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Empowering Leadership and Employee Performance in Indonesian Local Government:

Rudin[1]* · **Ansar[1]** · **Mattalatta[1]** · **Kurniawaty[1]**

[1] Doctoral Program in Management Science, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) Amkop Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

* Corresponding author: Rudin · rudinrudy5@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Empowering leadership is expected to improve public employee performance, yet its motivational and attitudinal pathways are rarely assessed together. This article examines a parallel-mediation model linking empowering leadership with employee performance through public service motivation, job satisfaction, and affective commitment in an Indonesian regency-government context. The supplied analytical dataset contains 200 cases and 26 five-point indicators. Partial least squares structural equation modeling reports positive leadership associations with public service motivation (β = .292), job satisfaction (β = .387), and affective commitment (β = .322). All three mediators are positively associated with performance, while the remaining direct coefficient is small and statistically imprecise (β = .085, p = .229). The specific indirect associations are .087, .084, and .078, respectively; their pairwise differences are not statistically resolved. The findings illustrate motivational, evaluative, and relational pathways as complementary explanations of perceived public employee performance. Because the provided manuscript describes the analytical data as generated for teaching, its provenance must be reconciled against original field records before these results can be claimed as field evidence.

KEYWORDS empowering leadership · local government · public service motivation · job satisfaction · affective commitment · employee performance · mediation

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01 Introduction

A central difficulty in explaining employee performance in public administration is that public employees are simultaneously members of formal bureaucratic organizations and participants in a public mission. Their work is organized by statutes, budget ceilings, reporting obligations, and hierarchical approvals, but also requires judgment about citizen needs. A supervisor may authorize more discretion without changing the regulations that define permissible action. Conversely, a leader may communicate public-service values without furnishing the resources necessary to meet service standards. This distinction motivates an analysis of the psychological and attitudinal routes through which empowering leadership is associated with performance. It also cautions against treating empowerment as a universally transferable management intervention whose effects are identical in private firms and public offices.

The contribution of a three-path model is conceptual rather than simply additive. Public service motivation, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment are often correlated, but each answers a different question. Public service motivation concerns why an employee values contributing to society; satisfaction concerns how favorably an employee evaluates the experience and conditions of work; and affective commitment concerns the employee's emotional relationship with the employing institution. A public servant can remain strongly motivated to serve citizens while being dissatisfied with promotion prospects, or can feel

loyal to an agency without perceiving opportunities to act on public-oriented motives. Estimating their conditional associations in a common model is a useful step toward differentiating those explanations, although a cross-sectional model cannot establish how they unfold over time.

The regency context adds a service-systems perspective to the leadership literature. Public employees influence the experiences of residents, entrepreneurs, and visitors through licensing, sanitation, local infrastructure, and the coordination of tourism-related services. Administrative performance should therefore not be read as an entirely internal organizational outcome. Yet the dependent variable here is employee self-reported performance, not objectively observed service waiting time, citizen satisfaction, or administrative accuracy. This distinction is consequential: a positive association with perceived performance can inform theory and future investigation without demonstrating an improvement in publicly experienced service quality.

Local governments are the level of the state that citizens meet most often. Regency agencies issue permits, register residents, run health centers and schools, maintain roads, and distribute social assistance, so the performance of their employees largely determines the quality of public services people experience. Service-management scholars have long argued that public services are co-produced through the interaction of service organizations, their staff, and users, which places the public service workforce at the center of service quality (Osborne et al., 2013). Research published in this journal has likewise emphasized that the capabilities and engagement of employees link managerial practices to service outcomes, whether in small hotels (Dasmadi et al., 2026) or in collaborative public governance (Malau et al., 2026).

Indonesian regency governments face a particular combination of pressures. Bureaucratic reform and the expansion of digital public services require employees to exercise more judgement and initiative, while hierarchical decision-making, rigid procedures, and limited discretion persist (Ulum, 2025; Khumaidi & Aminullah, 2025). The workforce also combines career civil servants (PNS) and contract government employees (PPPK), whose motivations and expectations may differ. In this context, empowering leadership, in which supervisors share authority, involve employees in decisions, provide information, express confidence in employees' abilities, and support their development (Arnold et al., 2000; Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014), is often proposed as a way to release the capacity of public employees.

Meta-analytic evidence shows that empowering leadership is positively related to employee performance, but also that the relationship is largely indirect and varies across contexts (Lee et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018). Three mechanisms are especially plausible in public organizations. Empowering leaders may strengthen employees' public service motivation (PSM) by making the public value of their work visible and by satisfying their needs for autonomy and competence (Vandenabeele, 2014). They may raise job satisfaction by improving the experience of work itself (Judge et al., 2001). And they may build affective commitment, an emotional attachment to the organization that motivates effort on its behalf (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Few studies examine these three mechanisms simultaneously, so it remains unclear whether they operate in parallel or whether one dominates.

This problem is more than an extension of private-sector leadership theory into another administrative setting. Frontline government personnel operate under legal mandates and service standards that make the meaning of discretion unusually contingent. Some decisions can be delegated within prescribed limits, whereas others cannot be negotiated by supervisors or subordinates. A leader may communicate trust without being able to alter salary schedules, staffing assignments, or statutory procedures. A plausible explanatory model must therefore separate the psychological experience of empowerment from the legal capacity to change the organization. It must also distinguish performance as a self-reported behavior from administratively recorded outputs or citizen-experienced service quality.

An additional analytical difficulty arises when multiple favorable employee attitudes are entered as independent mediators. Public service motivation, job satisfaction, and affective commitment are conceptually distinct but empirically correlated. Estimating a single mediator can inadvertently assign that mediator variance that is shared with the others. Parallel mediation permits a comparison of conditional routes while making clear that the resulting path coefficients depend on construct measurement and model specification. Failure to find a statistically significant difference between two indirect effects is not proof of practical equivalence. The present article places these distinctions at the center of the theoretical argument.

The setting also raises an important boundary question for tourism and service-management research. Licensing, mobility infrastructure, destination management, public health, and local administrative access

shape the operating conditions of tourism enterprises and the experiences of visitors and residents. Public employee behaviors may therefore matter for a wider service ecosystem even when employees do not directly work in hotels or attractions. This article links the organizational mechanisms of leadership with those public-service capacities without claiming to estimate destination or visitor outcomes (Osborne et al., 2013; Malau et al., 2026; Khumaidi & Aminullah, 2025).

The study brings together three theoretically distinct employee responses within one parallel-mediation framework. The previous teaching-material version reported the model as an instructional example; its reported statistical estimates are retained here while the authors verify the documentation of the original fieldwork and respondent-level records. This distinction is essential because a PLS-SEM analysis method does not, on its own, establish how observations were obtained.

The article therefore asks three analytical questions: how strongly is empowering leadership associated with each of the three putative mediators; how are those mediators jointly associated with self-rated performance; and how do the specific indirect associations compare? These questions also help specify a field-research agenda rather than treating a statistically fitted path model as evidence of causation.

02 Literature Review

An integrated account must specify both differentiation and coexistence of the three pathways. Self-determination theory directs attention to autonomy and competence-supportive contexts, but empowerment does not necessarily produce public service motivation unless employees connect their discretion to public value. Social exchange theory focuses on perceived investment and reciprocity, which may create identification with the organization rather than with citizens as beneficiaries. The job demands–resources perspective predicts that access to information, participation, and developmental support makes work more manageable and satisfying. Because these frameworks address different motivational objects, the mechanisms can coexist without being interchangeable. Their empirical correlations should consequently be acknowledged rather than taken to mean they measure the same construct.

Competing explanations also deserve attention. Employees who already perform well may attract more managerial trust and delegation, resulting in reverse causality. Supportive organizational cultures may jointly influence leadership ratings, attitudinal ratings, and self-rated performance. Dispositional optimism, perceived procedural fairness, organizational identification, and role clarity could further account for shared variance. The proposed parallel model is therefore one theoretically motivated representation of an association structure, not an exhaustive causal map. A future design could introduce temporally separated measurements, supervisor-rated performance, and agency-level controls to compare the proposed model with these alternatives.

Empowering Leadership in Public Organizations

Empowering leadership refers to leader behaviors that share power with subordinates and raise their intrinsic motivation (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Arnold et al. (2000) identified five dimensions: leading by example, participative decision-making, coaching, informing, and showing concern. Ahearne et al. (2005) emphasized enhancing the meaningfulness of work, fostering participation, expressing confidence in high performance, and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints, while Amundsen and Martinsen (2014) distinguished autonomy support from development support. Empowering leadership is closely related to psychological empowerment, the experience of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact at work (Spreitzer, 1995; Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Public organizations are often seen as difficult settings for empowerment because rules, hierarchy, and accountability requirements limit the discretion leaders can delegate. Yet research in public agencies shows that leadership behaviors perceived by employees remain consequential for performance (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015), and studies of Indonesian local government highlight the need for leadership commitment to make reforms such as digital complaint services work in practice (Khumaidi & Aminullah, 2025). Research on local government employees elsewhere in Southeast Asia similarly shows that organizational culture and internal dynamics shape work performance (Banico-Ortega & Acero, 2025).

Theoretical Foundations

Three theories explain why empowering leadership should affect performance through the proposed mediators. Self-determination theory holds that people are most motivated and perform best when their basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, and that supportive social contexts help internalize the values of an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Empowering leaders provide autonomy and development opportunities, which should both satisfy these needs and help employees internalize public service values (Vandenabeele, 2014). Social exchange reasoning, embedded in the commitment literature, suggests that employees who feel trusted and supported reciprocate with emotional attachment and effort (Meyer et al., 2002). Finally, the job demands–resources perspective treats leadership as a job resource that fosters positive attitudes and motivation, which in turn improve performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017); a study in this journal found that job resources directly fostered work engagement (Syarifuddin et al., 2025).

Empowering Leadership and the Three Mediators

Self-determination theory clarifies why formal delegation is not enough. Autonomy support involves meaningful choice, opportunities to exercise competence, and an explanation of why a task matters. An employee who is technically authorized to make a decision but lacks information or fears punishment may experience little autonomy. In contrast, informational feedback and participation may support internalization even when formal decision rights remain limited. In public institutions, internalization is likely to be oriented toward service responsibilities, impartial treatment, and the consequences of administrative decisions for citizens (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vandenabeele, 2014).

Social exchange theory supplies a related but separate explanation. Employees who regard supervisors as reliable, fair, and supportive may reciprocate through stronger affiliation with their agency. However, identification with the organization should not be collapsed into motivation to serve the public. Staff can be deeply committed to a mission but dissatisfied with organizational practices; they may also remain attached to their employing agency for reasons unrelated to public values. The constructs may reinforce one another while preserving their theoretical boundaries (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002).

The job demands–resources approach adds an evaluative perspective. Information access, developmental support, discretion, and constructive feedback are resources that can make demanding public work more manageable. Satisfaction summarizes employees' assessments of several aspects of employment, not solely the intrinsic rewards of public service. Compensation and promotion opportunities may be largely determined by civil-service rules rather than discretionary choices made by immediate supervisors. Thus, a positive leadership–satisfaction association is plausible, but it cannot be assumed to operate equally across all job facets (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Spector, 1985).

Public service motivation is the predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions (Perry & Wise, 1990). It encompasses attraction to public service, commitment to public values, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Perry, 1996; Kim et al., 2013). Although PSM was once treated as a stable trait, evidence shows that it is shaped by organizational socialization and leadership (Vandenabeele, 2007; Ritz et al., 2016). By involving employees in decisions and explaining how their work affects citizens, empowering leaders make public value more salient and satisfy needs that support the internalization of public service values (Vandenabeele, 2014).

H1. Empowering leadership positively affects public service motivation.

Job satisfaction is a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and job experiences (Locke, 1976), covering facets such as the work itself, pay, promotion, co-workers, and working conditions (Spector, 1985). Empowering leadership increases autonomy, information, and developmental support, all of which make work more interesting and controllable, and meta-analyses show consistent positive associations between empowering leadership and job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018).

H2. Empowering leadership positively affects job satisfaction.

Affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993). Work experiences that communicate trust, respect, and support are among the strongest antecedents of affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). Leaders who delegate authority and invest in employees' development signal that the organization values them, which should strengthen identification and the desire to remain.

H3. Empowering leadership positively affects affective commitment.

Empowering Leadership, the Mediators, and Performance

Individual work performance refers to behaviors under the employee's control that contribute to organizational goals (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015), including task, contextual, and adaptive performance (Koopmans et al., 2011). Empowering leadership may improve performance directly by removing obstacles, providing information, and enabling faster decisions (Ahearne et al., 2005). In addition, each of the three mediators is expected to relate to performance. Employees with high PSM find their work meaningful and invest effort in serving citizens (Bright, 2007; Kim, 2005). Satisfied employees tend to perform better, with a meta-analytic true-score correlation of about 0.30 (Judge et al., 2001), and PSM itself is associated with satisfaction (Homberg et al., 2015). Affective commitment is the form of commitment most strongly associated with performance (Riketta, 2002; Meyer et al., 2002). A study in this journal also found that a supportive work climate improved job attitudes, which in turn improved performance (Wang & Oscar, 2024).

H4. Empowering leadership positively affects employee performance.

H5. Public service motivation positively affects employee performance.

H6. Job satisfaction positively affects employee performance.

H7. Affective commitment positively affects employee performance.

Combining these arguments, empowering leadership is expected to influence performance indirectly through each of the three mediators, which operate in parallel because they capture distinct motivational (PSM), evaluative (satisfaction), and relational (commitment) responses to leadership.

The parallel specification assumes that leadership is associated with each intermediate construct and that each intermediate construct retains a relationship with performance conditional on the other mediators. It does not assume that the mediators are unrelated. Indeed, public-service values may make work more meaningful, satisfaction may support continued commitment, and identification with the organization may reinforce work effort. Such interrelationships make an exclusive one-mechanism account improbable, but they also mean that cross-sectional data alone cannot distinguish truly parallel mechanisms from sequential psychological processes (Homberg et al., 2015; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Performance requires particular interpretive care. Respondents asked whether they meet standards or solve problems may be rating their own effectiveness rather than demonstrating objectively observed outcomes. Common response tendencies, social desirability, and optimistic self-assessment can inflate associations when the same person rates leadership, motivational dispositions, and their performance in a single questionnaire. Procedural remedies would include temporal separation, confidentiality assurances, independent supervisor assessments, and externally recorded output indicators where appropriate (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Campbell & Wiernik, 2015).

H8. Public service motivation mediates the effect of empowering leadership on employee performance.

H9. Job satisfaction mediates the effect of empowering leadership on employee performance.

H10. Affective commitment mediates the effect of empowering leadership on employee performance.

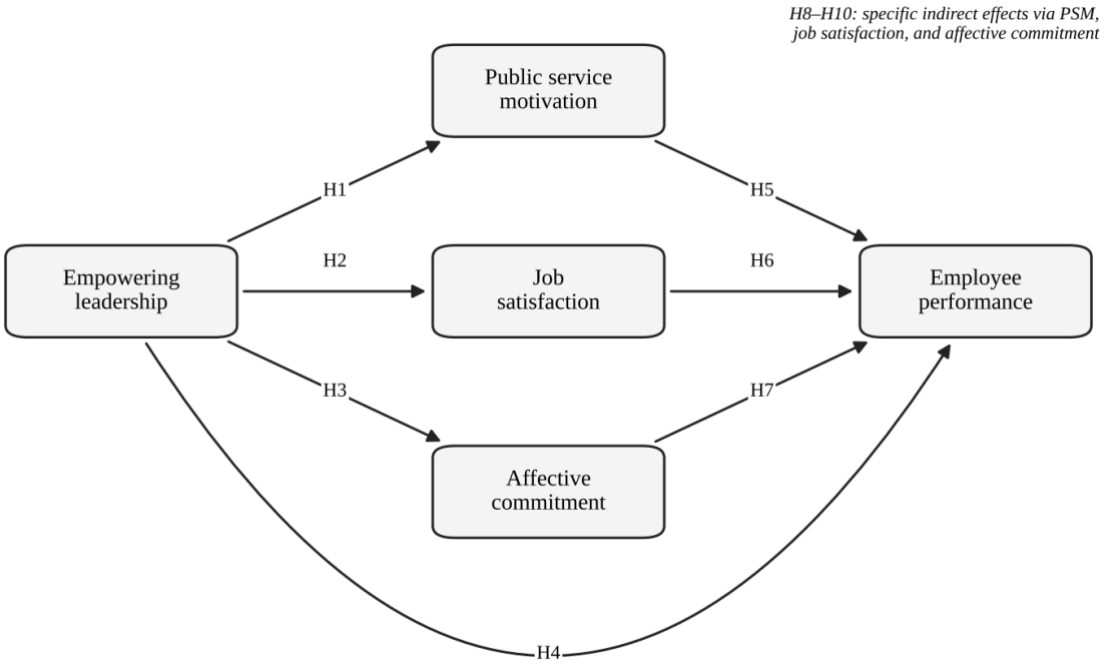

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

03 Research Methods

Research transparency and provenance are especially important when a manuscript has previously served as instructional material. A valid empirical description requires more than a plausible sampling plan or internally consistent model output. The authors should establish when, where, and by whom questionnaires were actually administered; the size of the sampling frame; the number of invitations, refusals, and incomplete responses; the eligibility of PNS and PPPK participants; and the procedures used to protect voluntary participation. For stratified probability sampling, agency-specific selection probabilities or a verifiable random selection procedure would also be required. The available document supplies a planned sampling design but does not establish execution of that plan. Accordingly, the analysis is presently described as an analytical dataset rather than verified field observations.

Interpretation of measurement quality also depends on construct operationalization. Each five-item battery is treated reflectively, implying that indicators are manifestations of the same latent attribute and that their covariance is informative about the underlying construct. That assumption warrants scrutiny for public service motivation, where attraction to policy-making, commitment to public values, compassion, and self-sacrifice can represent conceptually distinguishable facets. Likewise, a broad job-satisfaction measure spanning pay, colleagues, career opportunities, and conditions may involve substantive domains rather than interchangeable indicators. Reporting composite reliability and AVE is necessary but not sufficient for validating these conceptual assumptions. A further empirical study should test measurement invariance across employment categories and assess the implications of alternative first- or second-order specifications.

Because all constructs are measured using the same five-point response format, same-source measurement presents a further interpretive constraint. Full-collinearity VIF checks are descriptive diagnostics and do not prove that common-method processes are absent. More persuasive design protections would include confidentiality assurances, separation of predictor and outcome measurements, and independent performance ratings. The absence of raw data in the supplied material also prevents re-estimation of uncertainty intervals, assessment of unusual response patterns, comparison of alternative model specifications, and verification of predictive cross-validation partitions. The numerical findings below are retained as supplied rather than presented as independently reproduced estimates.

The conceptual design is a quantitative cross-sectional assessment of public employees in Konawe Selatan Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The source protocol anticipates proportionate stratification across agencies and includes both civil servants (PNS) and government employees with employment agreements (PPPK). However, the supplied manuscript does not document completed field recruitment, dates of collection, actual respondent consent, a sampling frame, or original questionnaire records. Consequently, the present results should be read as an analytical demonstration, not as verified field observations. A field-based manuscript would need to replace this subsection with independently documented recruitment, sample disposition, and collection procedures.

The reported analytical approach is partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), with 5,000 bootstrap resamples for inferential tests. The earlier instructional version separately describes the provenance of the 200 observations as model-generated records. Since the original respondent-level questionnaire file, sampling records and software output were not supplied with this editing request, the analyses are presented as reported and cannot yet be independently validated as results from field-collected data. The authors should reconcile the source description with the original data documentation before empirical publication.

Table 1 describes the composition of the 200-case supplied dataset, including 153 coded PNS cases (76.5%) and 47 PPPK cases (23.5%). These are characteristics of the analytical records rather than independently verified counts of surveyed employees. The largest coded agency stratum corresponds to basic public services (36.5%).

Table 1. Profile of the Sample (n = 200)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Employment status	Civil servant (PNS)	153	76.5
	Contract government employee (PPPK)	47	23.5
Gender	Male	103	51.5
	Female	97	48.5
Age (years)	< 30	24	12.0
	30–39	54	27.0
	40–49	72	36.0
	≥ 50	50	25.0
Length of service (years)	< 5	53	26.5
	5–10	54	27.0
	11–20	64	32.0
	> 20	29	14.5
Education	Senior high school	28	14.0
	Diploma	19	9.5
	Bachelor	122	61.0
	Master	31	15.5
Agency stratum	Administrative and planning agencies	39	19.5
	Basic service agencies (education, health, social affairs)	73	36.5
	Licensing, economic, and infrastructure agencies	52	26.0
	Subdistrict offices	36	18.0

The source instrument adapts established construct domains but contains shortened items whose formal content validation is not documented. All 26 items are scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Empowering leadership includes five indicators of delegated discretion, participation, information, trust, and development; public service motivation includes five indicators covering commitment to public values and the public interest; job satisfaction includes five facets; affective commitment includes five statements; and performance includes six self-reported behavioral indicators. The items appear in Table 2. In authentic field

research, translation, cognitive piloting, item-source traceability, and supervisor-versus-self ratings would require explicit documentation.

The reported analysis uses reflective measurement specifications and PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap draws. Outer loadings, internal-consistency indices, AVE, HTMT, structural collinearity, standardized paths, explained variance, specific indirect associations, and cross-validated prediction statistics are retained from the source tables. Because the raw dataset and computational project were not supplied, the results are not presented as independently reproduced. Confidence intervals quantify sampling uncertainty conditional on the analytical records and modeling assumptions; they do not validate their provenance or support causal identification (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

The proposal specifies PLS-SEM, which suits models that combine several mediators and aim at both explanation and prediction (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2022). All constructs were modeled as reflective (Mode A) and estimated with the path weighting scheme and a stop criterion of 10^{-7}. Significance was assessed with 5,000 bootstrap resamples and two-tailed percentile 95% confidence intervals. Following Hair et al. (2022), the measurement model was evaluated through loadings, Cronbach's α, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), the Fornell–Larcker criterion, and HTMT (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). The structural model was evaluated through collinearity, path coefficients, R^2, f^2, and PLSpredict (Shmueli et al., 2019). Specific indirect effects through each mediator, their sum (the total indirect effect), and pairwise contrasts between specific indirect effects were bootstrapped, following the logic of parallel multiple mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), and mediation was classified following Zhao et al. (2010). Common method variance was assessed with full collinearity VIFs (Kock, 2015; Podsakoff et al., 2003). The minimum sample size was checked with the inverse square root method (Kock & Hadaya, 2018).

04 Results and Discussion

Reading statistical magnitudes requires attention to the difference between standardized association and practical consequence. The estimated coefficient of empowering leadership is strongest for job satisfaction (β = 0.387), followed by affective commitment (β = 0.322) and public service motivation (β = 0.292). This ranking concerns associations with the immediate mediators; it does not rank their overall importance for performance. The downstream performance coefficients follow a different ordering, and the product terms consequently converge to similar values. The indirect associations are thus best understood as combinations of two links rather than as evidence that all three mechanisms are identical in strength or policy importance.

The explained variance in performance, $R^2 = 0.386$, indicates that the specified predictors account for a substantial but incomplete portion of the variability in performance scores within the supplied analytical records. It does not measure causal attribution or prove that changing a leadership behavior would produce a corresponding percentage improvement in performance. Similarly, PLSpredict's reported comparison with a linear benchmark is conditional on its stated validation protocol and the construction of the analytical records. Stronger prediction in a generated or unverified dataset should not be used as evidence of external predictive validity for personnel decisions in Indonesian government agencies.

Data Screening and Descriptive Statistics

According to the original analytical output, the 200-case dataset has no missing values. Item skewness was reported between −0.65 and 0.15 and excess kurtosis between −0.77 and 0.31; one case used the same response for all 26 indicators. The descriptive construct scores were highest for public service motivation (M = 4.10) and perceived performance (M = 3.87), followed by affective commitment (M = 3.77), leadership (M = 3.57), and satisfaction (M = 3.51). Compensation satisfaction had the lowest item mean (3.02). These numbers describe the supplied constructed sample and should not be generalized to the workforce without verified survey data.

Measurement Model

Table 2 reports the measurement model. Most loadings exceed 0.708. Three items fall slightly below this value: compensation satisfaction (Y2.2 = 0.685), adaptability (Z5 = 0.679), and cooperation (Z6 = 0.703). Following Hair et al. (2022), items with loadings between 0.40 and 0.708 should be removed only if deletion raises composite reliability or AVE above their thresholds; because both criteria are already met, the items

were retained to preserve content validity. Cronbach's α ranged from 0.822 to 0.853, composite reliability from 0.875 to 0.894, and AVE from 0.573 to 0.629. Outer VIFs ranged from 1.44 to 2.10.

Table 2. Measurement Items, Descriptive Statistics, and Measurement Model Results

Item	Statement (translated from Indonesian)	Mean	SD	Loading	VIF
Empowering leadership (α = 0.850; CR = 0.893; AVE = 0.626)					
X1	My supervisor gives me authority to make work-related decisions	3.46	0.92	0.821	1.92
X2	My supervisor involves me in decisions about my work	3.37	0.86	0.840	2.10
X3	My supervisor gives me the information I need to complete my work	3.70	0.85	0.756	1.69
X4	My supervisor shows confidence in my ability to perform my tasks	3.80	0.85	0.768	1.70
X5	My supervisor gives me guidance and opportunities to develop my skills	3.54	0.81	0.767	1.65
Public service motivation (α = 0.827; CR = 0.878; AVE = 0.591)					
Y1.1	I am attracted to work that benefits the community	4.21	0.78	0.756	1.60
Y1.2	I put the public interest first in carrying out my duties	4.06	0.80	0.763	1.71
Y1.3	I strive to deliver services fairly, honestly, and responsibly	4.18	0.76	0.756	1.68
Y1.4	I care about the difficulties experienced by citizens	4.11	0.79	0.781	1.75
Y1.5	I am willing to make extra efforts to provide the services citizens need	3.94	0.83	0.788	1.64
Job satisfaction (α = 0.822; CR = 0.875; AVE = 0.585)					
Y2.1	I am satisfied with the work I am responsible for	3.81	0.82	0.765	1.73
Y2.2	I am satisfied with the compensation I receive	3.02	0.86	0.685	1.44
Y2.3	I am satisfied with the career development opportunities available	3.19	0.80	0.800	1.66
Y2.4	I am satisfied with working relationships among colleagues	3.96	0.80	0.772	1.65
Y2.5	I am satisfied with the conditions that support my work	3.55	0.91	0.795	1.77
Affective commitment (α = 0.853; CR = 0.894; AVE = 0.629)					
Y3.1	I have a strong emotional attachment to my agency	3.65	0.84	0.765	1.67
Y3.2	I feel the agency's success is my success	3.85	0.81	0.757	1.68
Y3.3	I feel I am an important part of my agency	3.67	0.88	0.849	2.10
Y3.4	I am proud to work for my agency	3.88	0.84	0.792	1.83
Y3.5	I want to stay and build my career in this agency	3.79	0.85	0.798	1.91
Employee performance (α = 0.850; CR = 0.889; AVE = 0.573)					
Z1	I achieve the work targets I am responsible for	3.90	0.87	0.783	1.87
Z2	My work meets the agency's quality standards	3.91	0.77	0.800	1.77
Z3	I complete work within the set time	3.82	0.86	0.754	1.75
Z4	I take the initiative to solve work problems	3.71	0.88	0.811	2.06
Z5	I adapt to changes in rules, technology, or work methods	3.80	0.87	0.679	1.47
Z6	I cooperate with colleagues to achieve agency goals	4.07	0.76	0.703	1.56

Items adapted from the instrument in Rudin (2026). All loadings significant at $p < 0.001$ (5,000 resamples). α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

Table 3 supports discriminant validity: each construct's square root of AVE exceeds its correlations with the other constructs, and all HTMT values are below 0.85, the highest being 0.562.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity: Fornell–Larcker Criterion and HTMT

Construct	EL	PSM	JS	AC	PERF
Empowering leadership	[0.791]	0.343	0.452	0.375	0.386
Public service motivation	0.292	[0.769]	0.399	0.413	0.562
Job satisfaction	0.387	0.337	[0.765]	0.557	0.536

Construct	EL	PSM	JS	AC	PERF
Affective commitment	0.322	0.351	0.472	[0.793]	0.542
Employee performance	0.334	0.479	0.465	0.475	[0.757]

Diagonal: square root of AVE. Below the diagonal: construct correlations. Above the diagonal: HTMT. EL = empowering leadership; PSM = public service motivation; JS = job satisfaction; AC = affective commitment; PERF = employee performance.

Structural Model

Inner VIFs were at most 1.43. Empowering leadership explains 8.5% of the variance in PSM, 15.0% in job satisfaction, and 10.4% in affective commitment; the full model explains 38.6% of the variance in performance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.374$). The SRMR is 0.061, below 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 4 and Figure 2 show the hypothesis tests. Empowering leadership had positive effects on PSM ($\beta = 0.292$, $t = 4.99$, $p < 0.001$), job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.387$, $t = 5.99$, $p < 0.001$), and affective commitment ($\beta = 0.322$, $t = 4.69$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1–H3; the effect on job satisfaction was the largest ($f^2 = 0.176$). PSM ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$), job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.005$), and affective commitment ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.001$) each predicted performance, supporting H5–H7. However, the direct effect of empowering leadership on performance was not significant ($\beta = 0.085$, $t = 1.20$, $p = 0.229$, 95% CI [-0.057, 0.224]), so H4 is not supported.

Table 4. Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing

H	Path	β	SD	t	p	95% CI	f^2	Decision
H1	EL → PSM	0.292	0.058	4.99	< 0.001	[0.177, 0.408]	0.093	Supported
H2	EL → JS	0.387	0.065	5.99	< 0.001	[0.263, 0.517]	0.176	Supported
H3	EL → AC	0.322	0.069	4.69	< 0.001	[0.192, 0.461]	0.116	Supported
H4	EL → PERF	0.085	0.071	1.20	0.229	[-0.057, 0.224]	0.010	Not supported
H5	PSM → PERF	0.296	0.057	5.21	< 0.001	[0.189, 0.408]	0.117	Supported
H6	JS → PERF	0.218	0.077	2.83	0.005	[0.065, 0.366]	0.054	Supported
H7	AC → PERF	0.241	0.063	3.81	< 0.001	[0.116, 0.366]	0.068	Supported

Percentile bootstrap confidence intervals (5,000 resamples).

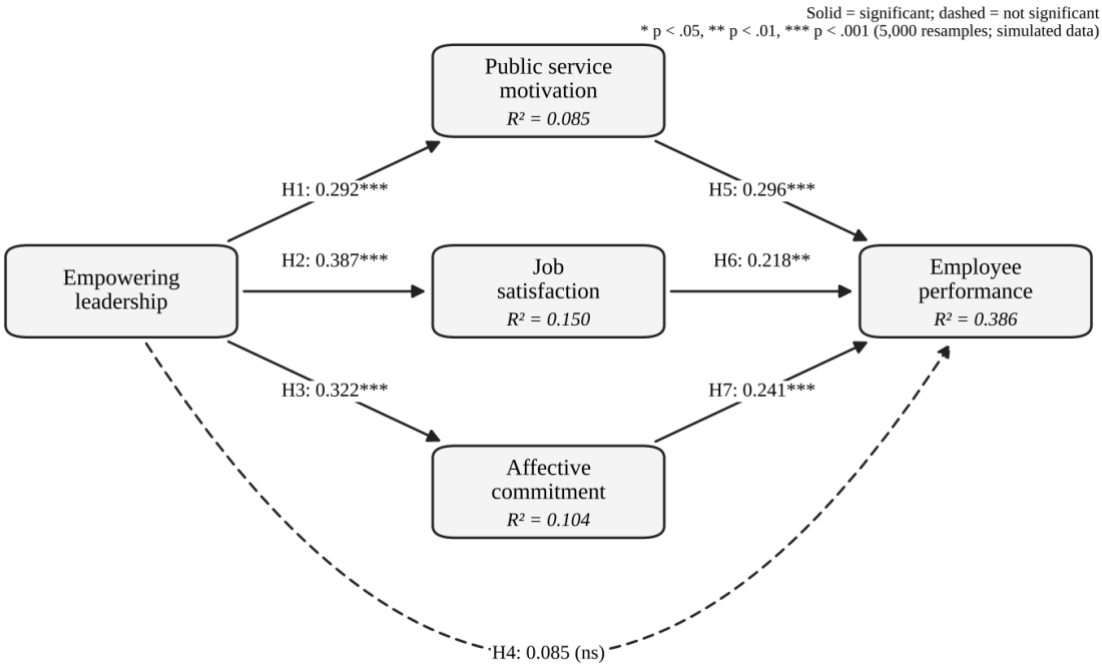

Figure 2. Structural Model Results

Mediation Analysis

Table 5 reports the indirect effects. Each specific indirect effect was positive and significant: through PSM (β = 0.087, 95% CI [0.043, 0.144]), through job satisfaction (β = 0.084, 95% CI [0.026, 0.155]), and through affective commitment (β = 0.078, 95% CI [0.035, 0.135]). H8–H10 are therefore supported. The total indirect effect was 0.248 (95% CI [0.166, 0.354]) and the total effect 0.334; the indirect pathways account for 74.4% of the total effect. Because the direct effect is not significant, the pattern corresponds to indirect-only (full) mediation (Zhao et al., 2010). None of the pairwise contrasts between specific indirect effects was significant (all confidence intervals included zero), so the three mechanisms contribute roughly equally.

Table 5. Specific and Total Indirect Effects and Contrasts

H	Path	β	SD	t	p	95% CI	Decision
H8	EL → PSM → PERF	0.087	0.026	3.39	< 0.001	[0.043, 0.144]	Supported
H9	EL → JS → PERF	0.084	0.033	2.52	0.012	[0.026, 0.155]	Supported
H10	EL → AC → PERF	0.078	0.025	3.05	0.002	[0.035, 0.135]	Supported
—	Total indirect effect	0.248	0.048	5.17	< 0.001	[0.166, 0.354]	—
C	Contrast: PSM vs. JS	0.002				[-0.073, 0.078]	Not significant
C	Contrast: PSM vs. AC	0.009				[-0.058, 0.079]	Not significant
C	Contrast: JS vs. AC	0.007				[-0.089, 0.102]	Not significant

Direct effect of EL on PERF not significant, so mediation is indirect-only (full). C = pairwise contrast between specific indirect effects.

Predictive Power

PLSpredict, using empowering leadership as the only exogenous construct, produced positive Q^2predict values for all 21 endogenous indicators (performance: 0.009 to 0.102), and the PLS-SEM model yielded lower prediction errors than the linear benchmark for all 21 indicators. By the criteria of Shmueli et al. (2019) this indicates high predictive power relative to the benchmark, although the small Q^2predict values show that a single antecedent predicts individual responses only modestly (Table 6).

Table 6. PLSpredict Summary by Endogenous Construct

Construct	Indicators	Q^2predict range	RMSE (PLS − LM) range	PLS < LM
Public service motivation	5	0.028 – 0.051	-0.017 – -0.012	5 of 5
Job satisfaction	5	0.044 – 0.121	-0.017 – -0.010	5 of 5
Affective commitment	5	0.035 – 0.074	-0.021 – -0.012	5 of 5
Employee performance	6	0.009 – 0.102	-0.017 – -0.009	6 of 6

10-fold cross-validation, 10 repetitions; empowering leadership indicators as predictors. Negative RMSE differences favor PLS-SEM.

Discussion

The principal theoretical refinement is a distinction between motivational alignment, work evaluation, and organizational attachment. The public service motivation pathway indicates the relevance of values linked to beneficiaries outside the organization. The satisfaction pathway reflects the immediate employment experience, including autonomy, compensation, colleagues, and growth opportunities. The commitment pathway reflects affiliation and attachment to the employing institution. These orientations may reinforce one another but can also conflict: an employee committed to citizens could challenge organizational routines, whereas an employee loyal to the agency could prioritize internal stability. Future work should explore such tensions rather than assume each attitude is uniformly beneficial.

A policy interpretation should also distinguish what supervisors can change from what requires institutional authorization. Line managers may offer clearer task explanations, invite suggestions, and coach staff, but remuneration rules, staffing allocations, and some personnel decisions lie outside their discretion. A leadership-development intervention would accordingly need to be paired with administrative process reforms and credible employee-feedback channels. If agencies promote empowerment symbolically while withholding the authority, information, or protection needed to exercise judgment, employees may experience frustration rather than improved service. This implementation boundary is particularly relevant in bureaucratic settings with strong accountability procedures.

The results provide no statistical basis for declaring one indirect route superior to another, because the three pairwise contrast confidence intervals include zero. Failure to detect a difference is not evidence of precise equality: the study may be insufficiently powered to distinguish differences of practical interest. A subsequent preregistered study could specify equivalence bounds for the indirect effects, report power for comparisons, and examine whether pathways vary across PNS and PPPK status, agencies with direct citizen contact, or managerial levels. These analyses should be motivated before data collection rather than introduced after inspecting sample patterns.

Within the reported analytical model, empowering leadership was linked to perceived performance mainly through three positive intermediate associations. This does not imply that a leadership intervention would cause the same pattern in the field. The theoretical interpretation is that greater discretion, consultation, information and development support could coincide with stronger public-service purpose, favorable job appraisals and identification with the agency; these dispositions could in turn be associated with higher self-assessed work performance. This account is compatible with self-determination and social-exchange perspectives, but its empirical status depends on real, independently verifiable observations (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Meyer et al., 2002).

The absence of a direct effect would be theoretically informative. In a rule-bound regency bureaucracy, where procedures, budgets, and targets are set from above, supervisors' delegation of authority may not by itself change what employees can accomplish. Its value would lie in the psychological resources it creates. This interpretation is consistent with research in this journal showing that the effects of governance and leadership on public employees' performance operate mainly through intermediate states such as engagement, trust, and role clarity (Malau et al., 2026), and that internal organizational dynamics carry part of the effect of culture on local government performance (Banico-Ortega & Acero, 2025).

A non-significant direct coefficient should not be equated with proof that leadership has no direct consequences. In the submitted estimates its confidence interval permits small negative as well as moderate positive values. Similarly, the language of “full mediation” is best treated as a statistical description of the specified model rather than a verified causal mechanism. Changing the set of covariates, measurement

timing, or performance source could alter both the direct estimate and the size of the indirect associations. A more cautious reading is that the analytical results are consistent with an indirect-only pattern under this particular specification (Zhao et al., 2010).

The similar size of the three indirect effects would suggest that PSM, satisfaction, and commitment are complementary rather than competing mechanisms. PSM represents the public-service-specific channel emphasized in public administration (Perry & Wise, 1990; Ritz et al., 2016), whereas satisfaction and commitment represent general attitudinal channels well established in organizational behavior (Judge et al., 2001; Riketta, 2002). A model that included only one mediator would overstate its unique role, which is why parallel designs are recommended when several mechanisms are theoretically plausible (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

The contrast intervals provide a second methodological lesson. The individual indirect estimates are numerically close, but they are estimated with sampling uncertainty and common information from the same fitted model. None of the pairwise tests rejects a zero difference; this is not a formal demonstration that the pathways are equivalent. Equivalence would require a substantively justified tolerance, appropriate test design, and sufficiently precise estimates. Policy recommendations should therefore not rank the three mediators from these rounded point estimates alone.

The descriptive pattern would also matter for practice. employees reported strong public service motivation but the lowest satisfaction with compensation and career development. This combination, high intrinsic motivation and weaker satisfaction with extrinsic rewards, is common in public organizations and suggests that leadership practices that build meaning and development opportunities may be especially valuable where financial incentives are constrained.

For the service orientation of this journal, the case shows how the mechanisms that link leadership to service quality in commercial settings, such as employee capability and service quality in small hotels (Dasmadi et al., 2026), can be examined among public service providers. Regency agencies that license tourism businesses, manage destinations, and maintain public infrastructure are part of the service system that residents and visitors experience, so the performance of their employees is a service-quality issue.

Two further streams widen the argument. Ulum (2025) places public-sector reform in an institutional and ethical perspective, suggesting that employee initiative should remain accountable to norms of fairness and public responsibility. Khumaidi and Aminullah (2025) illustrate that digital service improvements depend on organizational implementation, not technology alone. In a local-government workforce, empowerment may be valuable precisely when discretion is combined with procedural integrity, role clarity, and service-user feedback. These propositions require field testing with records that identify when and how the leader behaviors, attitudes, and performance indicators were measured.

Recent GRTSS contributions reinforce the importance of intermediate employee processes while also revealing their context dependence. Malau et al. (2026) connect governance conditions with engagement through collaborative leadership, role clarity, and interorganizational trust; Ortega and Acero (2025) highlight internal politics as a mechanism relating organizational culture to performance; and Syarifuddin et al. (2025) examine resilience and job resources as antecedents of engagement. These studies consider distinct constructs and sampling contexts, so their evidence should not be treated as replication of the present coefficients. Instead, together they motivate research on how organizational arrangements translate into employee attitudes and behavior.

Theoretical Implications

The parallel mediation structure also contributes a caution about explanatory parsimony. Single-mediator models risk assigning shared motivational and attitudinal variance to whichever construct happens to be included. Joint estimation limits that particular omission, but the resulting coefficients are conditional on the other included mediators and may be sensitive to their measurement quality. Thus, the present pattern is consistent with distinct theoretical routes without verifying their independence. A longitudinal design with repeated mediator measures could examine whether changes in public purpose precede satisfaction or commitment, while a multilevel design could separate individual perceptions of leadership from agency-level climates.

The central contribution is conceptual and model-comparative pending authentication of the observations. The framework distinguishes a purpose-related mechanism (public service motivation), an appraisal-related

mechanism (job satisfaction), and an attachment-related mechanism (affective commitment). Estimating all three together discourages interpreting any one attitude as the sole channel. Future field research can evaluate whether the same conditional associations appear in hierarchical local-government organizations, and whether mechanisms differ by employment status or public-service function.

Practical Implications

For evaluation, agencies should use indicators more concrete than generalized self-rated performance alone. Potential outcomes include timeliness of completed cases, rework or error rates, verified citizen complaints, successful resolution of service requests, and employee-reported opportunities to exercise discretion. Collecting these indicators before and after a leadership intervention, alongside employee attitudes, would make it possible to distinguish perceived improvement from operational change. Monitoring unintended consequences is equally important: delegation without clear rules may introduce inconsistent decisions, while pressure to serve rapidly may undermine procedural fairness. An effective empowerment program requires both scope for judgment and transparent safeguards.

The model suggests three propositions for evaluation rather than established policy effects. First, supervisors could combine decision participation with explicit rules about delegated authority. Second, agencies could communicate citizen outcomes to reinforce the meaning of routine tasks. Third, transparent promotion criteria and development access could respond to dissatisfaction with career opportunities. These are testable management approaches, not interventions shown to improve performance by the supplied analytical dataset.

05 Conclusion

The model offers a disciplined conceptual basis for examining why empowering leadership may be associated with better public service work. The reported estimates identify statistically positive indirect routes through public service motivation, job satisfaction, and affective commitment, while the specified direct route has a confidence interval spanning zero. These results should not be interpreted as demonstrating that empowerment causes improved performance or that any specific pathway would remain stable across agencies. The key next step is a provenance-verified field study with independent performance measurement and a transparently documented sampling process. Such evidence would permit a stronger assessment of whether the three mechanisms are complementary, context dependent, or temporally connected in Indonesia's regency administration.

The reported parallel-mediation model associates empowering leadership with public service motivation, job satisfaction, and affective commitment, each of which is positively related to perceived employee performance in the supplied 200-case analytical dataset. Its principal insight is the need to distinguish public purpose, job evaluation, and organizational attachment rather than attributing performance to empowerment alone. The direct path is not statistically resolved, nor are differences among the three indirect paths. Importantly, the source describes the observations as generated for instruction. The present article therefore does not represent the coefficients as authenticated field evidence. Publication as an original empirical research article requires replacement or verification against original field data, documentation of data collection and ethics/consent, and reproducible analysis. Beyond this threshold, cross-sectional self-reporting would still preclude causal inference. The framework offers a defensible agenda for a verified, multi-source investigation of local public service performance.

Declarations

Author contributions. Rudin: conceptualization and original research framework; Ansar, Mattalatta, and Kurniawaty: author roles to be confirmed by the authors prior to publication. All authors must review and approve the final submitted manuscript and confirm their contributions.

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