

## The Impact of Leadership Style on the Performance of Employees of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the influence of leadership style on employee performance at the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency. The study used a quantitative approach with a sample of 71 respondents taken through saturated sampling techniques. Data collection was carried out through a Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using simple linear regression. The results showed that leadership style had a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a determination coefficient value ( $R^2$ ) of 0.412. This means that 41.2% of employee performance variations are explained by leadership style, while the rest are influenced by other factors. In conclusion, communicative, participatory, and exemplary leadership is able to improve the performance and effectiveness of the work of the apparatus.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is an important aspect in moving an organization to be able to achieve the goals that have been set. In the context of public organizations, such as the Education and Culture Office, the role of leaders is not only as a decision maker, but also as a director and motivator for employees. The success of a government organization is largely determined by how a leader is able to manage the human resources he has. According to (Rivai, 2013), leadership is the process of influencing and directing the behavior of others to achieve organizational goals. The Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency has a great responsibility in improving the quality of education and preserving regional culture. This task requires competent, disciplined, and public service-oriented human resources. In an effort to realize this, leadership is the main key that determines the direction and morale of employees. An effective leader will be able to foster a sense of responsibility and increase the productivity of subordinates' work.

Leadership style is a leader's way of influencing, directing, and controlling his subordinates. Each leader has a different style in carrying out his leadership functions, ranging from authoritarian, democratic, to laissez-faire styles. According to (Judge & Robbins, 2013), Leadership style is a pattern of behavior used by leaders in interacting with their subordinates to achieve organizational goals. In government bureaucracies such as the Education and Culture Office, the leadership style applied will greatly affect employee performance. Leaders who are able to provide clear direction, effective communication, and role models in work will create a conducive work environment. On the other hand, rigid and non-participatory leadership styles often lead to dissatisfaction and lower employee motivation (Mularto et al., 2024).

Employee performance basically reflects the extent to which employees carry out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the standards that have been set. In the context of public organizations, employee performance is directly related to the quality of service received by the community. According to (Anwar Prabu, 2017), performance is the result of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by a person in carrying out tasks in accordance with the responsibilities given to him. The Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency faces various challenges in improving employee performance, such as limited resources, lack of work motivation, and low discipline. One of the factors that is believed to play a big role in overcoming these problems is the application of the right leadership style. An adaptive leader will be able to adjust his approach according to the characteristics of employees and the existing work situation.

In addition, the dynamics of government organizations also require leaders to have good interpersonal communication skills. Leaders who are able to interact positively with employees will create harmonious and mutually supportive working relationships. According to (Yukl et al., 2013), effective leadership is not only measured by the ability to control, but also the ability to build trust and a sense of belonging among the members of the organization.

In the current era of decentralization, the role of leaders in the regions is increasingly important in ensuring that education and cultural policies run effectively. The leader of the Education and Culture Office must be able to become a visionary, innovative, and public service-oriented figure. They need to apply a leadership style that is able to encourage employees to work with high enthusiasm and integrity for the progress of the region.

Optimal employee performance depends heavily on how a leader provides direction, motivation, and appreciation for the work of his subordinates. Leaders who provide positive and fair feedback will foster employee confidence. On the other hand, leaders who are authoritarian and do not allow space for employee participation can reduce morale and hinder organizational performance (Malayu, H. S. & Hasibuan, 2017). In the context of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency, the leadership style applied by the head of the service will affect the way employees work in carrying out administrative and technical tasks. Leaders who are open to employee ideas and input will find it easier to build healthy collaboration. Therefore, research on the relationship between leadership style and employee performance in this agency is important to be carried out.

Each employee has different characteristics and motivations, so the application of the right leadership style needs to be adjusted to these conditions. According to Hersey and Blanchard in (Raza & Sikandar, 2018), situational leadership theory emphasizes that the effectiveness of leadership depends on the level of readiness of subordinates in carrying out tasks. Leaders who are sensitive to the conditions of their employees will find it easier to create a productive work environment.

In addition to leadership style factors, employee performance is also influenced by work environment, compensation, and motivation factors. However, in many studies, it has been found that leadership style remains the dominant factor in determining the direction and quality of employees' work (Krisnawida et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important for public organizations to evaluate the extent to which their leadership style has been appropriate for the organization's needs.

In Southwest Aceh Regency, bureaucratic reform requires changes in the government management system, including in leadership patterns. Leaders who are still oriented towards personal power tend to find it difficult to adjust to the demands of transparency and public accountability. On the contrary, democratic leaders will be more open to innovation and participation from all employees. The relationship between leadership style and employee performance is not only direct, but also indirect through work motivation and job satisfaction. Leaders who are able to motivate their employees with a humanist approach will increase their sense of responsibility and commitment to the organization. According to (Robbins & Coulter, 2005), motivation is a psychological force that directs a person's behavior towards achieving goals.

Transformational leadership styles, for example, have been proven to be able to improve employee performance through inspiration, vision, and enthusiasm for change. Transformational leaders not only organize, but also inspire their subordinates to reach their best potential. (Wahjono et al., 2021) states that transformational leadership fosters employee commitment and loyalty to the organization.

Meanwhile, the transactional leadership style emphasizes more on the reward and punishment system in regulating employee behavior. Although this approach can improve short-term performance, in the long term it can reduce employee creativity if it is not balanced with emotional support. Therefore, leaders need to balance between the control aspect and the employee self-development aspect.

The Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency needs leaders who are able to apply a flexible and contextual leadership style. Leaders who are adaptive to change and sensitive to employee needs will be able to create a positive work culture. Thus, the right leadership style is expected to improve the performance of employees in carrying out public service duties. Various previous studies have shown a positive relationship between leadership style and employee performance in the public sector. For example, research conducted by (Rustaman, 2020) shows that the democratic leadership style has a significant influence on improving employee performance. This emphasizes that participatory leadership patterns can create a productive work climate.

Based on this phenomenon, it is interesting to examine how the leadership style applied by the Head of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency affects the performance of his employees. By understanding these relationships, organizations can determine more effective human resource development strategies. This research is also expected to be able to provide input for regional leaders in improving the performance of the state civil apparatus.

Thus, this study focuses on the analysis of the impact of leadership style on the performance of employees of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency. Through this research, it is hoped that a deep understanding of the most effective types of leadership styles in the context of regional bureaucracy will be obtained. In addition, the results of this research can be used as a reference for improving the performance of public organizations in a sustainable manner.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Definition of Leadership***

Leadership is at the core of the managerial process in an organization. Leadership is not only related to one's ability to organize and direct subordinates, but it also includes the art of influencing others to achieve a common goal. (Rivai, 2013) Explained that leadership is the process of influencing and directing the behavior of subordinates so that they are willing to work voluntarily and enthusiastically in achieving organizational goals. This indicates that leadership is not just about formal power, but about influence and trust.

In the context of public organizations, such as the Education and Culture Office, leadership is the main foundation in creating the effectiveness of apparatus performance. (Destiana, 2023) emphasized that the success of government organizations is highly dependent on how leaders are able to mobilize existing human resources to achieve public service goals. A good leader will act as a motivator, communicator, and facilitator for his employees to be able to provide the best performance.

### ***Leadership Style***

Each leader has a different way of leading his subordinates, and this method is known as leadership style. Leadership style can be interpreted as a consistent pattern of behavior that a leader shows when interacting with his subordinates (Judge & Robbins, 2013). In other words, leadership style is a reflection of a leader's character, values, and views on people and work.

According to Lewin, Lippitt, and White in (Rahayu et al., 2022), there are three classical leadership styles, namely authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. Leaders with an authoritarian style tend to make decisions on their own without involving subordinates. This style is effective for emergency situations, but it can lower morale when applied continuously. On the other hand, democratic leaders involve subordinates in the decision-making process, thus fostering a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. The laissez-faire style gives complete freedom to subordinates, which can foster creativity but also potentially lower work coordination.

Furthermore, modern theories such as the situational leadership theory developed by Hersey and Blanchard in (Raza & Sikandar, 2018) emphasizing that there is no one best leadership style. The effectiveness of leadership depends on the situation, the maturity level of the subordinates, and the characteristics of the tasks faced. Situational leaders are able to adjust their approach between directing, guiding, supporting, or delegating tasks according to the needs of their employees.

### ***Transformational and Transactional Leadership***

The most widely studied contemporary leadership theories are transformational and transactional theories put forward by (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to provide inspiration, motivation, and vision to employees to work above expectations. Transformational leaders seek to change employees' attitudes, values, and behaviors to align with the organization's vision. In public organizations such as the Education and Culture Office, this type of leader is needed because it can encourage change, innovation, and improve the quality of public services.

In contrast, transactional leadership emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between leaders and subordinates. Leaders reward employees for their achievements and sanction mistakes. This approach is rational and based on formal organizational rules. (Nanus, 1992), while transactional leadership can maintain organizational stability, this style is often less able to foster employee creativity and intrinsic motivation in the long run.

### ***Employee Performance***

Employee performance is the result of work achieved by a person based on the responsibilities given to him. According to (Anwar Prabu, 2017), performance is the result of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by a person in carrying out tasks in accordance with the responsibilities given. The performance of employees in government agencies is not only measured by the results of individual work, but also by their contribution to the achievement of overall organizational goals.

In public organizations such as the Education and Culture Office, employee performance is closely related to the effectiveness of public services. Employees are required to work professionally, transparently, and accountably. Therefore, factors such as work discipline, motivation, work environment, and leadership style are the main determinants of the success of organizational performance. (Zen et al., 2023) adding that performance is a function of the ability, motivation, and opportunities provided by the organization.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Types and Approaches to Research***

This study uses a quantitative approach with the type of associative research. The quantitative approach was chosen because this study aims to determine the relationship or influence between two variables, namely leadership style (variable X) and employee performance (variable Y). According to (Sugiyono, 2017), quantitative research is used to research a specific population or sample, collect data using research instruments, and analyze data statistically with the aim of testing established hypotheses. The associative approach is used because this study not only describes a phenomenon, but also tests the extent of the influence of leadership style on employee performance. Thus, the results of the study are expected to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between variables empirically and objectively.

### ***Research Location and Time***

This research was carried out at the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency, Aceh Province. The selection of this location is based on the consideration that the agency has a strategic role in the implementation of education and cultural policies at the regional level, and has an adequate number of employees to be used as a research sample. The time for the research was carried out for four months, namely March 2025 to June 2025. The series of research activities includes the preparation stage (making research instruments and licensing), data collection (distribution of questionnaires), data processing, and analysis of research results.

### ***Population and Research Sample***

The population in this study is all employees of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency who have the status of state civil servants (ASN). Based on personnel data in 2025, the total employee population in the agency is 71 people. Because the population is relatively small and it is still possible to reach completely, this study uses a saturated sampling technique (census). According to (Sugiyono, 2016), saturated sampling is a sample determination technique when all members of the population are used as samples. Thus, the number of samples in this study is 71 respondents.

### ***Research Variables and Operational Definitions***

This research consists of two main variables, namely:

#### ***Independent Variable (X): Leadership Style***

Leadership style is defined as a pattern of behavior used by leaders in influencing, directing, and controlling their subordinates to achieve organizational goals. The indicators used refer to the theory put forward by (Rivai, 2013), including:

- a. the leader's communication skills.
- b. the ability to provide motivatio.
- c. participation in decision-making.
- d. Exemplary in work.

#### ***Dependent Variable (Y): Employee Performance***

Employee performance is the result of work achieved by a person in carrying out tasks in accordance with the responsibilities given. Performance indicators refer to theory (Anwar Prabu, 2017) that is:

- a. Quality Of Work.
- b. Quantity Of Work.
- c. Timeliness.
- d. Responsibilities.
- e. Cooperation.

### ***Data Types and Sources***

The data used in this study consisted of:

Primary data, namely data obtained directly from respondents through the distribution of questionnaires to 71 employees of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency. Secondary data, namely data obtained from agency documents such as personnel data, organizational structure, annual reports, and relevant literature such as books, journals, and previous research that supports the analysis of this research.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

The main data collection technique in this study was a questionnaire which was compiled using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was distributed directly to all employees who were respondents. In addition, non-participatory observations were also carried out to understand working conditions and leadership dynamics within the agency, as well as documentation to complete administrative data and organizational profiles.

### **Test Research Instruments**

Before the questionnaire is widely disseminated, validity and reliability tests are carried out to ensure that the research instrument is suitable for use. The Validity Test is carried out using the Pearson Product Moment correlation formula to see the extent to which each item of the statement is able to measure the indicator in question. The Reliability Test is carried out using Cronbach's Alpha formula, with the criterion that the instrument is declared reliable if the alpha value  $> 0.60$ .

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data that has been collected will be processed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis with the help of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. The analysis is carried out through several stages, namely:

- a. Descriptive Analysis, used to describe the characteristics of respondents as well as their responses to the variables of leadership style and employee performance.
- b. The Classical Assumption Test, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, to ensure the feasibility of regression models.
- c. Simple Linear Regression Analysis, used to find out how much influence leadership style (X) has on employee performance (Y).
- d. The Hypothesis test, consists of a t-test (partial) and a determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) test to test the significance of the influence between variables.

### **Research Hypothesis**

Based on the theoretical framework and problem formulation, the hypothesis in this study is:

$H_0$  (Hypothesis zero): *There was no significant influence between leadership styles on the performance of employees of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency.*

$H_1$  (Alternative hypothesis): *There is a significant influence between leadership styles on the performance of employees of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency.*

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

***Respondent Overview***

This research was conducted at the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency from March to June 2025. The number of population as well as the research sample was 71 employees, consisting of structural employees, administrative staff, and functional personnel. Of the total questionnaires distributed, all of them are returned and can be processed, so that the response rate reaches 100%. Most of the respondents had a S1 educational background (60%), were between 31-45 years old (65%), and had a working period of more than 5 years (58%). This shows that the majority of respondents already have work experience and an understanding of leadership dynamics within the Service.

***Description of Leadership Variables (X<sub>1</sub>)***

Leadership variables are measured using four indicators, namely communication skills, motivation, participation in decision-making, and leadership example. Data were obtained through a questionnaire on a Likert scale of 1-5.

The following table shows the results of the calculation of respondents' average scores on the leadership variable:

**Table 1. Descriptive Score of Leadership Variables (X<sub>1</sub>)**

Leadership Indicators	Average Score	Criterion
Leader's communication skills	4,25	Excellent
Motivating employees	4,10	Good
Participation in decision-making	3,95	Good
Leadership example at work	4,30	Excellent
Overall Average	4,15	Good

*Source: Primary Data Processed By Researchers (2025)*

From the table above, it can be concluded that the leadership style at the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency is in the good category, with an average score of 4.15. This indicates that the service leaders have been able to build effective communication, provide direction, and become an example for their subordinates.

***Description of Employee Performance Variables (Y)***

Performance variables are measured through five indicators, namely work quality, work quantity, punctuality, responsibility, and cooperation.

**Table 2. Descriptive Score of Employee Performance Variables (Y)**

Employee Performance Indicators	Average Score	Criterion
Quality of work results	4,20	Good
Quantity of work completed	4,05	Good
Timeliness in completing tasks	3,95	Good
Responsibility for work	4,15	Good
Cooperation between employees	4,25	Excellent
Overall Average	4,12	Good

*Source: Primary Data Processed By Researchers (2025)*

The average score of 4.12 indicates that employee performance is relatively good, although there are still several aspects that need to be improved, especially in terms of punctuality and effectiveness of task execution.

**Instrument Validity and Reliability Test**

The research instrument is tested for validity and reliability before use.

- a. The results of the validity test with Pearson correlation show that all statement items have  $r_{count} > r_{table}$  (0.233), so they are declared valid.
- b. The results of the reliability test showed that Cronbach's Alpha value = 0.892, greater than 0.60, so that all questionnaire items were reliable.

**Classic Assumption Test**

Before the regression test is carried out, a classical assumption test is carried out:

- a. Normality Test: Normally distributed data with Asymp values. Sig. (0.076) > 0.05.
- b. Multicollinearity test: Tolerance value = 0.812 and VIF = 1.231 (<10), meaning that there is no multicollinearity.
- c. Heteroscedasticity Test: Sig. value (0.274) > 0.05, so that heteroscedasticity does not occur.

**Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis**

To answer the formulation of the first problem, a simple linear regression analysis between the leadership variable ( $X_1$ ) and employee performance (Y) was used.

**Table 3. Simple Linear Regression Test Results**

Variable	Regression Coefficient (B)	t-count	Sig.	Information
Constant	21,573	-	-	-
Leadership ( $X_1$ )	0,524	5,873	0,000	Significant
$R^2 = 0.412$				
F-count = 34.49    Sig. F = 0.000				

Source: SPSS Data Processing (2025)

**Interpretation of Regression Results**

Based on the table above, the following simple linear regression equation is obtained:

$$Y = 21.573 + 0.524X_1$$

This means that every one unit increase in the leadership style variable will increase employee performance by 0.524 units, assuming the other variables are considered constant.

The t-count value (5.873) > t-table (1.996) and Sig. 0.000 < 0.05, show that leadership style has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. The value of the determination coefficient ( $R^2 = 0.412$ ) means that 41.2% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by leadership style, while the remaining 58.8% is influenced by other factors such as discipline and work motivation.

## DISCUSSION

### *The Influence of Leadership Style on Employee Performance*

The results of the study show that leadership style has a positive and significant influence on the performance of employees of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency. Based on the results of simple linear regression analysis, a regression coefficient value of 0.524 was obtained with a t-calculation value of 5.873 and a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . This means that any improvement in leadership style applied by the leadership will have a direct impact on improving employee performance. The  $R^2$  value of 0.412 indicates that 41.2% of the variation in employee performance is explained by leadership style, while the rest is influenced by other factors such as motivation, discipline, work environment, and compensation.

These results reinforce the theory put forward by (Rivai, 2013) Leadership is a person's ability to influence, direct, and motivate others to achieve organizational goals. In the context of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency, the leadership style applied by the head of the agency is able to motivate employees to work more effectively, foster a sense of responsibility, and increase discipline and collaboration between employees.

### *The Relationship of Research Results with Leadership Theory*

Theoretically, the results of this research are in accordance with the concept of transformational leadership theory put forward by (Bass & Avolio, 1993). This theory confirms that transformational leaders act as inspirers and motivators, who are able to instill a shared vision and build employee commitment to organizational goals. Leaders with this style not only give orders, but also provide real examples and appreciation for employee performance.

Facts on the ground show that the leadership of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency has tried to display exemplary behavior, provide clear directions, and involve employees in decision-making. This condition is in line with the results of the descriptive score on the leadership variable which shows an average score of 4.15 (good category), with the highest indicator in the aspect of leadership example (4.30). This means that leaders in this agency have carried out effective leadership functions in building a positive work culture.

These findings also confirm the view (Yukl et al., 2013) which states that effective leaders are those who are able to build working relationships based on trust and open communication. Healthy interpersonal relationships between leaders and subordinates create a harmonious work atmosphere that ultimately results in increased productivity and performance.

### ***The Influence of Leadership on Performance in the Context of Public Organizations***

In government organizations, the leadership style applied has a great influence on employee morale and effectiveness. Authoritarian leaders tend to suppress creativity and create distance from subordinates, while democratic and participatory leaders are able to foster a sense of belonging to the organization. This is in accordance with the opinion (Aryani et al., 2021) which states that good leadership in the public sector must create synergy, coordination, and trust so that employees can work in accordance with their responsibilities.

Based on the results of this study, the leadership style applied at the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency is included in the democratic-participatory category, where leaders provide space for employees to express their opinions, participate in decision-making, and encourage them to innovate. This approach has been proven to increase the intrinsic motivation of employees, which can be seen from the average performance score of 4.12 (good category).

These findings are also in line with research conducted by (Rustaman, 2020) which found that the democratic leadership style has a significant influence on improving employee performance in government agencies. In his research, a leadership style that involves subordinates in the decision-making process can increase a sense of responsibility and loyalty to the organization.

### ***Relevance to Performance Theory***

Employee performance is basically a reflection of the individual's ability and willingness to carry out their duties. (Anwar Prabu, 2017) Explains that performance is influenced by ability and motivation. Leaders who are able to create a conducive work environment and provide moral support will increase employee work motivation, which ultimately has an impact on improving individual and organizational performance. In this study, the aspect of cooperation between employees obtained the highest average score of 4.25, which shows that service leaders have succeeded in building a cooperative and mutually supportive work climate. Leadership that emphasizes collaboration is able to foster team solidarity, strengthen cross-field coordination, and accelerate the completion of organizational tasks. Thus, the results of this study strengthen the view (Mularto et al., 2024) that high performance is determined not only by technical factors, but also by leadership support that fosters a collective spirit.

### ***Contextual Analysis at the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency***

Empirical conditions in the field show that the leadership of the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency has implemented an effective communication pattern and built good interpersonal relationships with its employees. Service leaders are also active in providing direct direction, guiding staff in the implementation of programs, and giving awards to employees who show good performance. All of this is in line with the research findings that communication and leadership exemplary are the most dominant factors in improving employee performance.

Good employee performance is also inseparable from the factors of discipline and work responsibility. However, there are several aspects that still need to be improved, such as the timeliness of job completion which has the lowest score among other indicators. This indicates the need for increased supervision and periodic evaluation from the leadership so that employee work discipline is maintained.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of research conducted at the Education and Culture Office of Southwest Aceh Regency, it can be concluded that leadership style has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. The better the leadership style applied, the higher the performance produced by employees. The results of the analysis showed that the contribution of leadership to performance was 41.2%, while the rest was influenced by other factors such as motivation and work discipline. Leaders who are communicative, exemplary, and involve employees in decision-making have proven to be able to increase the enthusiasm, responsibility, and work productivity of officials within the Education and Culture Office.

## **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

Still conducting further research to learn more about the Impact of Leadership Style on the Performance of Employees at the South Aceh District Office of Education and Culture.

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