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The Impact of Human Resource Competency and Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance with Motivation as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract

Transformational Leadership at DLH has been applied but there is still no evidence that the application of transformational leadership at DLH Kota Surabaya can improve overall employee performance. This research aims to analyze the influence of competence and transformational leadership on employee performance through the role of motivation as an intervening variable using the SEM-PLS method on a sample of DLH Surabaya City employees. SEM-PLS is used because of its ability to obtain relationship results between variables. The results show good validity and reliability of the instrument. Motivation variables explain 47.6% of employee performance, while competence and transformational leadership explain 52% of motivation. In a case study at DLH Kota Surabaya, it was found that competence had a positive and significant effect on employee performance and motivation. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on motivation but not employee performance. Motivation does not have a significant effect on employee performance and is not effective as a mediating variable between competence and performance, as well as transformational leadership and performance. Factors such as rigid bureaucratic structures and lack of effective training contributed to these findings. These findings are important for policy makers to develop more effective HR management and leadership strategies.

Article Info

1. INTRODUCTION

Human resource competency and transformational leadership are pivotal elements in enhancing organizational performance, particularly in public sector institutions (Alrowwad et al., 2020; Sulistyan et al., 2022). The Department of Environmental Services in Surabaya City serves as a crucial entity for managing environmental resources and ensuring sustainable urban development. As such, understanding the impact of human resource competency and transformational leadership on employee performance within this department is essential. This study aims to explore these dynamics and examine how motivation functions as an intervening variable in this relationship (Boon et al., 2019).

Employee performance is often influenced by multiple factors, including the competencies they possess, and the leadership style adopted within the organization. Competency encompasses the skills, knowledge, and abilities that enable employees to perform their tasks effectively. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and

motivating employees towards achieving organizational goals, plays a significant role in shaping employee behavior and performance. Therefore, analyzing these factors can provide valuable insights into improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Environmental Services (Laroche & Salesina, 2017).

Motivation acts as a critical intervening variable that potentially mediates the relationship between competency, transformational leadership, and employee performance. Employees who are motivated tend to exhibit higher levels of commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction, which, in turn, enhance their performance. Understanding the extent to which motivation mediates this relationship can help identify strategies to foster a more motivated and high-performing workforce within the department (Cooke et al., 2019).

The public sector, including environmental services departments, often faces unique challenges such as rigid bureaucratic structures, limited resources, and stringent regulatory requirements. These challenges necessitate a deeper examination of the factors influencing employee performance. By focusing on the Department of Environmental Services in Surabaya City, this study addresses a gap in the literature regarding the specific impacts of human resource competency and transformational leadership in a public sector context (Bos-Nehles & Veenendaal, 2019).

Despite extensive research on the impact of human resource competency and transformational leadership on employee performance, there is a notable gap in studies focusing on the public sector, specifically within environmental services departments. Previous research predominantly emphasizes private sector organizations, leaving a void in understanding how these dynamics operate in public institutions with unique challenges such as rigid bureaucratic structures and limited resources. Furthermore, the role of motivation as an intervening variable in this context has not been adequately explored. This study addresses this gap by investigating the specific influences of competency and transformational leadership on employee performance in the Department of Environmental Services in Surabaya City, aiming to provide empirical evidence and practical insights for enhancing public sector performance (Malik & Garg, 2020).

Human resource competency is a fundamental determinant of employee performance. Competency encompasses a range of skills, knowledge, and abilities that employees must possess to execute their roles effectively. According to (Wang et al., 2020) competencies are classified into five dimensions: skills, motives, traits, self-concept, and knowledge. Competency not only affects the ability to perform tasks but also influences overall job satisfaction and motivation. Prior studies have demonstrated that higher competency levels correlate with improved performance outcomes (Boyatzis, 2008). In the context of public sector organizations, enhancing employee competencies is crucial for improving service delivery and achieving organizational goals.

Transformational leadership is another critical factor influencing employee performance. This leadership style, characterized by the ability to inspire and motivate employees towards achieving higher levels of performance, has been extensively studied. (Shamim et al., 2019) identified four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders create a supportive and motivating environment, fostering employee engagement and commitment (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In public sector settings, where resources and rewards may be limited, transformational leadership can play a pivotal role in enhancing employee morale and productivity (Donnelly & Johns, 2021).

Motivation serves as an intervening variable that can mediate the relationship between competency, leadership, and performance. Theories of motivation, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, highlight the importance of addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to enhance employee motivation (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, 1959). Motivated employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of performance, commitment, and job satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the public sector,

understanding how to effectively motivate employees, given the constraints of bureaucratic structures and limited resources, is essential for improving organizational performance.

Existing research highlights the significant impact of competency and transformational leadership on employee performance, yet there remains a gap in the literature specifically within the context of public sector environmental services departments. Studies often overlook the unique challenges faced by these departments, such as rigid bureaucratic processes and the need for sustainable practices. Furthermore, the role of motivation as a mediator in this specific setting is underexplored. By focusing on the Department of Environmental Services in Surabaya City, this study aims to fill this gap, providing a comprehensive understanding of how competency and transformational leadership influence employee performance and how motivation can be leveraged to enhance these effects in a public sector context.

The hypothesis developed in this research is explained as follows:

H1: Competency is hypothesized to significantly influence employee performance.

H2: Transformational leadership is hypothesized to significantly influence motivation.

H3: Competency is hypothesized to significantly influence motivation.

H4: Transformational leadership is hypothesized to significantly influence employee performance.

H5: Motivation is hypothesized to significantly influence employee performance.

H6: Competency is hypothesized to significantly influence employee performance through motivation.

H7: Transformational leadership is hypothesized to significantly influence employee performance through work motivation.

2. METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the impact of human resource competency and transformational leadership on employee performance, with motivation as an intervening variable. The research design is structured to collect and analyze numerical data, enabling the testing of hypotheses through statistical methods. Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) is utilized as the primary analytical technique, allowing for the assessment of complex relationships between the variables under investigation.

The population targeted in this study consists of 193 public workers from the Department of Environmental Services (DLH) in Surabaya City. To determine a representative sample size, the Slovin formula is applied, resulting in a sample of 69 public workers. This sampling method ensures that the selected participants adequately represent the entire population, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the study's findings.

Data collection is carried out through a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this research. The questionnaire comprises items designed to measure the constructs of human resource competency, transformational leadership, motivation, and employee performance. Each item is formulated based on established scales and adapted to the context of public sector employees. Prior to administration, the instrument undergoes a pilot test to ensure reliability and validity.
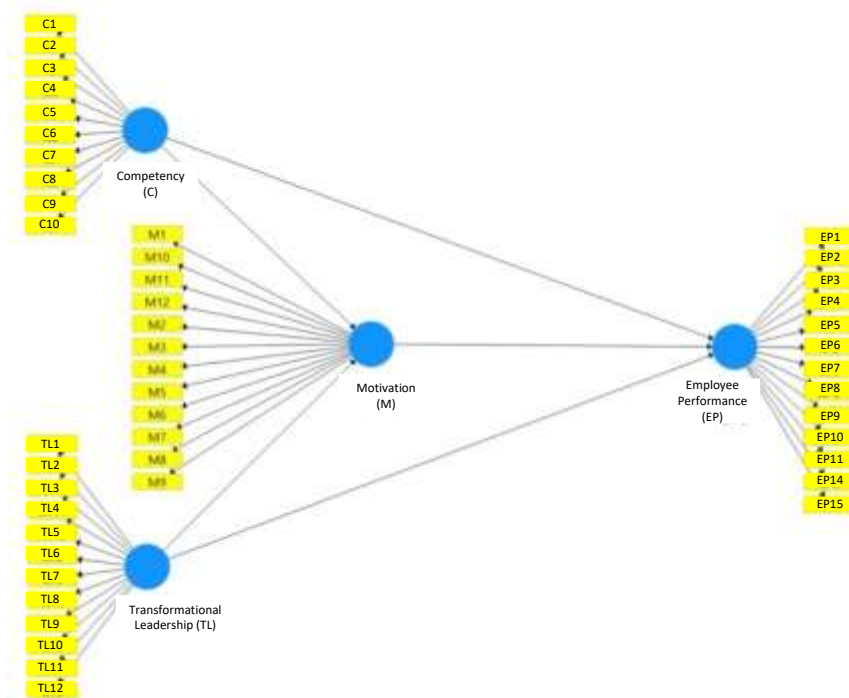
Figure 1. SEM-PLS study case structure model
Source: Results of Development by Researchers (2024)

The data analysis techniques employed in this study include both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the key variables. Inferential statistics, specifically SEM-PLS, are applied to test the hypothesized relationships between competency (Kolibáčová, 2014), transformational leadership (Deng et al., 2023), motivation (Lapointe & Perreault, 2013), and employee performance (Skousen & Sun, 2019). This technique allows for the simultaneous analysis of multiple dependent and independent variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics.

This study utilizes a robust methodological approach to explore the relationships between human resource competency, transformational leadership, motivation, and employee performance in a public sector context. By employing SEM-PLS, the research is able to provide detailed insights into the direct and indirect effects of the studied variables, contributing valuable knowledge to the field of public administration and human resource management

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The study analyzed data from 69 respondents who are civil servants (ASN) at the Environmental Agency of Surabaya. The demographic data was categorized based on age, gender, and rank. The age distribution showed that the majority (81.6%) of respondents were over 40 years old, with smaller percentages in the 20-30 and 31-40 age groups. In terms of gender, 57.96% were male and 42.04% were female. Education levels varied, with the majority holding a bachelor's degree (52.17%), followed by those with elementary (17.39%), middle school (14.49%), and high school education (13.04%). The ranks of the respondents were predominantly in the second and third grades, with 37.68% and 33.33%, respectively.

This study utilizes a quantitative approach, employing Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze the data and test the hypothesized relationships. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the significance of competency and transformational leadership in enhancing employee performance. Moreover, the study aims to offer practical recommendations for policymakers and administrators in the public sector to develop strategies that enhance employee motivation and performance (Budhwar et al., 2022).

The competency of human resources was evaluated through knowledge, skills, experience, and attitudes/behavior. Thirteen items were used to measure these indicators, resulting in a high average score of 4.52, indicating strong agreement among respondents on their competency levels. Notably, areas such as responsibility, technical skills, and problem-solving received high scores, reflecting the respondents' positive perception of their competencies. The study concluded that human resource competency significantly impacts performance.

Transformational leadership was assessed through charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Twelve items measured these indicators, with an average score of 4.38. Respondents agreed that their leaders demonstrate strong transformational leadership traits, such as providing support, encouraging creativity, and inspiring future visions. The results suggest that transformational leadership is well-implemented and has a significant positive effect on employee performance.

Employee motivation was measured by responsibility, recognition and rewards, working relationships, and achievements. The twelve items resulted in an average score of 4.21, indicating that respondents feel motivated in their work. However, scores for recognition and promotion opportunities were slightly lower, highlighting areas where the organization could improve. The study emphasized that enhancing reward systems and promotion transparency could further boost motivation and, consequently, performance.

Performance was assessed based on quality of work, quantity of work, timeliness, supervision, and effectiveness. Fifteen items were used, with an average score of 4.34, indicating strong performance levels among respondents. However, scores for independent work and completing tasks without supervision were lower, suggesting a reliance on teamwork and managerial oversight. The study suggested that simplifying procedures and enhancing documentation could help improve independent working capabilities, thereby further improving overall performance. The structural model indicated that competencies, transformational leadership, and motivation positively influence performance.

Table 1. Average variance extracted per variable

Variable	AVE
HR Competency	0,538
Transformational Leadership	0,724
Motivation	0,679
Employee Performance	0,699

Source: Data Processed (2024)

The analysis of the model using Partial Least Square (PLS) begins with evaluating the measurement model (outer model). This evaluation aims to assess the relationship between latent variables and their indicators, focusing on validity and reliability tests. Validity tests check whether the indicators effectively measure the latent variables, with hypotheses suggesting either the indicators do not measure the same aspect of the theory (H0) or they do (H1). Convergent validity is assessed through the outer loading values of each indicator item, where a loading factor below 0.5 signifies invalidity. Following the elimination of non-significant indicators, the remaining indicators showed valid outer loading values, confirmed by an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.5 for all variables, indicating convergent validity.

Table 2. Cross-Loading Factor Validity Test

Cross loading factor (fornell-lacker)	HR Competency	Employee Performance	Transformational Leadership	Motivation
HR Competency	0,734			
Employee Performance	0,659	0,836		
Transformational Leadership	0,600	0,559	0,851	
Motivation	0,596	0,520	0,683	0,824
Result	**Valid**	**Valid**	**Valid**	**Valid**

Source: Data Processed (2024)

Discriminant validity is evaluated using cross loading values, which must be greater than 0.7 and exceed the cross loading of other variables' indicators. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion further supports discriminant validity, showing that each variable's AVE is greater than 0.5. The hypothesis for discriminant validity is similar to that for convergent validity, suggesting that indicators either do (H1) or do not (H0) measure the same aspect of the latent variable. The results from the cross loading factor table confirmed that all variables' indicators are valid in reflecting their respective constructs, thus accepting H1.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	(AVE)	Conclusion
HR Competency	0,928	0,940	0,937	0,538	Reliable
Employee Performance	0,967	0,976	0,971	0,699	Reliable
Transformational Leadership	0,965	0,969	0,969	0,724	Reliable
Motivation	0,957	0,963	0,962	0,679	Reliable

Source: Data Processed (2024)

Reliability tests were conducted to verify the accuracy, consistency, and precision of the instruments in measuring constructs. This involved examining the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values, with hypotheses suggesting either inconsistency (H0) or consistency (H1) in the indicators measuring the constructs. The model is deemed reliable if the values for each variable exceed 0.6. The results, presented in the composite reliability table, showed values above 0.8, indicating a high level of reliability and consistent responses from the participants.

The structural model (inner model) evaluation follows, provided the measurement model indicates valid and reliable indicators. The structural model is assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2). An R^2 value is classified as low (< 0.30), moderate (0.30 < R^2 < 0.60), or high (> 0.60). The results showed that the employee performance variable had an R^2 of 0.476, indicating that motivation explains 47.6% of employee performance, which is moderate. Similarly, the motivation variable had an R^2 of 0.520, suggesting that employee competence and transformational leadership explain 52.0% of motivation, also considered moderate.

The evaluation of both the measurement and structural models indicates that the indicators are valid and reliable in measuring the constructs. The structural model's R^2 values show that the constructs can moderately explain the variations in employee performance and motivation. These findings highlight the importance of competence and transformational leadership in influencing employee motivation and performance, with a significant portion of the variance explained by other variables not included in this model. Here is the direct and indirect result for significancy.

Table 4. Direct relationship significancy test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	Result
HR Competency to Employee Performance	0.491	0.477	0.194	2.533	0.012	Significant
HR Competency to Motivation	0.303	0.327	0.139	2.175	0.030	Significant
Transformational Leadership to Employee Performance	0.205	0.163	0.151	1.365	0.173	Non-Significant
Transformational Leadership to Motivation	0.490	0.498	0.179	2.738	0.006	Significant
Motivation to Employee Performance	0.095	0.183	0.196	0.484	0.628	Non-Significant

Source: Data Processed (2024)

The results indicate that while several variable relationships are significant, two are not: transformational leadership to employee performance and motivation to employee performance. Additionally, motivation is not an effective direct intervening variable between competence, transformational leadership, and employee performance due to its insignificance. In the structural model testing, relationships between variables are considered significant if the t-statistic > 1.995 at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Based on the SEM PLS analysis, it was found that the bootstrap results were inconclusive as they did not directly support the hypothesized relationship between motivation as an intervening variable and employee performance. Specifically, the direct effects testing showed that motivation does not significantly influence employee performance, indicating that it may not be suitable as an intervening variable for competence and transformational leadership on employee performance. Both results yielded T-statistics below the critical T-value (<1.995) and P-values above 0.05, suggesting these relationships are indirect and insignificant, possibly due to organizational characteristics within government institutions like DLH that prioritize collective achievements over individual performance.

The study identified that the work environment, which lacks emphasis on personal rewards and incentives, also plays a significant role. In DLH, employees might be more motivated by factors such as job stability, social security benefits, and career certainty rather than individual performance incentives. This diminishes the prominence of intrinsic motivation to enhance performance, thereby limiting the impact of competence and transformational leadership on motivating employees to perform better.

Table 5. Indirect relationship significancy test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	Result
HR Competency to Motivation to Employee Performance	0.199	0.255	0.167	1.329	0.329	Non-Significant
Transformational Leadership to Motivation to Employee Performance	0.292	0.340	0.187	1.611	0.317	Non-Significant

Source: Data Processed (2024)

The rigid and complex bureaucratic processes inherent in government institutions like DLH also emerged as a major hindrance. Excessive bureaucracy often stifles individual

initiatives and innovation, shifting employee focus towards compliance with procedures and regulations rather than achieving optimal outcomes. This bureaucratic environment impedes the development of a high-performance motivation culture, thereby limiting the potential positive effects of implementing transformational leadership and employee competence.

Table 5. Indirect Relationship Significancy Test

Hypotheses	Path from	Path to	Result
H1	HR Competency	Employee Performance	Accepted
H2	Transformational Leadership	Motivation	Accepted
H3	HR Competency	Motivation	Accepted
H4	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Rejected
H5	Motivation	Employee Performance	Rejected
H6	HR Competency	Employee Performance with Motivation as mediator	Rejected
H7	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance with Motivation as mediator	Rejected

Source: Data Processed (2024)

3.2. Discussion

Impact of Competence on Employee Performance. The research confirms a significant positive impact of competence on employee performance, as evidenced by a t-statistic of 2.553 (> 1.995) and a p-value of 0.012 (< 0.05). This statistical finding supports the rejection of H0 and acceptance of H1, indicating that competence plays a crucial role in enhancing employee performance. Competence here encompasses various aspects such as education levels, work experience, technical skills, and soft skills like communication and teamwork abilities. Higher educational attainment provides employees with a strong knowledge foundation, enabling them to handle complex tasks effectively. Work experience offers practical insights and the ability to navigate diverse work challenges. Adequate technical skills ensure precise task execution, while soft skills facilitate effective communication and collaborative teamwork, essential in achieving collective goals (Boyatzis, 1982).

Influence of Transformational Leadership on Motivation. The study also reveals a significant positive influence of transformational leadership on motivation, with a t-statistic of 2.738 (> 1.995) and a p-value of 0.006 (< 0.05). This finding underscores the role of inspirational leadership in motivating employees intrinsically and extrinsically. Transformational leaders inspire a sense of purpose and empowerment among employees by articulating clear visions and goals. They encourage intellectual stimulation and support creativity, fostering intrinsic motivation through recognition and meaningful feedback (Nurhuda, et al., 2019).

Competence's Impact on Motivation. Competence demonstrates a direct and significant positive impact on motivation, supported by a t-statistic of 2.175 (> 1.995) and a p-value of 0.039 (< 0.05). This finding indicates that employees' perceived competence levels, including knowledge, skills, and abilities, contribute significantly to their motivation. High competence instills confidence in employees, making their work meaningful and achievable, thereby enhancing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The study suggests that investments in enhancing competence through training and development initiatives positively influence employees' motivation (Ayu Wahyuni, Budiono Budiono, 2022).

Transformational Leadership's Influence on Employee Performance. Contrary to expectations, the research finds that transformational leadership does not significantly influence employee performance, with a t-statistic of 1.365 (< 1.995) and a p-value of 0.173 (> 0.05). This lack of significance may stem from organizational characteristics within DLH, where traditional hierarchical structures and limited direct recognition may mitigate the

impact of transformational leadership. Additionally, varying educational backgrounds and perceptions among employees about the applicability of idealistic leadership styles could diminish its perceived effectiveness (Agustine Paresti, 2021).

Motivation's Impact on Employee Performance. The study concludes that motivation does not significantly influence employee performance, with a t-statistic of 0.484 (< 1.995) and a p-value of 0.63 (> 0.05). This finding suggests that in the context of DLH, motivations intrinsic and extrinsic do not strongly correlate with actual job performance. Factors such as bureaucratic structures, insufficient performance incentives, and limited career development opportunities may undermine the motivational impact on employee performance within government organizations (Meta Lianasari, Slamet Ahmadi, 2022).

The research confirms a significant positive impact of competence on employee performance, demonstrated by a t-statistic of 2.553 and a p-value of 0.012. This statistically significant finding supports the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating that competence is crucial in enhancing employee performance. Competence, as measured in this study, includes education levels, work experience, technical skills, and soft skills such as communication and teamwork abilities. Employees with higher educational attainment possess a robust knowledge foundation, enabling them to handle complex tasks more effectively. Additionally, work experience provides practical insights, helping employees navigate various work challenges. Adequate technical skills ensure precise task execution, while soft skills facilitate effective communication and collaborative teamwork, both essential for achieving collective goals.

The study also highlights a significant positive influence of transformational leadership on employee motivation, evidenced by a t-statistic of 2.738 and a p-value of 0.006. This finding emphasizes the importance of inspirational leadership in motivating employees both intrinsically and extrinsically. Transformational leaders foster a sense of purpose and empowerment by articulating clear visions and goals. They encourage intellectual stimulation and support creativity, enhancing intrinsic motivation through recognition and meaningful feedback. However, contrary to expectations, the research finds that transformational leadership does not significantly influence employee performance, with a t-statistic of 1.365 and a p-value of 0.173. This lack of significance may be attributed to organizational characteristics within DLH, such as traditional hierarchical structures and limited direct recognition, which could mitigate the impact of transformational leadership.

Furthermore, the study reveals that competence has a direct and significant positive impact on motivation, with a t-statistic of 2.175 and a p-value of 0.039. Employees' perceived competence levels, including their knowledge, skills, and abilities, contribute significantly to their motivation. High competence instills confidence in employees, making their work more meaningful and achievable, thereby enhancing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Conversely, the research concludes that motivation does not significantly influence employee performance, as indicated by a t-statistic of 0.484 and a p-value of 0.63. This finding suggests that in the context of DLH, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations do not strongly correlate with actual job performance. Bureaucratic structures, insufficient performance incentives, and limited career development opportunities may undermine the impact of motivation on employee performance within government organizations.

4. CONCLUSION

From the research, the problem is to research the impact of each variable, and the results is that motivation is not quite related to employee performance in this case, so, several hypotheses regarding the mediation is rejected. It is concluded that competency impacted motivation and performance, transformational impacted motivation, but not performance, and motivation did not impact performance. The study confirms that competency positively and significantly influences employee performance. This implies that with adequate competencies, employees in the Department of Environmental Management

(DLH) can effectively carry out their duties, thereby enhancing their performance. Similarly, transformational leadership significantly affects employee motivation within DLH, fostering a conducive work environment and driving employees to fulfill organizational goals. While competency and transformational leadership exhibit significant impacts on employee performance and motivation, respectively, some nuances such as the limited mediation effect of motivation on these relationships highlight areas for further organizational development, particularly in enhancing training systems and empowering employees in decision-making processes. These findings provide valuable insights for improving organizational practices within DLH to optimize employee performance and motivation effectively

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