators such as quality and quantity of work results, timeliness in completing tasks, independence, effectiveness in using resources, and level of commitment to the organization.(Abernethy et al., 2015). Each indicator reflects a different dimension of work behavior, making it important for organizations to evaluate performance comprehensively and objectively.

The factors that influence performance are very complex, including leadership, work motivation, communication, organizational culture, and workload balance.(Ardhani, 2025; Cahyati & Adelia, 2024; Fauzi et al., 2023; Kawiana et al., 2020; Rachman, 2019). Therefore, improving employee performance cannot only be done through technical training alone, but also through strengthening psychological and social aspects in the workplace.

In the context of government agencies such as prisons, employee performance greatly determines the quality of public services and the success of fostering inmates. Employees who have high performance will be better able to carry out fostering tasks with empathy, professionalism, and integrity.(Widyastuti & Ratnaningsih, 2020). Therefore, it is important for organizations to continuously monitor, evaluate, and develop employee performance on an ongoing basis.

**2.5. Research Hypothesis Development**

1. **The Influence of Leadership on Employee Performance**

Leadership style is one of the important factors that can affect employee performance in an organization. Transformational leadership, in particular, encourages employees to work beyond their personal interests for the sake of organizational goals, thus having a positive impact on improving performance (Alkadash et al., 2021; Kawiana et al., 2020). Leadership that is able to provide vision, inspiration, and individual attention to employees is also believed to be able to motivate and direct them effectively. A study by Cahyadi et al. (2022) emphasized that leadership style plays an important role in the MSME environment in the digital era, which demands flexibility and innovation from its leaders. In addition, Hajiali et al. (2022) also showed that an effective leadership style can increase job satisfaction and ultimately have an impact on employee performance. Likewise, Tarmizi and Hutasuhut (2021) in the context of state civil servants, found that a participatory leadership style has a significant effect on improving performance.

Previous literature also mentions that the right leadership style can be a complement in incentive contracts, which has a double impact on performance (Abernethy et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important for organizations to implement a leadership style that is in accordance with the characteristics and needs of their human resources in order to optimize employee potential to the maximum. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**H1.**Leadership has a positive influence on employee performance

1. **The Influence of Communication on Employee Performance**

Communication within an organization is an important instrument in conveying the vision, mission, values ​​and work rules to all employees.(Robbins, 2017). When communication takes place openly, clearly and effectively, employees will have the same understanding of what needs to be achieved and how to achieve it.(Chen & Wei, 2020). Good communication also reduces the potential for misunderstanding and conflict in carrying out tasks, thereby increasing work efficiency.

In various organizational studies, communication is stated as a key factor influencing employee performance.Previous research evenemphasizes that open, two-way communication helps employees understand the organization's expectations and goals, thereby increasing accuracy and efficiency in task execution.(Ardhani, 2025; Nandini et al., 2024). Other studies also show that effective communication can increase job satisfaction and performance because employees feel valued, involved, and understood.(Nandini et al., 2024).

In the context of public service organizations such as prisons, open communication between superiors and subordinates can create a cooperative and responsive work culture. This will improve the quality of service, speed up decision-making, and facilitate coordination between work units. Therefore, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H2.**Communication has a positive effect on employee performance

1. **The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance**

Work motivation is an internal factor that drives someone to take action to achieve a certain goal. Based on Vroom's expectancy theory (Vroom et al., 2015; Rehman et al., 2019), employees will be motivated to work better if they believe that their efforts will result in good performance, which will ultimately provide the desired rewards. Research by Fauzi et al. (2023) shows that there is a significant relationship between work motivation and employee performance, where the higher the level of motivation, the higher the performance produced. Fransiska and Tupti (2020) also emphasized that motivation is an important variable that can mediate the relationship between workload and employee performance. In addition, Prayudi (2020) found that work motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee performance. According to Vroom's Expectancy Theory, motivation arises when employees believe that their efforts will result in good performance and bring valuable results. This means that the stronger the employee's belief that their hard work will be recognized and appreciated, the higher the motivation shown. This motivation can be realized in the form of achieving work targets, innovation, and dedication to tasks.

Furthermore, Kumar and Pradesh (2018) also tested Vroom's expectancy theory and proved that motivation derived from perceptions of work results and rewards received can significantly improve employee performance. Thus, organizations need to create a work environment that can encourage intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in order to achieve optimal employee productivity. Based on this description, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H3.**Work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance

1. **The Influence of Leadership on Work Motivation**

Effective leadership is not only about the ability to manage tasks, but also the ability to manage people. Leaders who have empathy, good interpersonal communication, and attention to the needs of their subordinates will be better able to build positive relationships. This relationship will ultimately raise work motivation because employees feel heard, appreciated, and involved in the organizational process. An effective leadership style not only affects employee performance but also has a significant impact on work motivation. Transformational leaders tend to provide inspiration and emotional support, which can increase the work enthusiasm of their subordinates (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020; Umesi, 2023).

Research by Fauzi et al. (2023) also shows that leadership style plays an important role in shaping the level of employee work motivation. Klösel (2021) also emphasized that visionary and empowering leadership can create a positive work climate and motivate employees to achieve organizational goals effectively. In the context of prisons, leaders who are able to understand the workload and challenges of employees, as well as provide moral and professional support, will increase employees' sense of belonging and work commitment. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**H4.**Leadership has a positive effect on work motivation

1. **The Influence of Communication on Work Motivation**

Open and supportive communication plays a significant role in creating a healthy and motivating work climate. When employees are given the space to voice their opinions, criticisms, or suggestions, they feel more valued and in control of their role in the organization. This sense of value creates strong intrinsic motivation, especially in stressful work environments such as correctional facilities.

Communication also plays a vital role in clarifying organizational expectations, task allocation, and expected accomplishments. This clarity of information helps employees feel more focused and confident in their roles. When employees feel they understand what needs to be done and why it is important, they are more motivated to do it seriously. Communication that encourages collaboration and mutual understanding also strengthens relationships between employees and between employees and superiors. This sense of togetherness and mutual trust is an important psychological factor in forming sustainable work motivation.

Effective communication in the workplace contributes greatly to building employee motivation. Open, clear, and two-way communication will provide clarity on tasks and work expectations, and increase employee appreciation and engagement.(Robbins, 2017). This is also reinforced by previous researchers who found that effective communication has a significant effect on work motivation in the context of public organizations.(Nandini et al., 2024)Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H5.**Communication has a positive effect on work motivation

1. **The Influence of Leadership on Employee Performance through Work Motivation**

Strong and inspiring leadership not only has a direct impact on performance, but can also foster work motivation that acts as an intermediary in achieving optimal work results. Leaders who provide clear direction, support competency development, and show appreciation for work results will foster a sense of enthusiasm in employees. This motivation then encourages employees to work more diligently, efficiently, and responsibly. Work motivation can act as a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership style and employee performance. Leaders who are able to generate employee motivation through a transformational or participatory approach tend to create an indirect impact on improving employee performance (Prayudi, 2020; Putra & Sry, 2023).

Within the framework of expectancy theory, leaders play a role in shaping employee expectations through clarity of goals and providing incentives or recognition. The higher the employee's belief that their efforts will be recognized and appreciated, the higher their motivation. This motivation is the main driver of quality work behavior and has a direct impact on performance. This is reinforced by research by Fransiska and Tupti (2020) which states that motivation acts as a bridge between managerial factors and work results.

Thus, the influence of leadership on performance is not only direct, but also strengthened through motivational channels. The role of work motivation as a mediator explains how leadership influences employee attitudes and behavior in carrying out tasks. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**H6.**Leadership has a positive effect on performance through work motivation

1. **The Influence of Communication on Employee Performance through Work Motivation**

Effective organizational communication creates a shared understanding between leaders and employees, which leads to the formation of strong work motivation. Clear communication about tasks, targets, and appreciation will make employees feel appreciated and motivated to give their best contribution. This motivation then becomes the main driver in achieving maximum performance. Organizational communication can indirectly affect employee performance by increasing work motivation. Constructive, consistent, and supportive communication creates a conducive work atmosphere, strengthens employee motivation, and ultimately drives better performance (Nasution & Harahap, 2020).

In expectancy theory, communication influences employees' expectations and perceptions of the chances of success. Good communication will strengthen employees' belief that their efforts will be appreciated and result in desired outcomes. Thus, work motivation that arises from effective communication will have a direct impact on the quality and quantity of performance displayed. According to research by Wijaya and Wibowo (2022), effective communication increases work motivation which in turn has a positive impact on performance. Therefore, structured and supportive communication should be an important focus in human resource management strategies.

Overall, the influence of communication on employee performance is not only direct, but also runs indirectly through work motivation. In the context of the Yogyakarta Narcotics Prison, where work challenges are quite high, the existence of good communication and raising motivation is an important aspect to maintain optimal performance. This statement strengthens the assumption that:

**H7.**Communication has a positive effect on employee performance through work motivation.

**2.6. Research Method**

 This research method uses quantitative. Data collection techniques use surveys and analysis of several literature or other references that support the concept of this research. The research objects used are employees/staff Narcotics Prison Class II A Yogyakarta. The sampling technique uses a saturated sampling technique or also known as a census. In the saturated sampling technique, all individuals in the population are selected as samples because researchers want to obtain data from all existing elements, without exception. This approach is considered capable of providing a complete and accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied, because there is no bias that arises from the sample selection process. Saturated sampling is often used in organizational, management, or social research, especially when the target population consists of a limited number, such as all employees in one agency, all students in one class, or all business actors in a small community(Sugiyono, 2018).

This study uses assessment through distributing questionnaires using a Likert scale of 1-5.consisting of STS: Strongly Disagree, TS: Disagree, KS: Less Agree, S: Agree, and SS: Strongly Agree. The research variable indicators are explained in table 1 as follows.

**Table 1.** Definition, indicators and measurement of research variables

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Variables** | **Variable indicators** | **Measurement** |
| Leadership is the ability, art, or process of influencing, directing, and motivating others to achieve common goals.(Alkadash et al., 2021) | Ability to provide vision and direction | Likert Scale |
| Ability to motivate subordinates |
| Giving individual attention (individual consideration) |
| Ability to make fair decisions |
| Involvement in decision making |
| Communication is the process of conveying information or messages from one person to another through certain means or media with certain goals and impacts.(Dahal et al., 2023) | Clarity of information delivery | Likert Scale |
| Two-way communication |
| Openness of communication |
| Communication frequency |
| Communication media used |
| Work motivation is an internal or external drive that encourages someone to work and achieve predetermined goals.(Hanafi et al., 2019) | Need for achievement | Likert Scale |
| Recognition and awards |
| Opportunity for advancement |
| Responsibility in work (responsibility) |
| Job interest |
| Employee/staff performance(Sumantri, 2017) | Quality of work | Likert Scale |
| Quantity of work |
| Punctuality |
| Initiative in work |
| Ability to work together (teamwork) |

The analysis method in this study uses the Partial Least Square method through the structural equation modeling statistical test tool.(Jaya, 2025). The data analysis of this study was conducted using Smart PLS and applied verification analysis consisting of three stages, namely outer model measurement, inner model measurement and testing of research hypotheses.(Jaya, 2025)

3. results and discussion

**3.1. Results**

 Population in this study employee Narcotics Prison Class II A in Yogyakarta as many as 126 respondents. Because the sample selection technique uses a saturated sampling technique, all individuals in the population are selected as samples because the researcher wants to obtain data from all existing elements, without exception. The following are descriptive data of respondents and some of the results of the data tests that have been obtained.

1. **Respondent characteristics**

The explanation of the characteristics of the respondents is done to inform the reader about the profile of the respondents used as samples in this test. The profile of the respondents includes gender, educational background, and length of service of the respondents. The following are the results of the descriptive test.

**Table 2.**Descriptive statistical test

| **Length of working** | **Man** | **Woman** | **Total** | **Diploma** | **S1** | **S2** | **SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL** | **Total (Education)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| <5 years | 20 | 1 | 21 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 18 | 21 |
| 5–10 years | 18 | 2 | 20 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 18 |
| 11–20 years | 57 | 11 | 68 | 6 | 38 | 3 | 21 | 68 |
| >20 years | 11 | 8 | 19 | 1 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 19 |
| **Total** | **98** | **22** | **126** | 8 | 53 | **8** | **57** | **126** |

Source: Questionnaire tabulation, 2025.

Based on the results of the descriptive test, from a total of 126 respondents, the majority were male, 106 people (84.44%), while 22 were female (15.56%). When viewed from the length of service, most respondents were in the category of 11-20 years of service, which was 68 people. Of that number, 57 people were male and 11 were female. Furthermore, respondents with a length of service <5 years were 21 people (20 men and 1 woman), then the category of 5-10 years was 20 people (18 men and 2 women), and the rest were in the category >20 years as many as 19 people (11 men and 8 women).

In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents have a final education level of high school as many as 57 people, followed by S1 as many as 53 people, Diploma as many as 8 people, and S2 as many as 8 people. In the category of length of work <5 years, most respondents are high school graduates (18 people), while in the category of 11-20 years that dominate, there are 38 S1 graduates, 21 high school graduates, and a small number from other levels.

From the combination of gender, education, and length of service, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents are male high school or bachelor's degree graduates who have worked for between 11 and 20 years. This profile illustrates that most of the employees of Class II A Yogyakarta Narcotics Prison are experienced workers and have secondary to higher education.

1. **Validity and reliability test**

The survey data that has been obtained, the first test is the validity and reliability test to determine the accuracy of the data that has been tabulated. The test results are explained as follows.

**Table 3. Validity and reliability test**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Item** | **Correlation (r)** | **Coefficient** |
| **r** | **Status** | **Alpha** | **Status** |
| Leadership(Alkadash et al., 2021) | **LD01** | **0.436** | valid | **0.816** | Strong reliability |
| **LD02** | **0.964** | valid |
| **LD03** | **0.964** | valid |
| **LD04** | **0.960** | valid |
| **LD05** | **0.951** | valid |
| Communication(Dahal et al., 2023) | **CM01** | **0.607** | valid | **0.797** | *sufficient reliability* |
| **CM02** | **0.925** | valid |
| **CM03** | **0.925** | valid |
| **CM04** | **0.410** | valid |
| **CM05** | **0.925** | valid |
| Work motivation(Hanafi et al., 2019) | **MV01** | **0.583** | valid | **0.781** | *sufficient reliability* |
| **MV02** | **0.627** | valid |
| **MV03** | **0.804** | valid |
| **MV04** | **0.756** | valid |
| **MV05** | **0.794** | valid |
| Employee performance/employee(Sumantri, 2017) | **EM01** | **0.918** | valid | **0.786** | *sufficient reliability* |
| **EM02** | **0.397** | valid |
| **EM03** | **0.918** | valid |
| **EM04** | **0.918** | valid |
| **EM05** | **0.487** | valid |

Source: Questionnaire data test, 2025.

Based on table 3. above, it shows that all items of questions/questionnaires statements from the variables studied have been in accordance with the provisions that have been set, namely the calculated r value> r table. Then, with 126 questionnaire data, then by using the degree of freedom equation (DF = N-2) or DF = 126-2 = 124, the r table value is obtained as much as 0.176. This result means that all items of questions/questionnaires statements are valid and can be used in research.

Meanwhile, based on the results of the reliability test, it is known that the Cronbach's alpha value for all variables is greater than the standard reliability test requirements.that is 0.70(Jaya, 2025). Meanwhile, tThe level of reliability is expressed by a value called the reliability coefficient, ranging from 0-1. The reliability coefficient is symbolizedwith x is the index of the case being searched. Reliability testing uses the Cronbach's Alpha formula, as follows.



 = reliability sought

n = number of question items

 = sum of variance of scores for each item

 = total variance

**Cronbach's Alpha Value Range, namely**

* alpha < 0.50 low reliability
* 0.50 < alpha < 0.70 moderate reliability
* alpha > 0.70 then reliability is sufficient (sufficient reliability)
* alpha > 0.80 then reliability is strong
* alpha > 0.90 then perfect reliability

The smaller the alpha value indicates the more unreliable items. The standard used is alpha > 0.70 (sufficient reliability). Based on the results of the data test shows that all statement items from all variables are valid and reliable and can be used in research.

1. **Test outer and inner models**

This outer model test is measured using Composite reliability data. Dimensions are considered reliable if they have a value*composite reliability*(ρc) above 0.7(Hair et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the Inner Model is evaluated using R-Square for the dependent construct. The test results are shown in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Table 4 as follows.

**Figure 1.** outer models test results (composite reliability)



**Figure 2.**inner models test results (R-square)



**Table 4.** Composite reliability calculation results

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimensions** | ***Composite Reliability*** | ***R-Square*** |
| Leadership | 0.935 | - |
| Communication | 0.741 | - |
| Work motivation | 0.687 | 0.106 |
| Employee performance | 0.771 | 0.739 |

Source: Smart PLS, 2025.

Based on the test results that have been conducted, the Composite Reliability (CR) values ​​obtained for each dimension show varying reliability. The Leadership dimension has the highest CR value of 0.935, indicating that the indicators in this dimension are very consistent in measuring their constructs. Employee Communication and Performance also have fairly good CR values, respectively 0.741 and 0.771, indicating acceptable reliability. Meanwhile, Work Motivation has the lowest CR value of 0.687, but is still within the minimum tolerance limit for reliability.

In terms of R-Square, Employee Performance shows a high value of 0.739, which means that 73.9% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by the independent variables in the model. Meanwhile, Work Motivation only has an R-Square value of 0.106, which shows that only 10.6% of the variation in work motivation can be explained by the variables in the model, and the rest is influenced by other factors outside this research model.

1. **SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) Test**

Figures 3 and 4 show the output results of the data test model that has been carried out with the help of PLS, and table 5 provides information about the statistical values ​​of the results of the hypothesis that has been carried out, the display is as follows.

**Figure 3.** Hypothesis Test Results (t-value)

**Figure 4.**Hypothesis Test Results (p-value)



Source: Smart PLS, 2025.

This hypothesis testing is done by comparing the calculated t value with the t table value, if the calculated t value is greater than the t table, then there is a significant relationship between the variables and vice versa when the calculated t is smaller than the t table, then there is no significant relationship between the variables. This study tested data from 126 respondents, then the t table value was obtained (=5%) of 1,978. The presentation is as follows.

**Table 5.** Research hypothesis testing

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hypothesis** | **t count** | **P value** | **Information** |
| **H1** | Leadership | 🡪 | Employee/staff performance | 0.680 | 0.497 | Not Sig. |
| **H2** | Communication | 🡪 | Employee performance | 16,356\* | 0,000 | Sig. |
| **H3** | Work motivation | 🡪 | Employee performance | 2,883\* | 0.004 | Sig. |
| **H4** | Leadership | 🡪 | Work motivation | 0.401 | 0.689 | Not Sig. |
| **H5** | Communication | 🡪 | Work motivation | 2,232\* | 0.026 | Sig. |
| **H6** | Leadership | 🡪 | Work motivation | 🡪 | Employee performance | 0.994 | 0.007 | Sig |
| **H7** | Communication | 🡪 | Work motivation | 🡪 | Employee performance | 0.966 | 0.004 | Sig |

The results of hypothesis testing show that not all variables have a significant effect on the dependent variable. In the first hypothesis (H1), the effect of leadership on employee performance shows a t-value of 0.680 and a p-value of 0.497. Because the t-value is smaller than the t table and the p-value is greater than 0.05, it is concluded that leadership does not have a significant effect on employee performance. Likewise for the fourth hypothesis (H4), which tests the effect of leadership on work motivation, the t-value is 0.401 and the p-value is 0.689, which also indicates no significant relationship.

On the other hand, the second hypothesis (H2) shows that communication has a significant effect on employee performance, with a t-value of 16.356 and a p-value of 0.000, far above the significance threshold. These results indicate that good communication in the work environment contributes significantly to improving employee performance. The same thing also applies to the third hypothesis (H3), namely that work motivation has a significant effect on employee performance, indicated by a t-value of 2.883 and a p-value of 0.004. The fifth hypothesis (H5) which tests the effect of communication on work motivation is also significant, with a t-value of 2.232 and a p-value of 0.026.

For the last two hypotheses, namely H6 and H7, which test the mediating effect of work motivation on the relationship between leadership and communication on employee performance, the results show a calculated t value of 0.994 and 0.966, respectively, with a p-value of 0.007 and 0.004. Although this calculated t value is still below the t table, because the p-value obtained is smaller than 0.05, it can be interpreted that there is a significant indirect effect of leadership and communication on employee performance through work motivation. This means that work motivation plays an important mediator in this relationship.

Overall, these results indicate that communication and work motivation are the factors that have the most influence on employee performance, both directly and through mediation effects, while leadership does not show a significant direct influence.

**3.2. Discussions**

The results of the hypothesis testing in this study show interesting dynamics related to the role of leadership, communication, and work motivation in influencing employee performance at the Yogyakarta Narcotics Prison. In general, these findings indicate that communication and work motivation are key factors that significantly impact employee performance improvement, while leadership does not have a significant direct influence, but still plays an indirect role through work motivation.

This finding emphasizes that effective communication between employees and leaders has a real contribution to achieving optimal performance, as shown in the second hypothesis (H2) with a t-value of 16.356 and a p-value of 0.000. This is in line with the findings of Chen and Wei (2020), which emphasize the importance of using communication as a social exchange tool to build healthy and productive working relationships. Nandini et al. (2024) also revealed that open and structured communication is the main foundation in supporting the performance of public sector organizations.

Meanwhile, work motivation is proven to be a significant factor in mediating the relationship between independent variables and employee performance. In the third (H3) and fifth (H5) hypotheses, work motivation is proven to have a direct effect on performance and is also significantly influenced by communication. This is reinforced by the motivation theory outlined in Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory, where motivation arises when individuals feel that their efforts will lead to desired results (Rehman et al., 2019; Kumar & Pradesh, 2018). A study by Fauzi et al. (2023) also shows that work motivation is an important variable that mediates the influence of leadership on employee work outcomes.

Interestingly, the first (H1) and fourth (H4) hypotheses that test the direct influence of leadership on performance and work motivation do not show significant results. The p-values ​​of each above 0.05 indicate that in the context of the Yogyakarta Narcotics Prison, the existing leadership style has not been able to directly drive performance or motivate employees. This may be due to the gap between the leadership style applied and the expectations and characteristics of employees. This is in line with the findings of Ardhani (2025) which shows that transformational leadership style only has a significant impact if accompanied by a deep understanding of the needs and values ​​of individual employees.

However, the sixth (H6) and seventh (H7) hypotheses that evaluate the mediation effect of work motivation on the influence of leadership and communication on performance, show a significant indirect effect. Although the calculated t value is below the t table, because the p-value is below 0.05, it can be concluded that work motivation acts as a crucial mediator. This means that although leadership does not directly affect performance, it can still influence employee work results by increasing motivation. This supports the theoretical model proposed by Alkadash et al. (2021) that in conditions of crisis or organizational pressure, such as in correctional institutions, the role of motivation as a link between leadership structure and work output becomes very important.

Overall, these results support the idea that the synergy between effective communication and high work motivation plays a dominant role in driving employee performance in the prison environment. While leadership does not directly affect performance, it remains important as a driver of motivation. This study is in line with the findings of Becker (2021) and Cahyadi et al. (2022) that a strategic approach to employee communication and motivation can strengthen organizational performance, especially in the public sector with complex structural challenges.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that leadership and communication have a significant effect on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through work motivation as a mediating variable. Effective leadership and good communication patterns can increase employee work motivation, which ultimately has a positive impact on their performance. These findings indicate that work motivation plays an important role in strengthening the relationship between leadership and communication on performance, so it can be concluded that improving the quality of leadership and organizational communication is a crucial factor in efforts to increase employee productivity.

Based on the research results, it is suggested that organizational leaders prioritize a participatory and inspiring leadership style, which can encourage employee work enthusiasm. In addition, internal communication needs to be improved, both in terms of clarity of information, frequency, and openness, in order to create a conducive and motivating work atmosphere. For further researchers, it is suggested to conduct further research by involving other variables that may also affect performance, such as organizational culture or job satisfaction, so that the research results are more comprehensive.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the understanding of the mediating role of work motivation in bridging the influence of leadership and communication on employee performance, which is in line with motivation theory and organizational behavior theory. The practical implication is that organizations can use the results of this study as a basis for designing human resource development policies, especially in improving leadership capacity and internal communication effectiveness. This is important in order to create a productive work environment and support the achievement of organizational goals in a sustainable manner.

This study has limitations in scope and sample size limited to one particular agency or region, so the results may not necessarily represent all other organizations or sectors. In addition, the quantitative approach used limits exploration of interpersonal dynamics and social contexts that may affect employee motivation and performance. Therefore, further research is recommended to use other variables that can drive performance or through a qualitative or mixed methods approach so that the results are more in-depth.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

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Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Authors’ Contributions

Authors may use the following wordings for this section: “ ‘Author A’ designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. ‘Author B’ and ‘Author C’ managed the analyses of the study. ‘Author C’ managed the literature searches…… All authors read and approved the final manuscript.”

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