

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT MEDIATION MODEL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF WORK CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP ON THE PERFORMANCE OF ASN IN SITUBONDO REGENCY GOVERNMENT

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of employee engagement as a mediating variable in the influence of work culture and leadership on the performance of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) within the Situbondo Regency Government, considering that there are still problems with ASN performance that are not optimal. This study uses a quantitative descriptive approach with a population of 6,904 employees, and a research sample of 100 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula with purposive sampling techniques. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and literature studies, then analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the WarpPLS 8.0 application. The results of the study show that work culture has a significant effect on employee engagement and employee performance, while leadership does not have a significant effect on employee engagement but has a significant effect directly on employee performance. Employee engagement has been proven to have a significant effect on employee performance and is able to mediate the influence of work culture on ASN performance significantly. In contrast, employee engagement is not able to mediate the influence of leadership on employee performance. These findings indicate that a positive work culture is a key factor in building employee attachment which further has an impact on improving ASN performance. This research provides practical implications for the Situbondo Regency Government to prioritize strengthening work culture and increasing employee engagement as the main strategy in improving the performance of ASN in a sustainable manner.

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement; Work Culture; Leadership

## INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRDM) is a strategic function in the organization that plays a vital role in achieving organizational goals through effective and efficient management of human assets. defines HRD as the process of acquiring, training, assessing, and compensating employees, taking into account their employment, health, safety, and fairness issues. In the context of the public sector, MSDM has its own complexity because it must balance bureaucratic efficiency with responsiveness to community needs. emphasizing that modern HR does not only focus on administrative aspects, but also on developing organizational capabilities through practices that increase Dessler (2020) Armstrong & Taylor (2020) *employee engagement*, a strong organizational culture, and effective leadership. The transformation of Indonesia's bureaucracy through ASN reform requires a more strategic approach to MSDM in managing the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in order to be able to provide quality public services.

One of the main focuses in MSDM is the optimization of employee performance as an output of various HR management practices. Performance is the result of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out his duties in accordance with the responsibilities given to him. In the context of civil servants, performance is a crucial indicator in measuring the effectiveness of government and public service administration. Various studies show that the performance of civil servants is influenced by multiple factors that interact with each other. Research identifies that organizational culture, leadership, and (Mangkunegara, 2021) Fachrurazi et al. (2020) *employee engagement* are significant determinants of ASN performance. Muhammad in his study on the Bantaeng Regional Government found that the performance of ASN is determined by a combination of work culture factors, transformational leadership style, and the level of employee attachment. Similarly, it affirms that individual performance improvement cannot be separated from an organizational context that includes a conducive work culture and effective leadership practices. These findings indicate the importance of a holistic approach in understanding and improving the performance of ASN. Tafsir et al. (2022) (Puspita et al., 2020a)

Among the various factors that affect the performance of ASN, work culture occupies a fundamental position as an organizational context that shapes employee behavior patterns. Work culture is a system of values, beliefs, and norms that are embraced together in an organization that influences the way employees think, feel, and behave in carrying out tasks. In the context of ASN, a positive work culture is the foundation for the creation of a high work ethic and orientation to public service. Most of the literature supports the positive influence of work culture on performance. A study by (Valcik et al., 2023) Puspita et al., (2020) (Anggraini et al., 2020; Fachrurazi et al., 2020; Junaidi & Marantika, 2022; Putra et al., 2024) emphasizes that a conducive organizational culture is able to improve individual and organizational performance. Research by Muhammad Tafsir et al. (2022) provides similar empirical evidence. However, the results of the study were opposed by those who stated that work culture did not have a significant effect on performance. The inconsistency of these findings indicates the need for a more in-depth study of the mechanisms of influence of work culture on performance, particularly considering the mediating variables that may play a role in these relationships. (Abid, 2024; Triastuti et al., 2025; Widiyanto & Parwoto, 2025)

In addition to work culture, leadership is also a crucial factor that determines the direction and dynamics of the organization in achieving optimal performance. Leadership is the ability to influence, motivate, and direct individuals or groups to achieve organizational goals through vision, strategies, and effective management practices. In the government bureaucracy, transformational leadership is an urgent need to encourage innovation and change towards better public services. Literature evidence shows consistent support for the influence of leadership on performance. Research by indicates that transformational leadership and leadership commitment have a positive effect on improving employee performance. Consistent results also emerged in studies that placed leadership as a key determinant of performance through work engagement mechanisms. However, research partially found that (Hasibuan, 2020) (Airyq et al., 2023; Shirley & Shirley, 2020; Fachrurazi et al., 2020; Mulyanto, 2021; Nurwati et al., 2020; Tafsir et al., 2022) Hamzah & Sitorus (2021) Utami et al. (2024) *employee engagement* and leadership had a insignificant effect on employee performance. This research gap shows the need for further investigation into how leadership affects performance, particularly through psychological mechanisms such as *employee engagement*.

The psychological mechanism that connects work culture and leadership to performance can be explained through the construct of *employee engagement* as a strategic intervening variable. Employee engagement is a positive psychological condition characterized by a high level of energy, dedication, and absorption in carrying out work. In the context of civil servants, (Ababneh, 2020) *employee engagement* is the key to encouraging employees not only to be physically present, but also emotionally and cognitively involved in providing optimal public services. The hypothesis about the influence of *employee engagement* on performance is strongly supported by most studies, among others, all of which have found that (Puspita et al., 2020b; Savitri et al., 2023; Shofiana & Perkasa, 2024) *employee engagement* contributes significantly to improving individual performance. However, these results contradict research that states that (Dunan & Ningrum, 2025; Rahmadalena & Asmanita, 2020) *employee engagement* is not significant to performance. The study also found that partially Utami et al. (2024) *employee engagement* and leadership had a non-significant effect on employee performance. These inconsistencies indicate the complexity of the relationship between *employee engagement* and performance, as well as the possibility of different contextual factors or causal mechanisms in different organizational settings.

Referring to the theoretical complexity and empirical inconsistencies that have been described, it is important to examine the phenomenon in the specific context of the Situbondo Regency Government. The Situbondo Regency Government as one of the local governments in East Java faces challenges in optimizing the performance of ASN which is characterized by operational symptoms and inconsistent indicator achievements. At the level of work behavior, it is still found (1) delays in completing administrative and public service tasks, (2) low initiative in completing tasks that are smarter and more responsive, (3) and the achievement of good performance that is only administrative.

Initial observations indicate that the work culture is still dominant in a routine-procedural nature and leadership style that tends to be transactional so that it has the potential to reduce the level of *employee engagement*. The above description of conditions is shown by the data on the performance achievements of ASN in the Situbondo Regency Government

which is measured through the ASN Professionalism Index indicator. The government through Government Regulation Number 30 of 2019 concerning ASN Performance Assessment emphasizes that performance assessments must be carried out objectively, measurably, accountably, participatory, and transparent. In this context, the ASN Professionalism Index (IP ASN) emerged as a strategic indicator because it comprehensively measures the professionalism dimension of ASN, not only assessing performance achievements, but also competencies, educational qualifications, and employee discipline.

With standardized indicators, local governments can map the level of professionalism of ASN and identify organizational factors such as work culture and leadership that affect performance improvement. Therefore, in this study, IP ASN is seen as an appropriate, valid, and relevant measurement tool to represent the performance of ASN within the Situbondo Regency Government, as well as supporting the transformation of apparatus resource management towards a high-performance bureaucracy. The achievement of the Professionalism Index of ASN in Situbondo Regency in the last four years shows fluctuating developments even though in general it has exceeded the set target. To provide a clearer picture of this trend, the following is presented data on the achievement of the Situbondo Regency ASN Professionalism Index in 2021–2024.

**Table 1.**  
**Situbondo Regency ASN Professionalism Index**

Year	ASN Professionalism Index		Categories
	Target	Realization	
2021	59,80 - 62,64	58,44	Very Low
2022	62,65 – 65,49	64,63	Low
2023	65,50 – 68,34	63,16	Low
2024	68,35 – 71,15	78,94	Medium

Source: BKPSDM Situbondo Regency (2025)

The Situbondo Regency ASN Professionalism Index data shows unstable performance dynamics during the 2021-2024 period, with a striking gap between targets and realization in several years. In 2021, it showed an achievement of 58.44 which was below the target of 59.80–62.64, so it was in the Very Low category, indicating the weak competence and basic professionalism of ASN in that period. Although there was an increase in 2022 with a realization of 64.63 and the Low category, this achievement is still within the minimum target limit and does not reflect a significant improvement. Conditions declined again in 2023 when the realization dropped to 63.16, remaining in the Low category, indicating problems with performance consistency, coaching effectiveness, and productivity stability of ASN. A major surge occurred in 2024 with an achievement of 78.94 and the category increased to Medium, but this drastic increase also shows an irregularity in performance patterns from year to year, indicating that the improvement of ASN professionalism has not been carried out continuously and requires a more systematic and measurable development strategy. This emphasizes the need to improve the coaching system, strengthen work culture, and more sustainable competency development strategies. This unstable pattern of achievement indicates a gap between strengthening technocratic aspects (SOPs, performance targets, and discipline control) and sustainable work behavior-psychological factors.

The inconsistency of empirical findings regarding the influence of work culture, leadership, and *employee engagement* on ASN performance shows that there is a strong research gap to be further researched. Although most studies confirm that work culture plays an important role in improving performance (Anggraini et al., 2020; Fachrurazi et al., 2020; Junaidi & Marantika, 2022; Puspita et al., 2020 Putra et al., 2024; Muhammad Tafsir et al., 2022), a number of other studies have concluded that work culture does not have a significant effect (Abid, 2024; Triastuti et al., 2025; Widiyanto & Parwoto, 2025), thus raising questions about certain conditions that make the influence of work culture strong or weak. Similar inconsistencies are also seen in leadership variables, where some literature shows a positive and significant influence on performance (Airyq et al., 2023; Shirley & Shirley, 2020; Fachrurazi et al., 2020; Mulyanto, 2021; Nurwati et al., 2020; Tafsir et al., 2022; Hamzah & Sitorus, 2021), while the findings of Utami et al. (2024) showed insignificant results. In addition, although most studies support the role of *employee engagement* as a determinant of performance (Puspita et al., 2020a; Savitri et al., 2023; Shofiana & Perkasa, 2024), there are also opposite results (Dunan & Ningrum, 2025; Rahmadalena & Asmanita, 2020; Utami et al., 2024). The difference in findings in the three variables of work culture, leadership, and *employee engagement* indicates that there is a causal mechanism that is not fully understood, especially related to the role of *employee engagement* as a mediating variable, so further research is needed to explain the contextual conditions that affect the strength of the relationship between these variables.

Based on the description above, this research is important to be carried out to fill the existing *research gap*, especially related to the inconsistency of previous research findings on the influence of work culture, leadership, and *employee engagement* on the performance of ASN. Furthermore, this research is expected to make a practical contribution to the Situbondo Regency Government in formulating a strategy to improve ASN performance based on strengthening work culture, developing transformational leadership, and increasing *employee engagement*. Using a strategic MSDM approach and supported by a solid theoretical foundation, this study seeks to produce an empirical model that can explain the complex mechanism of how work culture and leadership affect the performance of ASN through the role of employee engagement mediation, so that it can be a reference for policy-making in bureaucratic reform and improving the quality of public services in Situbondo Regency.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R)**

The *Job Demands-Resources (JD-R)* model developed by (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) offers a comprehensive *framework* for understanding the antecedents and consequences of *employee engagement* and performance in an organizational context. The JD-R model of Bakker and Demerouti (2007) divides job characteristics into *job demands* (physical/psychological demands such as high workload) and *job resources* (resources such as social support and autonomy). This model explains two processes: *health impairment* (excessive demands without *resources* cause *burnout*) and *motivational* (high *resources* increase *engagement* and performance). In ASN Situbondo, positive work culture and transformational leadership as *resources* strengthen the motivation process, meet

psychological needs (competence, autonomy, connectedness), and encourage sustainable performance.

### **Employee Performance**

Performance is a multidimensional construct that reflects the quality and quantity of work results achieved by an employee in carrying out tasks in accordance with the responsibilities given to him. Define performance as the result of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out his duties in accordance with the responsibilities given to him, which is influenced by Mangkunegara (2021) *the ability* factor and the motivation factor.

### **Employee Engagement**

*Employee engagement* is a psychological construct that describes the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral relationships between employees and their work that have an impact on energy levels, dedication, and attachment in the execution of tasks. Demerouti & Bakker (2023) define *employee engagement* as a positive, satisfying, and work-related state of mind, characterized by vigor (high energy, resilience, persistence even when difficult), *dedication* (strong involvement with significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride), and *absorption* (full concentration, preoccupation until time passes quickly and is difficult to let go).

### **Work Culture**

Work culture is a manifestation of values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that are shared by members of the organization that form patterns of behavior, way of thinking, and interaction in carrying out organizational tasks. Schein (2020) defines organizational culture as a pattern of common basic assumptions learned by a group when solving external adaptation and internal integration problems, which have worked well enough to be considered valid and are therefore taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those issues.

### **Leadership**

Leadership is the process of influencing individuals or groups to achieve common goals through direction, motivation, and empowerment carried out in a specific organizational context. Northouse (2021) defines leadership as the process of individual influence on the group to achieve a common goal, with four components: (1) an interactive leader-follower process (not a fixed trait); (2) reciprocal influence; (3) in the context of social groups; (4) the achievement of common goals.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the researcher chose the type of quantitative research, the data obtained must be in-depth, clear and specific. Furthermore, Sugiyono (2020) explained that data collection can be obtained from the results of observation, interviews, documentation, and combined/triangulation. The population in this study is all State Civil Apparatus (ASN) within the Situbondo Regency Government which totals 6,702 people. The number of samples in this study was determined using the Slovin formula with an error rate of 10%, because the population of Situbondo Regency Government employees is 6,904 people and the spread is quite wide. So it was rounded up to 100 respondents. The determination of the sample in this study uses *the purposive sampling technique*, which is the selection of respondents based on certain criteria that are considered to be able to provide relevant

information to the research objectives. According to Sugiyono (2020), *purposive sampling* is appropriate when researchers need respondents with special characteristics that can ensure data quality, so that the selection of experienced ASN can produce more accurate and representative answers to the performance phenomenon being studied.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Validity Test

The validation test criteria were to use the loadings factor criteria (*cross-loadings factor*) with a value of more than 0.70 and *average variance extracted (AVE)* with a value exceeding 0.50 for the conference validity test and for the discriminant validity test using the root comparison of AVE with the correlation between variables. (Solihin and Ratmono, 2013). The results of WarpPLS 8.0 are as follows:

**Table 2.**  
*Combined loadings and cross-loadings*

	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Type (a)</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>P value</b>
X1.1.1	<b>0.765</b>	0.143	0.176	0.090	Reflect	0.081	<0.001
X1.1.2	<b>0.804</b>	0.130	0.271	0.437	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X1.2.1	<b>0.811</b>	0.195	0.164	0.045	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X1.2.2	<b>0.811</b>	0.013	0.183	0.097	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X1.2.3	<b>0.745</b>	0.184	0.312	0.013	Reflect	0.082	<0.001
X1.3.1	<b>0.797</b>	0.059	0.291	0.002	Reflect	0.081	<0.001
X1.3.2	<b>0.767</b>	0.031	0.481	0.592	Reflect	0.081	<0.001
X2.1	0.192	<b>0.827</b>	0.071	0.116	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X2.2.1	0.030	<b>0.841</b>	0.205	0.215	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X2.2.2	0.126	<b>0.799</b>	0.355	0.248	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X2.3	0.056	<b>0.837</b>	0.123	0.075	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X2.4	0.007	<b>0.846</b>	0.186	0.148	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
X2.5	0.141	<b>0.860</b>	0.372	0.320	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
X2.6	0.118	<b>0.839</b>	0.143	0.020	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
X2.7	0.131	<b>0.871</b>	0.024	0.082	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Z1.1	0.226	0.144	<b>0.831</b>	0.070	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
Z1.2	0.370	0.201	<b>0.872</b>	0.057	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Z1.3	0.122	0.225	<b>0.857</b>	0.033	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Z2.1	0.064	0.036	<b>0.778</b>	0.325	Reflect	0.081	<0.001
Z2.2	0.024	0.068	<b>0.849</b>	0.100	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Z2.3	0.230	0.052	<b>0.701</b>	0.116	Reflect	0.083	<0.001
Z3.1	0.398	0.223	<b>0.716</b>	0.409	Reflect	0.085	<0.001
Z3.2	0.206	0.041	<b>0.852</b>	0.008	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Z3.3	0.539	0.349	<b>0.715</b>	0.297	Reflect	0.082	<0.001
Y1.1	0.036	0.034	0.227	<b>0.821</b>	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
Y1.2	0.205	0.063	0.061	<b>0.861</b>	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Y2.1	0.016	0.038	0.072	<b>0.833</b>	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
Y2.2	0.095	0.083	0.239	<b>0.852</b>	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Y3.1	0.101	0.217	0.248	<b>0.791</b>	Reflect	0.081	<0.001
Y3.2	0.311	0.151	0.010	<b>0.850</b>	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Y4.1	0.149	0.113	0.382	<b>0.815</b>	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
Y4.2	0.211	0.065	0.377	<b>0.817</b>	Reflect	0.080	<0.001

Y5.1	0.127	0.013	0.192	<b>0.850</b>	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Y5.2	0.266	0.229	0.135	<b>0.821</b>	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
Y6	0.137	0.023	0.234	<b>0.832</b>	Reflect	0.080	<0.001
Y7.1	0.116	0.156	0.159	<b>0.868</b>	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Y7.2	0.027	0.042	0.415	<b>0.802</b>	Reflect	0.080	<0.001

Source: Data Processed by Researchers 2026

The results of the WarpPLS 8.0 calculation in Table 2. show that each value in the *cross-loadings factor* has reached a value above 0.7 with a p-value below 0.05. Thus the criteria for the convergent validity test have been met.

## 2. Reliability Test

Reliability testing is carried out with the aim of ensuring that the research instrument used can present concept measurements consistently without any bias. The results of WarpPLS 8.0 data processing are as follows:

**Table 3.**  
**Reliability Test**

Variable	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	Coefficients Min	Information
Work culture	0,919	0,897	> 0.7	Reliable
Leadership	0,950	0,940	> 0.7	Reliable
<i>Employee engagement</i>	0,937	0,923	> 0.7	Reliable
Employee performance	0,967	0,963	> 0.7	Reliable

Source: Data Processed by Researchers 2026

The basis used in the reliability test is the value of Composite *reliability coefficients* and *Cronbach's alpha coefficients* above 0.7. Results in table 3. shows that the questionnaire instrument in this study has met the requirements of the reliability test.

## 3. Inner Model Evaluation

### a. Calculation of Direct Influence Path Coefficient

**Table 4.**  
**Direct Influence Path Coefficient Value**

Yes	Hypothesis	Path coefficients	P values	Remarks
1	Engagement → <i>work culture</i>	0,711	0,001	Significant
2	Engagement → <i>Leadership</i>	0,134	0,083	Insignificant
3	Work culture → Performance	0,281	0,002	Significant
4	Performance Leadership →	0,215	0,012	Significant
5	<i>Employee engagement</i> → Performance	0,412	0,001	Significant

Source: Data Processed by Researchers 2026

#### a. The Influence of Work Culture (X1) on *Employee Engagement* (Z)

Based on Table 4. it can be seen that for testing the work culture variable (X1) on *employee engagement*, a Path coefficient value of 0.711 with a p-value of 0.001 was obtained. Because the *p-value* is smaller than the  $\alpha$  ( $0.001 < 0.05$ ),  $H_0$  is rejected, thus there is a significant influence of work culture (X1) on *employee engagement* (Z).

#### b. The Influence of Leadership (X2) on *Employee Engagement* (Z)

Based on Table 4. it can be seen that for the testing of the Leadership variable (X2) on *Employee engagement* (Z), a *Path coefficient* value of 0.134 with a *p-value* of 0.083 was obtained. Because *the p-value* is greater than the  $\alpha$  ( $0.083 > 0.05$ ), H2 is rejected, thus Leadership (X2) has no significant effect on *Employee engagement* (Z).

c. The Influence of Work Culture (X1) on Employee Performance (Y)

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that for testing the work culture variable (X1) on employee performance (Y), a *Path coefficient* value of 0.281 with a *p-value* of 0.002 was obtained. Because *the p-value* is smaller than the  $\alpha$  ( $0.002 < 0.05$ ), H0 is rejected, thus there is a significant influence of work culture (X1) on employee performance (Y).

d. The Influence of Leadership (X2) on Employee Performance (Y)

Based on Table 4. it can be seen that for testing the Leadership variable (X2) on employee performance (Y), a *Path coefficient* value of 0.215 with a *p-value* of 0.012 was obtained. Because *the p-value* is smaller than the  $\alpha$  ( $0.012 < 0.05$ ), H0 is rejected and thus there is a significant influence of Leadership (X2) on employee performance (Y).

e. The Effect of *Employee Engagement* (Z) on Employee Performance (Y)

Based on Table 4. it can be seen that for testing the *variable Employee engagement* (Z) on employee performance (Y), a *Path coefficient* value of 0.412 with a *p-value* of 0.001 was obtained. Because *the p-value* is smaller than the  $\alpha$  ( $0.001 < 0.05$ ), H0 is rejected, thus there is a significant influence of *Employee engagement* (Z) on employee performance (Y).

**b. Calculation of Indirect Influence Path Coefficient**

**Table 5.**

**Indirect Influence Path Coefficient**

Yes	Hypothesis	Path coefficients	P values	Remarks
1	Employee Engagement Work Culture → → Employee Performance	0,293	0,001	Significant
2	Employee Leadership → <i>Employee Performance</i> →	0,055	0,215	Insignificant

Source: Data Processed by Researchers 2026

The indirect influence of work culture (X1) on employee performance variables (Y) through the *intervening variable Employee engagement* (Z) was 0.293, which was greater than the direct influence of work culture variable (X1) on employee performance variable (Y), which was 0.281. In addition, the indirect influence of the Leadership variable (X2) on employee performance (Y) through the *intervening variable Employee engagement* (Z) is 0.055, which is smaller than the direct influence of the Leadership variable (X2) on the employee performance variable (Y), which is 0.215. Thus, it can be stated that work culture (X1) and Leadership (X2) affect employee performance (Y) through *employee engagement* (Z), with a value smaller than its direct influence.

**4. Coefficient of Determination**

**Table 6.**

**Adjusted R-squared coefficients**

	Adjusted R-squared coefficients
Z	0.647

Y	0.670
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Source: Data Processed by Researchers 2026

Based on the results of the analysis in table 6, it is shown that work culture, and leadership are able to explain *the employee engagement* variable of 64.7% or categorized as a strong correlation, and the remaining 35.3% is explained by other constraints outside of those studied in this study. Meanwhile, work culture, leadership and *employee engagement* were able to explain the performance variables of Situbondo Regency employees of 67.0% or categorized as strong correlations, and the remaining 33.0% were explained by other constraints outside those studied in this study.

### **The Influence of Work Culture on *Employee Engagement*.**

The results of statistical testing showed that work culture (X1) had a significant effect on *employee engagement* (Z), which was shown by a *path coefficient* value of 0.711 with a *p-value* of 0.001. A *p-value* value smaller than the significance level of 0.05 confirms that the null hypothesis is rejected, so the relationship between work culture and *employee engagement* is statistically proven. The large coefficient of the path also shows that work culture has a strong and dominant influence in increasing the level of employee attachment within the Situbondo Regency Regional Government.

Descriptively, these results are in line with findings on the variables of work culture and *employee engagement* which show the tendency of respondents' answers to be in the category of agree and strongly agree. A work culture that is reflected in a positive attitude towards work, responsible work behavior, and high work discipline encourages employees to feel more energetic, have strong dedication, and be emotionally involved in their work. This condition makes employees not only carry out their duties as a formal obligation, but also feel the meaning and pride as ASN, so that work attachment is increasing.

The findings of this study are supported by various previous empirical research results that state that work culture or organizational culture plays an important role in shaping *employee engagement*. Ababneh (2020) explained that a strong organizational culture is able to improve the quality of performance through increased employee involvement. In addition, Yulivan (2021) proves that work culture has a significant effect on *employee engagement* in government agencies, because positive work values and habits strengthen employees' psychological ties with the organization. Similar support was also conveyed by Sofiyanti and Najmudin (2023) who stated that a conducive organizational culture is the main factor in building employee work engagement in a sustainable manner. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with previous theories and empirical findings that affirm the importance of work culture in increasing *employee engagement*.

### **The Influence of Leadership on *Employee Engagement*.**

The results of statistical testing showed that leadership (X2) had no significant effect on *employee engagement* (Z), which was shown by a *path coefficient* value of 0.134 with a *p-value* of 0.083. The *p-value* is greater than the significance level of 0.05, so the hypothesis that there is an influence of leadership on *employee engagement* is unacceptable. The relatively small coefficient of the path also indicates that the contribution of leadership in increasing employee engagement is relatively weak compared to other variables in this research model.

Descriptively, these results can be understood from the distribution of respondents' answers on leadership and *employee engagement* variables. Although most respondents

assessed that leadership in the Situbondo Regency Regional Government was in the good category, the work attachment of employees was stronger influenced by internal work factors such as work morale, dedication, and appreciation of duties. This shows that employees tend to build engagement not solely because of the role of leadership, but more because of the work culture that has been formed, the meaning of work as an ASN, and the professional responsibilities inherent in employees.

These findings are in line with several empirical research results that state that leadership does not always have a direct influence on *employee engagement*, especially in public sector organizations that have strong work systems and rules. Dunan and Arisma (2023) found that leadership is not always the dominant factor in shaping *employee engagement* when the work environment and organizational systems play a greater role. In addition, Hamzah and Sitorus (2021) explained that *employee engagement* in an organization can be more influenced by organizational culture than leadership style. Theoretical support is also conveyed by Bakker and Albrecht (2020) who affirm that work attachment is influenced by various work resources, not only leadership, but also the value of work, systems, and the characteristics of the work itself. Thus, the insignificance of the influence of leadership on *employee engagement* in this study is still in line with the relevant empirical findings and theoretical frameworks.

#### **The Influence of Work Culture on Employee Performance.**

The results of statistical testing showed that work culture (X1) had a significant effect on employee performance (Y), which was evidenced by the *path coefficient* value of 0.281 with a *p-value* of 0.002. A *p-value* that is smaller than the significance level of 0.05 confirms that the null hypothesis is rejected, so that statistically the work culture has a real influence on improving the performance of Situbondo Regency Regional Government employees. The large coefficient of this path shows that the better the work culture that is applied, the higher the performance of the employees produced.

Descriptively, these findings are in line with the respondents' answers to the variables of work culture and employee performance which are dominated by the categories of agree and strongly agree. Work culture reflected through a positive attitude towards work, responsible work behavior, compliance with rules, and work discipline encourages employees to work more professionally, accountably, and service-oriented. This condition directly contributes to improving employee performance, both in terms of service quality, work responsibility, adaptability, and cooperation in the organization.

The results of this study are supported by empirical findings from various previous studies that state that work culture or organizational culture has a significant influence on employee performance. Abid (2024) found that a strong organizational culture is able to improve employee performance on an ongoing basis. Research by Junaidi and Marantika (2022) also shows that work culture plays an important role in shaping work behaviors that have an impact on the performance of public sector employees. In addition, Karisma, Anitra, and Hadiyanti (2025) emphasized that a positive work culture is a key factor in increasing the productivity and performance of government employees. These findings reinforce the results of this study that work culture is an important determinant in improving employee performance.

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

The results of statistical testing showed that leadership (X2) had a significant effect on employee performance (Y), as evidenced by a *path coefficient* value of **0.215** with a *p-value* of **0.012**. A *p-value* that is smaller than the significance level of 0.05 indicates that the zero hypothesis is rejected, so that statistically leadership has a real influence on improving the performance of Situbondo Regency Regional Government employees. The large coefficient of the pathway indicates that the role of leadership makes a positive contribution in encouraging employee performance achievements.

Descriptively, these findings are in line with the results of respondents' answers to the variables of leadership and employee performance which are dominated by the category of agree and strongly agree. Leadership shown through fair attitude, attention to welfare, creation of work comfort, and respect for subordinate ideas can encourage employees to work more optimally. This condition makes employees feel directed, supported, and motivated in completing tasks, so that it has a direct impact on improving the quality, quantity, and responsibility of work.

The results of this study are supported by empirical findings from various previous studies that state that leadership has a significant effect on employee performance. Nurwati et al. (2020) prove that effective leadership is able to improve the performance of public sector employees. Similar findings were also conveyed by Arief and Sunaryo (2020) who stated that leadership style plays an important role in directing work behavior and employee performance achievement. In addition, Sugiono et al. (2021) emphasized that good leadership is a key factor in improving employee performance through providing the right direction and motivation.

### **The Influence of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance.**

The results of statistical testing showed that *employee engagement* (Z) had a significant effect on employee performance (Y), which was evidenced by a *path coefficient* value of **0.412** with a *p-value* of **0.001**. A *p-value* that is smaller than the significance level of 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected, so that statistically employee attachment has a strong and significant influence on improving the performance of employees of the Situbondo Regency Regional Government. The large coefficient of the path indicates that *employee engagement* is one of the dominant factors that drive optimal employee performance.

Descriptively, these results are in line with respondents' responses to the variables of *employee engagement* and employee performance, the majority of whom are in the category of agree and strongly agree. Employees who have a high level of work morale, dedication to work, and deep appreciation in carrying out tasks tend to show better performance. This work attachment encourages employees to work more focused, responsible, and results-oriented, so that it has a direct impact on improving service quality, accountability, cooperation, and achieving organizational goals.

The findings of this study are supported by various previous empirical research results that state that *employee engagement* has a significant effect on employee performance. Bakker and Albrecht (2020) explain that employees who are emotionally and cognitively attached to their work tend to show higher performance. Rahmadalena and Asmanita (2020) also prove that *employee engagement* plays an important role in improving employee performance through increased work enthusiasm and dedication. In addition, Umihastanti

and Frianto (2022) emphasized that employee attachment is a key factor in encouraging the performance of public sector employees. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with previous empirical findings that place *employee engagement* as the main determinant of employee performance.

### **The influence of work culture on employee performance through *employee engagement***

The results of statistical testing showed that work culture had a significant effect on employee performance through *employee engagement* as an intervening variable, which was shown by the *path coefficient* value of **0.293** with a *p-value* of **0.001**. A significance value smaller than 0.05 proves that the indirect influence is statistically significant. In addition, the magnitude of this indirect influence is higher than the direct influence of work culture on employee performance, thus confirming that *employee engagement* plays a strong mediating role in the relationship.

Descriptively, these results are in line with findings on the variables of work culture, *employee engagement*, and employee performance, the majority of which are in the category of agree and strongly agree. Work culture that is reflected through a positive attitude towards work, responsible work behavior, discipline, and compliance with rules encourages the emergence of enthusiasm, dedication, and appreciation of employee work. This work attachment then becomes a psychological mechanism that strengthens the employee's motivation to work more optimally, thus having an impact on improving employee performance in a sustainable manner.

These findings are supported by various empirical evidence that states that *employee engagement* acts as a mediating variable between work culture and employee performance. Ababneh (2020) shows that a strong organizational culture is able to improve performance through increased employee engagement. Hamzah and Sitorus (2021) also prove that *employee engagement* significantly mediates the influence of organizational culture on employee performance. In addition, Sinaga and Lubis (2025) emphasized that a positive work culture will be more effective in improving performance if it is able to build employee work attachment. Thus, the results of this study strengthen the view that *employee engagement* is a strategic path in optimizing the impact of work culture on employee performance.

### **There is an Influence of Leadership on Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement***

The results of statistical testing showed that the indirect influence of leadership on employee performance through *employee engagement* was not significant, which was shown by the *path coefficient* value of **0.055** with a *p-value* of **0.215**. A *p-value* greater than 0.05 indicates that *employee engagement* is not statistically able to mediate the relationship between leadership and employee performance. These findings show that the influence of leadership on employee performance is more dominant than through increased work attachment.

Descriptively, this condition can be explained from the characteristics of respondents who tend to have a level of work engagement that is formed not solely because of the role of the leader, but is influenced by the work system, organizational cultural values, and professional responsibilities as ASN. Although leadership is considered quite good by respondents, it has not consistently encouraged an increase in employee enthusiasm, dedication, and appreciation of work as an intermediate mechanism towards improving

performance. In other words, employees are still able to show good performance even though the level of engagement influenced by leadership is relatively limited.

These findings are in line with several empirical research results that state that *employee engagement* does not always play an intervening variable in the relationship between leadership and employee performance, especially in public sector organizations. Dunan and Arisma (2023) found that leadership does not have a significant effect on *employee engagement* in organizational conditions that have strong rules and work systems. In addition, Hamzah and Sitorus (2021) explained that the role of *employee engagement* mediation tends to be stronger in the relationship between organizational culture and performance than leadership. Theoretical support is also conveyed by Bakker and Albrecht (2020) who affirm that work attachment is influenced by various work resources, so leadership is not the only determining factor in forming *employee engagement*.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research that have been described in Chapter IV, the conclusions in this study are as follows:

1. The test results show that work culture has a significant effect on *employee engagement*. This confirms that a positive work culture is able to increase employee engagement in carrying out their duties and roles in the Situbondo Regency Regional Government.
2. The test results showed that leadership had no significant effect on *employee engagement*. These findings indicate that the level of employee engagement is more influenced by work culture and organizational systems than leadership factors alone.
3. The test results show that work culture has a significant effect on employee performance. This proves that the application of good values and work habits is able to encourage the improvement of ASN performance in the Situbondo Regency Regional Government.
4. The test results show that leadership has a significant effect on employee performance. These findings confirm that the role of leaders is very important in directing, motivating, and improving employee performance.
5. The test results show that *employee engagement* has a significant effect on employee performance. This shows that employees with a high level of work attachment tend to produce more optimal performance.
6. The test results show that work culture affects employee performance through *employee engagement* as an intervening variable with a greater influence than the direct influence. These findings confirm the important role of *employee engagement* in strengthening the relationship between work culture and employee performance.
7. The test results show that leadership does not have a significant effect on employee performance through *employee engagement*. This shows that *employee engagement* does not play a role as an intervening variable in the relationship between leadership and employee performance in the Situbondo Regency Regional Government.

## **Suggestions**

Based on the conclusions of the research that has been described, here are some research suggestions that can be done:

### **1. Theoretical Suggestions**

- a. Further research is suggested to develop a conceptual model by adding other variables, such as job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, or organizational fairness, to explain the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, which in this study proved to be insignificant.
- b. It is necessary to re-test the leadership construct with a more specific approach to leadership styles, such as transformational or authentic leadership, in order to capture a deeper influence on employee engagement.
- c. The next researcher is recommended to use a longitudinal design to see the dynamics of changes in employee engagement and employee performance over time, so that the causal relationship between variables can be explained more comprehensively.

### **2. Practical Suggestions**

- a. The Situbondo Regency Government needs to strengthen a work culture that is oriented towards responsibility, cooperation, and discipline, because these indicators have been proven to obtain a high level of approval and have a significant effect on employee engagement and employee performance.
- b. OPD leaders are advised to improve the quality of interaction with employees, especially in terms of attention to the aspirations, welfare, and job satisfaction of ASN, considering that there are still leadership indicators with a relatively higher level of neutrality.
- c. Efforts to increase employee engagement need to be focused on the absorption dimension, especially on the aspect of employees' ability to stay focused and immersed in work, because this indicator shows the highest level of disagreement compared to other engagement dimensions.

### **3. Policy Suggestions**

- a. Local governments are advised to develop policies to strengthen the work culture of ASN in a structured manner through the internalization of work values, habituation of positive work behavior, and periodic evaluation of work culture in each OPD.
- b. It is necessary to formulate a civil servant leadership development policy that emphasizes the ability to build employee attachment, such as through engagement-based leadership training and employee welfare.
- c. The Situbondo Regency Government is advised to establish a policy to increase employee engagement as part of the ASN performance improvement strategy, by integrating employee attachment aspects into the performance assessment and human resource management system of the apparatus.

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