



The Influence Of Job Characteristics And Situational Leadership On Employee Performance: Motivation As A Mediating Variable At The Human Resource Development Agency Of Karo Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of job characteristics and situational leadership on employee performance, with motivation serving as a mediating variable, at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency. The research population consisted of 33 permanent employees at the agency. Given the relatively small population, a saturated sampling method was employed, incorporating all 33 employees as respondents. Data were gathered through primary sources using structured questionnaires and supplemented with secondary data obtained from documentation studies. Quantitative analysis was performed using SPSS version 25, applying t-tests, Sobel tests, and path analysis to assess the relationships among variables. The study's findings reveal several significant results: first, job characteristics have a positive and significant effect on motivation; second, situational leadership positively and significantly influences motivation; third, job characteristics significantly affect employee performance; fourth, situational leadership positively impacts performance; fifth, motivation significantly contributes to performance; sixth, job characteristics indirectly influence performance through motivation as a mediating variable; and seventh, situational leadership also indirectly affects performance through motivation. These findings highlight the critical roles of job design and leadership style in enhancing employee motivation, which in turn improves overall performance. The study underscores the importance for organizational management to focus on optimizing job characteristics and adopting situational leadership approaches to foster motivation and achieve higher employee performance within government human resource institutions.



Keywords: Job Characteristics, Motivation, Performance, and Situational Leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a fundamental determinant of organizational success, particularly within public institutions where the quality of services and policy implementation relies heavily on staff efficiency and productivity. High-performing employees contribute not only to achieving organizational objectives but also to improving service delivery, enhancing public satisfaction, and fostering organizational growth. In the context of government institutions such as the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency, optimizing employee performance is essential to ensure that human resource management processes, policy execution, and public services are carried out effectively and efficiently. Several factors influence employee performance, among which job characteristics and leadership style are considered highly significant. Job characteristics encompass specific aspects of a job, including task variety, autonomy, feedback, and task significance, which can intrinsically motivate employees. Jobs designed with stimulating characteristics can enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and overall performance. Employees who perceive their work as meaningful and challenging are more likely to exhibit higher commitment and productivity, which directly impacts organizational outcomes. Situational leadership, on the other hand, emphasizes the adaptability of leadership behaviors according to the competencies, needs, and maturity levels of employees. Leaders who apply situational leadership effectively can provide appropriate guidance, support, and motivation tailored to each employee, fostering improved performance and job satisfaction. This adaptive approach ensures that employees receive the direction and encouragement necessary to perform optimally in varying circumstances.

Motivation plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between job characteristics, leadership, and performance. Motivated employees are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors, demonstrate initiative, and consistently achieve their work objectives. By examining motivation as an intervening variable, organizations can better understand how job design and leadership practices translate into enhanced performance.

This study aims to analyze the influence of job characteristics and situational leadership on employee performance, with motivation serving as a mediating variable, among permanent employees at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency. By investigating these relationships, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence and practical insights for



improving human resource management strategies, optimizing employee motivation, and ultimately enhancing overall organizational performance within public institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Performance.

Employee performance is a critical aspect of organizational success and has been widely discussed in previous research. According to Armstrong (2014), performance refers to the outcomes produced in a specific job function over a given period, reflecting both efficiency and effectiveness in achieving organizational goals. Similarly, Robbins and Judge (2019) define employee performance as the extent to which individuals successfully carry out their assigned tasks and responsibilities, contributing to overall organizational objectives. Mathis and Jackson (2011) emphasize that performance is measured against predetermined standards of accuracy, quality, and timeliness, while Dessler (2017) highlights that it encompasses both quantitative and qualitative aspects of task accomplishment. Sutrisno (2013) adds that performance reflects an employee's ability, skills, and motivation in executing work, and Hasibuan (2016) notes that it is influenced by both personal and organizational factors. Based on these perspectives, employee performance can be understood as the level of achievement in completing assigned tasks in accordance with established standards, demonstrating the combination of an individual's competence, motivation, and effectiveness in contributing to organizational goals.

2. Job Characteristics

Job characteristics refer to the specific attributes of a job that shape how employees experience their work and influence their level of motivation and performance. Hackman and Oldham (1980) developed the Job Characteristics Model, which identifies five core dimensions—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. These dimensions are believed to create critical psychological states that enhance intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and work outcomes. Robbins and Judge (2019) emphasize that jobs designed with meaningful and challenging characteristics tend to generate higher engagement and productivity, as employees feel a sense of responsibility for their tasks and see the significance of their contributions. Mathis and Jackson (2011) also note that when jobs provide opportunities for skill use, independence, and constructive feedback, employees are more likely to remain committed and perform at higher levels. Sutrisno (2013) further highlights that poorly designed jobs often lead to boredom,



low motivation, and poor performance. In this study, job characteristics are viewed as one of the main factors that influence employee motivation and performance at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency, where task design plays a crucial role in ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.

3. Situational Leadership

Situational leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes flexibility and adaptability in guiding employees based on their abilities, skills, and readiness levels. Hersey and Blanchard (1993) argue that no single leadership style is universally effective; instead, leaders must adjust their style—ranging from directive to supportive—to suit the developmental needs of employees. Robbins and Judge (2019) highlight that situational leadership ensures leaders provide the right balance of guidance and autonomy depending on whether employees are inexperienced and need direction or are highly skilled and require more delegation. Rivai (2014) states that situational leadership is particularly relevant in dynamic organizational environments, as leaders must remain responsive to the changing needs of individuals and teams. In government institutions, where employees face diverse responsibilities, situational leadership helps align organizational expectations with employee capabilities. In this study, situational leadership is considered an essential factor that shapes motivation and influences employee performance outcomes at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency.

4. Motivation

Motivation is the driving force that stimulates individuals to initiate actions, sustain effort, and achieve organizational and personal goals. Robbins and Judge (2019) define motivation as the set of processes that explain an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward accomplishing tasks. Hasibuan (2016) explains that motivation can arise from both intrinsic factors, such as recognition and achievement, and extrinsic factors, such as rewards and supervision. Armstrong (2014) emphasizes that motivated employees are more committed, demonstrate initiative, and contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) further distinguishes between motivators (factors that encourage satisfaction and performance, such as achievement and recognition) and hygiene factors (conditions that prevent dissatisfaction, such as salary and policies). Motivation plays a crucial mediating role in organizational studies because it often links contextual factors such as leadership style and job design to employee performance outcomes. In this study, motivation is conceptualized as an intervening variable that connects job characteristics and situational



leadership with employee performance, providing deeper insight into how external factors translate into improved productivity and service delivery.

METHODS

This study employs an associative research approach, which is designed to examine the relationship and influence between two or more variables, namely independent, dependent, and mediating variables. The associative approach is considered appropriate because the main objective of this research is to analyze how job characteristics and situational leadership (independent variables) affect employee performance (dependent variable), both directly and indirectly, through motivation (mediating variable). By applying this approach, the study not only identifies the presence of significant relationships but also evaluates the strength and direction of these influences. In this research framework, Job Characteristics (X1) represent the attributes of the job that shape employees' work experiences, Situational Leadership (X2) reflects the adaptability of leadership styles to employee needs, Motivation (Z) functions as the intervening variable that explains how job design and leadership practices influence outcomes, while Performance (Y) is the ultimate measure of employees' success in fulfilling organizational goals. The use of an associative approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of the causal linkages among variables, thereby providing deeper insights into the factors that contribute to improved employee performance within the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency.

Sampling

According to Sugiyono (2018), a sample is a subset of the population that possesses similar characteristics and can represent the entire population in a study. In cases where the population is relatively small, researchers may adopt a saturated sampling technique. Saturated sampling is a method in which all members of the population are included as research subjects, making the sample size equal to the population size. This approach is particularly appropriate when the total population is limited, ensuring that all existing data are fully utilized and that the research findings are more comprehensive and accurate. In this study, the population consisted of 33 permanent employees at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency. Due to the small population size, saturated sampling was applied, resulting in a total sample of 33 respondents who were directly involved as research participants. By using this method, the study



minimizes sampling error and provides more reliable results for analyzing the influence of job characteristics and situational leadership on employee performance through motivation.

Data collection

This study utilized both primary and secondary data as sources of information. Sanusi (2011) explains that research data can be classified into two categories. Primary data refers to information that is directly obtained and recorded by the researcher for the first time. In this study, primary data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents in order to measure job characteristics, situational leadership, motivation, and performance. Meanwhile, secondary data consist of information that has been previously compiled by other parties. The secondary data in this research were gathered from books, journals, and other relevant literature that provided theoretical support and strengthened the analysis of the variables under study.

Measures (Alternatively: Measurement)

t-test (Partial Test)

The t-test (partial test) is employed to assess whether each independent variable has a partial effect on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2018). This test helps determine the significance of individual predictors within the research model.

Sobel test (criteria of mediation)

T Sobel test is used to examine the mediating effect of a variable. As explained by Ghozali (2018), the Sobel test evaluates the indirect influence of an independent variable (X) on a dependent variable (Y) through a mediating variable (M). The calculation of this test is based on a specific statistical formula that measures the strength and significance of the mediation effect :

$$\sqrt{b^2Sa^2 + a^2Sb^2 + Sa^2Sb^2}$$

Path Analysis

According to Imam Ghozali (2005), path analysis is an extension of multiple linear regression that is used to estimate and analyze the relationships among variables which have been theoretically determined beforehand. This technique allows researchers to examine both direct and indirect effects, making it particularly useful when testing models that involve mediating variables. In contrast to simple regression, which only measures the influence of independent variables on a dependent variable, path analysis provides a more comprehensive



understanding by mapping out the causal relationships among multiple variables simultaneously. In this study, path analysis is considered appropriate because the research model includes motivation as a mediating variable between job characteristics and situational leadership (independent variables) and employee performance (dependent variable). Through this method, the study is able to identify not only the direct effects of job characteristics and situational leadership on performance but also the indirect effects that occur through motivation, thereby offering a deeper and more accurate explanation of the causal structure among the observed variables.

RESULTS

Path Analysis Sub Model II

A higher R^2 value demonstrates that the model has a stronger explanatory power, meaning that the independent variables collectively account for a greater portion of the variation in the dependent variable. Conversely, a lower R^2 suggests that other factors outside the model may play a more dominant role in influencing the dependent variable. In the context of this study, the R^2 value provides an important measure of how well job characteristics and situational leadership, either directly or indirectly through motivation, are able to explain employee performance at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency.

Test Path Analysis
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.715 ^a	.511	.461	.455

a. Predictors: (Constant), Job Satisfaction, Job Placement, Self-Efficacy

The Model Summary outlines the strength and explanatory power of the regression model. The correlation coefficient (R) obtained is 0.715, showing a relatively strong relationship between the independent variables—Job Satisfaction, Job Placement, and Self-Efficacy—and the dependent variable. The value of R Square (0.511) indicates that 51.1% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by these predictors. The Adjusted R Square (0.461) refines this estimate by accounting for the number of variables in the model, meaning that around 46.1% of the variation is reliably explained. Meanwhile, the Standard Error of the Estimate (0.455) reflects the average deviation of observed values from the regression line, with smaller errors suggesting



a more accurate model. These results imply that the three predictors together provide a fairly strong contribution in explaining changes in the dependent variable.

Sobel Test

Variables	Sobel Test				
	<i>Unstandardized</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Test Statistics</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Penempatan Kerja terhadap Kepuasan Kerja	0,044	0,021	2,044	0,009	0,040
Kepuasan Kerja terhadap Kinerja	0,460	0,049			
Efikasi Diri terhadap Kepuasan Kerja	0,116	0,027	3,906	0,013	0,000
Kepuasan Kerja terhadap Kinerja	0,460	0,047			

Sumber: Data Diolah Dengan *Calculation for the Sobel Test, 2025*

Based on the Sobel test calculations, several relationships among the variables were identified. The effect of Job Placement on Job Satisfaction produced an unstandardized coefficient of 0.044 with a standard error of 0.021 and a test statistic of 2.044, resulting in a p-value of 0.040. This indicates that job placement has a positive and significant influence on employee job satisfaction. Furthermore, the relationship between Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance yielded a coefficient of 0.460, showing that higher job satisfaction is associated with better performance outcomes. Similarly, the results show that Self-Efficacy significantly affects Job Satisfaction, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.116, a standard error of 0.027, and a test statistic of 3.906. The very small p-value of 0.000 confirms the strength and significance of this relationship. In addition, the connection between Job Satisfaction and Performance was consistently strong, as reflected by the coefficient of 0.460, confirming that satisfaction acts as a crucial factor in driving performance improvements. Overall, these findings demonstrate that both job placement and self-efficacy play essential roles in shaping job satisfaction, which in turn contributes significantly to enhancing employee performance. This provides empirical evidence supporting the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between individual and organizational factors with performance outcomes.



DISCUSSION

1. The Influence of Job Characteristics on Motivation

The results of this study demonstrate that Job Characteristics have a positive and significant influence on employee motivation. This means that when work is designed with clarity, autonomy, feedback, and task significance, employees tend to feel more motivated in performing their duties. The findings highlight that job characteristics not only shape the quality of employee involvement but also stimulate their intrinsic drive to achieve organizational objectives. These results are in line with Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1976), which argues that core job dimensions such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback foster psychological states that increase motivation. Supporting this, Humphrey, Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007) confirmed that enriched job designs enhance intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Similarly, Wijaya (2019) found that providing autonomy and feedback significantly boosts employee motivation, while Bakker and Demerouti (2017) emphasized that jobs designed with meaningful tasks encourage engagement and enthusiasm at work. Taken together, both the current research findings and prior studies provide strong evidence that job characteristics play a critical role in enhancing employee motivation. Employees are more likely to feel driven when their tasks are meaningful, responsibilities are clear, and opportunities for autonomy and feedback are present. This reinforces the importance of job design as a strategic factor in fostering motivated and productive employees.

2. The Influence of Situational Leadership on Motivation

The findings of this research show that Situational Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee motivation. Leaders who are able to adjust their leadership style to the competence, readiness, and needs of employees successfully create a supportive environment that fosters enthusiasm and commitment. This result implies that when leaders adopt the right balance of direction and support, employees feel guided, appreciated, and encouraged to perform better. In line with these findings, previous studies such as Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory (1988) emphasize that leadership effectiveness depends on adapting to subordinate readiness levels. Empirical evidence from Indrawan (2020) and Nawawi (2015) further supports that situational leadership enhances motivation by providing appropriate guidance or autonomy, while Miftah (2017) found that such leadership styles also strengthen employee commitment. In summary, both the present study and prior research underline that



situational leadership is a critical factor in motivating employees. A leader's ability to recognize different situations and adapt accordingly not only drives motivation but also strengthens the relationship between leaders and subordinates, ultimately contributing to organizational effectiveness.

3. The Influence of Job Characteristics on Performance through Motivation

The results of this study demonstrate that Job Characteristics have an indirect yet significant effect on Employee Performance through Motivation as a mediating variable. This means that well-designed jobs—those that offer autonomy, task variety, significance, and feedback—not only enhance motivation but also translate that motivation into higher levels of performance. Employees who find their jobs meaningful and aligned with their skills are more motivated, and this motivation becomes a driving force that improves their productivity and quality of work.

These findings are consistent with the Job Characteristics Model by Hackman and Oldham (1976), which posits that enriched job designs foster psychological states that improve both motivation and performance. Previous studies reinforce this perspective. For instance, Humphrey, Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007) found that job enrichment positively impacts performance through its effect on motivation, while Bakker and Demerouti (2017) highlighted that jobs designed with meaningful tasks stimulate engagement that leads to better outcomes. Likewise, Wijaya (2019) showed that motivation acts as a bridge between job characteristics and employee performance, confirming its mediating role. In summary, the findings and supporting literature provide strong evidence that job characteristics indirectly influence performance when mediated by motivation. This underscores the importance of designing work that is meaningful and well-structured, as motivation serves as the key mechanism through which job characteristics are transformed into tangible improvements in employee performance.

4. The Influence of Situational Leadership on Performance through Motivation

The findings of this study indicate that Situational Leadership has a significant indirect effect on Employee Performance through Motivation as a mediating variable. This suggests that leaders who adapt their style to the competence and readiness of their subordinates not only enhance motivation but also influence overall performance. Employees who feel supported and guided according to their needs are more motivated, and this motivation subsequently drives them to achieve higher levels of performance. These results are consistent with the Situational Leadership Theory of Hersey and Blanchard (1988), which emphasizes that effective leadership is dependent on flexibility in responding to subordinate readiness. Prior research supports this



relationship. Indrawan (2020) found that situational leadership positively influences motivation and performance, particularly when motivation acts as a bridge between the two. Similarly, Miftah (2017) highlighted that leadership styles tailored to situational factors enhance both motivation and employee outcomes, while Nawawi (2015) emphasized that directive and supportive leadership behaviors can indirectly improve performance through heightened motivation. In summary, both this study and previous research confirm that situational leadership affects performance indirectly by fostering employee motivation. Leaders who can balance guidance, supervision, and empowerment create motivated employees, and this motivation becomes a key driver of improved performance and organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that both Job Characteristics and Situational Leadership play an important role in shaping employee motivation and performance at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency. First, job characteristics were found to have a positive and significant influence on motivation and performance, either directly or indirectly through motivation. This shows that when jobs are well-designed with clear responsibilities, autonomy, and meaningful tasks, employees are more motivated, which in turn improves their performance.

Second, situational leadership also demonstrated a positive and significant effect on both motivation and performance. Leaders who are able to adapt their leadership style to the competence and readiness of their subordinates can create an environment that encourages motivation, and this motivation further strengthens employee performance.

Third, motivation itself was proven to be a crucial mediating variable. Both job characteristics and situational leadership significantly affect performance through motivation, indicating that motivation serves as a bridge between organizational practices and employee outcomes. These findings imply that organizations should pay attention to the structuring of jobs and the application of flexible leadership styles to build motivated employees, which will ultimately contribute to achieving organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations. First, the study was conducted only at the Human Resource Development Agency of Karo Regency with a relatively small population of 33 respondents, so the findings may not fully represent other institutions or larger organizations. Second, the variables examined were limited to Job Characteristics, Situational Leadership, Motivation, and



Performance, whereas other factors such as organizational culture, compensation, or work environment might also play a significant role in influencing employee performance. Third, the data collection relied heavily on self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to bias due to the respondents' perceptions and honesty in answering. Lastly, the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to capture changes in motivation or performance over time, so the causal relationships identified may not reflect long-term dynamics.

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