

Motivation, Leadership, and Organizational Climate on Employee Performance: The Moderating Effect of Reward

*Moderating Effect of
Reward on Employee
Performance*

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Editya Nurdiana^{1*}, Farah Noor Ayuningtyas²

^{1,2}*Department of Agronomy, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati; Cirebon, Indonesia*

*Corresponding Author E-Mail: editya.nurdiana@ugj.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The increasing demand for transparent, effective, and accountable bureaucratic performance, along with inconsistent empirical findings regarding the determinants of employee performance, forms the basis of this research. This study aims to examine the effects of motivation, leadership, and organizational climate on employee performance, as well as to investigate the moderating role of reward within public sector organizations. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design was employed, involving 115 employees of regional government agencies in Cirebon City selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings reveal that organizational climate is the only variable that has a significant effect on employee performance, while motivation and leadership do not demonstrate significant direct effects. Furthermore, reward does not significantly moderate the relationships between the independent variables and employee performance. The model also exhibits relatively low explanatory power. In conclusion, improving employee performance in the public sector is more effectively achieved through strengthening organizational climate rather than relying solely on motivational, leadership, or reward-based approaches that may not yet be optimally implemented.

Keywords: *Employee Performance, Leadership, Motivation, Organizational Climate, Reward.*

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is one of the primary indicators of the success of public organizations, including municipal and regional government agencies. Within the context of modern bureaucracy, the demand for transparent, effective, and responsive public services continues to intensify (Pradoto et al., 2022; Nurdiniati et al., 2024). Factors such as motivation, leadership, and organizational climate have long been acknowledged as key determinants in shaping employee work behavior and performance. Reward systems also represent a strategic element that can strengthen these relationships, as appropriate rewards are capable of enhancing employee motivation and loyalty. Therefore, understanding the interrelationships among these variables is not only theoretically relevant but also crucial for the development of human resource management policies in the public sector, particularly in the era of bureaucratic reform that emphasizes accountability and performance (Luthans et al., 2008; Supomo, 2024).

Previous studies by Supardi and Yulianah (2023) and Iddrisu and Mohammed (2025) have demonstrated that transformational leadership plays a significant role in enhancing employee motivation and engagement, which in turn contributes to organizational effectiveness. Likewise, a positive organizational climate has been found to foster employee creativity and innovation in the public sector (Mutonyi et al., 2020). However, empirical findings regarding the effects of motivation and rewards on performance remain inconsistent. For instance, Kumari et al. (2021) and Andreas (2022) reported that rewards and motivation positively influence performance; nevertheless, intrinsic motivation does

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not significantly affect contextual performance. Other studies indicate that public service motivation does not always exert a direct effect on employee performance but is mediated by variables such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Scrimshire et al., 2022; Razak et al., 2025). These inconsistencies highlight the need for further research that integrates these variables within a comprehensive model, particularly by considering the role of rewards as a moderating or reinforcing factor (Tamam, 2022; Hajiali et al., 2022).

In addition, meta-analytic evidence suggests that the effect of leadership on organizational performance is highly contingent upon contextual factors and its interaction with other variables, including work climate and motivation (Karadağ, 2015; Suprayitno & Hermawan, 2022). Reward systems, as noted by Abun et al. (2023) and Figueiredo et al. (2025), serve as a critical mechanism for talent management and enhancing organizational competitiveness. However, their implementation in the public sector is often suboptimal. Given these variations in empirical findings, research that examines the nexus among motivation, leadership, organizational climate, and employee performance, with rewards as a reinforcing variable, becomes both relevant and necessary (Tamimi & Sopiah, 2022; Jani & Suryadinata, 2023).

The unit of analysis is a regional government agency (*dinas*) in Cirebon City, which reflects distinctive bureaucratic characteristics and human resource management practices. The study employs a quantitative approach using survey data, analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to empirically test the effects among variables. The research problem focuses on whether motivation, leadership, and organizational climate significantly influence employee performance, and to what extent rewards strengthen these effects.

This study aims to examine the effects of motivation, leadership, and organizational climate on employee performance, as well as to identify the role of rewards in strengthening these effects. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on human resource management in the public sector, as well as to provide practical implications for improving human resource practices within local government institutions. The findings are anticipated to support more effective policymaking aimed at enhancing public service quality and organizational competitiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Effect on Employee Performance

Employee performance is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing job proficiency, effort, discipline, communication, and team contribution (Campbell et al., 1990). Within this framework, motivation, leadership, and organizational climate are considered key antecedents that shape employees' behavioral outcomes. According to Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2000), motivation becomes more effective when employees experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which in turn enhance intrinsic engagement and performance. Complementing this view, Expectancy Theory explains that employees are more likely to exert effort when they believe it will lead to desirable performance and valued outcomes (Rudi et al., 2022; Wibowo et al., 2022). These perspectives suggest that motivation plays a crucial role in driving performance through both psychological and cognitive mechanisms.

In addition, leadership and organizational climate contribute significantly to performance outcomes. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support, has been empirically linked to improved performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Similarly, leader-member exchange quality strengthens work outcomes by fostering trust and cooperation. At the organizational level, climate reflects shared perceptions of fairness, support, and ethical practices that guide employee behavior (Schneider et al., 2013). A positive climate reinforces expectations and encourages alignment with organizational goals, thereby enhancing performance. Empirical evidence by Alabi et al. (2022) and Pratama and

Handayani (2022) confirms that climate strength and consistency influence performance through psychological mechanisms such as clarity and engagement.

H1: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H2: Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H3: Organizational climate has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

The Effect of Employee Performance on Reward

Employee performance is often used as a primary basis for determining reward allocation within organizations. From a theoretical standpoint, Expectancy Theory posits that employees are motivated to perform when they perceive a clear linkage between performance and rewards (Vroom, 1964). In this sense, performance not only reflects individual contribution but also serves as a signal for reward distribution mechanisms. High-performing employees are generally expected to receive greater recognition, incentives, or compensation, thereby reinforcing the perceived fairness and effectiveness of the reward system (Hassan, 2022; Chi et al., 2023). This performance–reward linkage is particularly relevant in public sector organizations, where accountability and measurable outcomes are increasingly emphasized.

Furthermore, empirical research by Kurniawan et al. (2023) and Oamen (2023) suggests that reward systems designed around performance criteria can enhance organizational effectiveness when implemented fairly and transparently. Pay-for-performance systems, for example, have been shown to improve both motivation and performance when employees perceive procedural and distributive justice (Gerhart & Fang, 2014). In contrast, poorly aligned reward systems may fail to recognize performance adequately, leading to reduced motivation and dissatisfaction. In this context, performance becomes a critical determinant in shaping how rewards are distributed and perceived. When employees observe a consistent relationship between their efforts, performance, and rewards, it strengthens trust in the system and encourages sustained high performance. Therefore, understanding the influence of performance on reward allocation is essential for designing effective human resource practices.

H4: Employee performance has a positive and significant effect on reward.

The Effect of Reward as a Moderating Variable

Reward systems play a complex role in influencing employee behavior, particularly as a moderating factor in the relationship between antecedent variables and performance. According to Self-Determination Theory, rewards can either enhance or undermine intrinsic motivation depending on how they are designed (Deci et al., 1999; Ashfaq & Ahmad, 2023). Rewards perceived as controlling tend to reduce intrinsic motivation, whereas those that are informational and supportive of autonomy can strengthen it. In line with Expectancy Theory, rewards also shape employees' perceptions of instrumentality and valence, thereby influencing how motivation translates into performance (Vroom, 1964). The effectiveness of motivation in driving performance may depend on whether the reward system is perceived as fair, transparent, and aligned with employee expectations (Aldabbas et al., 2025).

Similarly, reward systems can interact with leadership and organizational climate in shaping performance outcomes. Transformational leadership enhances motivation and clarifies expectations, but its effectiveness may be amplified when supported by consistent and fair reward practices (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Likewise, organizational climate signals expected behaviors and norms, which can be reinforced through aligned reward systems (Schneider et al., 2013). When rewards are consistent with organizational values such as fairness and transparency, they strengthen the relationship between climate and performance. Conversely, misaligned or unfair rewards can weaken these relationships by creating perceptions of injustice and inconsistency (Obeng et al., 2021; Bashir et al., 2023). Thus, reward systems serve as a critical contextual factor that can either enhance

or diminish the effects of motivation, leadership, and organizational climate on performance.

H5: Reward moderates the relationship between motivation and employee performance.

H6: Reward moderates the relationship between leadership and employee performance.

H7: Reward moderates the relationship between organizational climate and employee performance.

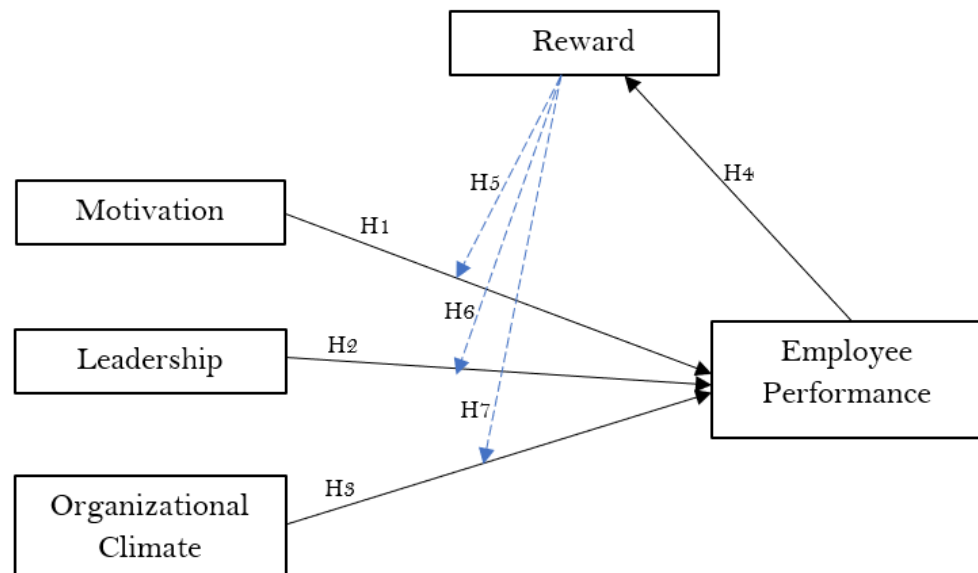


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual research model that examines the relationships among motivation, leadership, and organizational climate on employee performance, with reward acting as both an independent and moderating variable. Motivation, leadership, and organizational climate are hypothesized to have direct effects on employee performance (H1, H2, and H3). In addition, employee performance is proposed to influence reward (H4), indicating a performance-based reward mechanism. Furthermore, reward is positioned as a moderating variable that potentially strengthens or weakens the relationships between motivation, leadership, and organizational climate on employee performance (H5, H6, and H7). The dashed lines represent these moderating effects, highlighting the role of reward in shaping how the independent variables translate into performance outcomes within the organizational context.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the effect of motivation, leadership, organizational climate, reward, and employee performance. The research focuses on employees of regional government agencies in Cirebon City, with individual employees serving as the unit of analysis. The population comprises all employees working within these agencies. A purposive sampling technique is applied to ensure the relevance of respondents, with inclusion criteria consisting of permanent or contract employees who have a minimum tenure of one year. The sample size is determined based on a practical rule in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which suggests a minimum of five respondents per indicator. With a total of 23 indicators, the minimum required sample is 115 respondents. To anticipate potential non-response, the sample size is increased by 10 percent.

Data are collected using a structured questionnaire administered within a single time period. The instrument employs a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree

to strongly agree. Prior to distribution, content validity is established through expert judgment to ensure that each item adequately represents the intended constructs. The questionnaire consists of 23 statement items representing five key variables. Motivation is measured using six indicators: autonomy, competence, relatedness, expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, drawing on Vroom (1964) and Deci et al. (1999). Leadership is operationalized through four indicators: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, based on Bass (1990). Organizational climate is measured using four indicators: justice, transparency, support, and ethics, adapted from Litwin and Stringer (1968). Reward is assessed through four indicators, namely fair rewards, transparency, consistency, and pay-for-performance, following Milkovich and Newman (2014). Employee performance is measured using five indicators: job proficiency, effort, discipline, communication, and team contribution, based on Robbins (2016). All constructs in this study are treated as reflective.

Data analysis is conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in two main stages. The first stage involves evaluating the measurement model, including tests of reliability and validity. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with acceptable thresholds of ≥ 0.70 , while convergent validity is evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with a minimum criterion of ≥ 0.50 . The second stage focuses on the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among variables. Path analysis is employed to examine direct effects, while the moderating role of reward is tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 2,000 resamples to ensure the robustness of the estimates. This analytical approach enables a comprehensive assessment of both measurement quality and structural relationships within the proposed research model.

RESULTS

This study involved 115 respondents who are employees of regional government agencies in Cirebon City. The composite scores for each construct fall within the moderate to positive category, with mean values ranging from 3.17 to 3.78. The employee performance variable exhibits the highest mean score (Mean = 3.779; SD = 0.494), while the reward variable records the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.170; SD = 0.607). These findings indicate that perceptions of the reward system are relatively lower compared to perceptions of performance and other organizational factors.

Table 1. Convergent Reliability and Validity Test

Variable	Number of Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Motivation	6	3.607	0.441	0.871	0.903	0.609
Leadership	4	3.657	0.552	0.889	0.923	0.750
Organizational Climate	4	3.52	0.562	0.853	0.902	0.696
Reward	4	3.17	0.607	0.861	0.907	0.709
Employee Performance	5	3.779	0.494	0.884	0.918	0.690

Table 1 presents the results of convergent validity and reliability tests for all research variables, namely motivation, leadership, organizational climate, rewards, and employee performance. The results indicate that all constructs have met the recommended reliability and validity criteria. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.853 to 0.889, while Composite Reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.902 to 0.923, all of which were above the minimum limit of 0.70, thus indicating good internal consistency and construct reliability. In addition, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.609 to 0.750, all of which exceeded the minimum limit of 0.50, thus indicating that all constructs had adequate convergent validity.

Table 2. Multicollinearity Test

Variable	VIF
Motivation	1.076
Leadership	1.097
Organizational Climate	1.094
Reward	1.026
Reward*Motivation	1.096
Reward*Leadership	1.105
Reward*Organizational Climate	1.03

Table 2 presents the results of the multicollinearity test among the study variables, including motivation, leadership, organizational climate, reward, and their interaction terms. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all variables range from 1.026 to 1.105, which are well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.00 (or more conservatively 3.30). These results indicate that there is no multicollinearity issue among the independent variables and interaction terms in the model. Therefore, the relationships among variables can be estimated reliably without bias caused by high intercorrelations.

Table 3. Path Coefficients (Direct Effect)

Hypothesis	Beta	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value	95% CI
Motivation→ Employee Performance	0.075	0.098	0.764	0.4447	(-0.107, 0.268)
Leadership→ Employee Performance	-0.132	0.109	-1.205	0.2281	(-0.343, 0.097)
Organizational Climate→ Employee Performance	0.194	0.089	2.169	0.0301	(0.027, 0.383)
Performance→ Reward	0.089	0.092	0.972	0.3312	(-0.087, 0.273)

Table 3 reports the results of the path coefficient analysis for the direct effects among the variables in the proposed model. The findings indicate that motivation does not have a statistically significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.075$; $p = 0.4447$), suggesting that higher levels of motivation do not directly translate into improved performance. Similarly, leadership shows no significant influence on employee performance ($\beta = -0.132$; $p = 0.2281$), with the relationship even indicating a negative direction. In contrast, organizational climate demonstrates a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.194$; $p = 0.0301$), implying that a more supportive organizational environment contributes to better performance outcomes. Furthermore, the relationship between employee performance and reward is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.089$; $p = 0.3312$), indicating that performance does not directly determine the reward system. The examined variables, only organizational oclimate exhibits a significant direct effect on employee performance within this model.

Table 4. Moderation Effect

Hypothesis	Beta	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value	95% CI
Reward*Motivation→Employee Performance	-0.016	0.096	-0.161	0.8721	(-0.190, 0.194)
Reward*Leadership→ Employee Performance	0.018	0.112	0.163	0.8709	(-0.175, 0.263)
Reward*Organizational Climate→ Employee Performance	-0.125	0.078	-1.598	0.1099	(-0.299, 0.012)

Table 4 presents the results of the indirect effects, examining the moderating role of reward on the relationships between motivation, leadership, organizational climate, and employee performance. The findings indicate that reward does not significantly moderate the relationship between motivation and employee performance ($\beta = -0.016$; $p = 0.8721$), suggesting that the presence of rewards does not strengthen or weaken the effect of motivation on performance. Similarly, the interaction between reward and leadership shows no significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.018$; $p = 0.8709$), indicating

that reward does not enhance the influence of leadership on performance outcomes. Furthermore, the moderating effect of reward on the relationship between organizational climate and employee performance is also not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.125$; $p = 0.1099$), although the negative coefficient suggests a potential weakening tendency. These results demonstrate that reward does not play a significant moderating role in the relationships between the independent variables and employee performance within this model.

Table 5. Summary of Fit Models

Test	Value
R-Square	0.082
Adjusted R-Square	0.022

Table 5 presents a summary of the feasibility of the research model. The R-Square value of 0.082 indicates that the independent variables in the model are only able to explain approximately 8.2% of the variation in employee performance, which is considered low. This is reinforced by the Adjusted R-Square value of 0.022, which indicates the model's explanatory power decreases after adjusting for the number of variables. Thus, it can be concluded that the research model has a low level of feasibility and is not yet able to optimally explain the relationship between variables.

Table 6. Effect Size

Variable	f ²
Motivation	0.006
Leadership	0.017
Organizational Climate	0.037
Reward	0.008
Reward*Motivation	0.000
Reward*Leadership	0.000
Reward*Organizational Climate	0.017

Table 6 presents the effect size (f²) values for each variable in the research model. In general, all f² values are in the very small category, considering that none of them reached the minimum limit of 0.02 for a small effect according to general criteria. The organizational climate variable has the largest value (f² = 0.037), which can be categorized as a small effect, indicating that this variable has a relatively larger contribution compared to other variables in explaining employee performance. Meanwhile, leadership (f² = 0.017) and the reward*organizational climate interaction (f² = 0.017) approach the small effect category but are still relatively weak. The motivation (f² = 0.006) and reward (f² = 0.008) variables show very small effects, while the reward*motivation and reward*leadership interactions show no effect at all (f² = 0.000). These results indicate that the contribution of each variable in the model to changes in employee performance is still very limited.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that, among the examined variables, organizational climate is the only factor that demonstrates a meaningful influence on employee performance. This suggests that a supportive and well-structured organizational environment plays a central role in shaping employee outcomes in public sector institutions. A positive climate characterized by fairness, transparency, support, and ethical practices appears to create conditions that enable employees to perform more effectively. This result is consistent with prior studies, such as those by Mutonyi et al. (2020), which emphasize that a conducive organizational climate fosters higher levels of engagement, creativity, and overall performance in public organizations. In bureaucratic settings, where formal structures often dominate, the presence of a healthy organizational climate becomes even more critical as a driver of performance.

In contrast, motivation does not appear to have a direct impact on employee performance in this study. This finding suggests that individual motivational factors alone may not be sufficient to drive performance outcomes within the context of public organizations. It is possible that motivation operates indirectly through other mediating variables such as job satisfaction or organizational commitment, as highlighted in previous research by Scrimshire et al. (2022) and Razak et al. (2025). These studies indicate that the relationship between motivation and performance is often complex and contingent upon additional psychological and organizational mechanisms. Therefore, the absence of a direct effect in this study aligns with the broader literature suggesting that motivation may require supportive contextual factors to translate into observable performance improvements.

Similarly, leadership does not show a significant influence on employee performance. This finding contrasts with much of the existing literature that highlights the importance of leadership, particularly transformational leadership, in enhancing employee outcomes. However, it is in line with meta-analytic evidence by Karadağ (2015), which suggests that the effectiveness of leadership is highly context-dependent. In highly formalized public sector environments, leadership influence may be constrained by rigid regulations, standardized procedures, and hierarchical structures, thereby limiting its direct impact on performance. This implies that leadership alone may not be sufficient to drive performance unless it is supported by conducive organizational conditions.

The results also indicate that reward does not play a significant moderating role in the relationships between motivation, leadership, organizational climate, and employee performance. This suggests that the existing reward system may not be effectively aligned with performance outcomes or employee expectations. In the public sector, reward systems are often standardized and less flexible, which may reduce their ability to reinforce behavioral and performance improvements. This finding is consistent with Figueiredo et al. (2025), who argue that although reward systems are strategically important, their implementation in public organizations is frequently suboptimal and fails to motivate employees effectively.

The model demonstrates limited explanatory power in accounting for variations in employee performance. This indicates that other factors beyond those included in the model may play a more substantial role in influencing performance outcomes. Variables such as organizational commitment, work discipline, job satisfaction, or bureaucratic culture may provide additional explanatory value. These findings highlight the complexity of employee performance in the public sector and underscore the need for more comprehensive models that integrate multiple dimensions of organizational and individual behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that organizational climate is the only variable that exerts a significant influence on employee performance, whereas motivation and leadership do not demonstrate significant direct effects. Furthermore, reward does not function as a moderating variable in strengthening the relationships between motivation, leadership, and organizational climate on employee performance. These findings imply that efforts to enhance employee performance in public sector organizations should place greater emphasis on fostering a supportive organizational climate characterized by fairness, transparency, and ethical practices. From a practical perspective, policymakers and managers in regional government institutions are encouraged to prioritize improvements in the organizational environment rather than relying solely on motivational approaches, leadership interventions, or reward systems that may not be effectively aligned with performance outcomes.

Nevertheless, this study is subject to several limitations. The relatively low explanatory power of the model suggests that other relevant variables influencing employee performance have not been fully captured. In addition, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to examine causal relationships over time, while the focus on a single regional

context may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate additional variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and bureaucratic culture, as well as to employ longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to provide more comprehensive insights. Expanding the scope of analysis across different regions or institutional contexts would further strengthen the robustness and external validity of the results.

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