



LEADERSHIP STYLE, VILLAGE APPARATUS COMPETENCE, AND VILLAGE GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN KUNINGAN REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of leadership style and village apparatus competence on village government performance, as well as the mediating role of organizational commitment. The study is motivated by the increasing demand for effective, accountable, and responsive village governance in supporting rural development and public service delivery. Despite substantial fiscal decentralization and village autonomy, variations in village government performance remain a critical challenge, highlighting the importance of leadership, competence, and organizational commitment as key determinants of organizational effectiveness. A causal quantitative approach was employed using data collected from 361 village apparatus members across 32 sub-districts in Kuningan Regency through proportionate random sampling. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The findings indicate that leadership style and village apparatus competence significantly enhance village government performance. Leadership style has a positive effect on performance ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < 0.001$), while competence also contributes positively ($\beta = 0.286$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, both variables significantly strengthen organizational commitment, which in turn positively influences performance ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < 0.001$). Organizational commitment was found to partially mediate the relationships between leadership style and performance ($\beta = 0.182$, $p < 0.001$) as well as competence and performance ($\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.001$). The structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power, accounting for 86.8% of the variance in village government performance ($R^2 = 0.868$). This study contributes to the literature on public sector and village governance by identifying organizational commitment as a crucial mechanism through which leadership and competence improve performance outcomes. The findings suggest that efforts to strengthen village governance should integrate leadership development, competency enhancement, and organizational commitment-building initiatives to achieve sustainable improvements in governance quality, accountability, and public service effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Village government plays a strategic role in delivering public services, implementing development programs, and improving community welfare at the grassroots level. In Indonesia, the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages has granted broader authority and financial resources to villages, thereby increasing expectations for accountable, transparent, effective, and responsive governance. The success of village autonomy largely depends on the ability of village apparatus to perform their duties efficiently and provide quality public services. Consequently, improving village apparatus performance has become an important issue in both public administration and rural development studies.

Despite various government initiatives to strengthen village governance, performance challenges remain evident in many regions. Data from the Department of Community and Village Empowerment (DPMD) of Kuningan Regency for the period 2023–2025 indicate a declining trend across several key

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performance indicators of village apparatus. The quality of work decreased from 88 to 74, output quantity from 92 to 79, timeliness from 85 to 70, teamwork from 90 to 78, budget efficiency from 75 to 68, and supervision intensity from 95 to 81. These findings suggest that village governments are facing increasing difficulties in maintaining optimal organizational performance. Furthermore, a preliminary survey involving 35 community respondents revealed that 61% perceived the performance of village apparatus as not yet optimal, indicating a gap between public expectations and actual service delivery.

Previous studies have identified numerous factors affecting employee and organizational performance in the public sector. Among these factors, leadership style, competence, and organizational commitment are frequently recognized as critical determinants. Leadership style is considered important because village heads and administrative leaders directly influence employee motivation, work behavior, coordination, and organizational effectiveness. Competence is equally essential because village apparatus are increasingly required to manage complex administrative, financial, and development responsibilities. Meanwhile, organizational commitment represents the psychological attachment of employees to their organization, which can encourage stronger dedication, responsibility, and performance.

Although these variables have been widely examined, previous findings remain inconclusive. Several studies reported that leadership style and competence significantly improve organizational performance (Suryadi, 2020; Mulyana, 2021), while other studies found weak, inconsistent, or statistically insignificant relationships (Ardiyansah & Elmi, 2024). These inconsistencies indicate that the relationship between leadership, competence, and performance may involve additional explanatory mechanisms. One potential mechanism is organizational commitment, which may serve as an intervening variable linking leadership and competence to performance outcomes.

However, studies examining organizational commitment as a mediating variable in village government settings remain limited. Most previous research has focused on direct relationships among leadership, competence, and performance, particularly in corporate organizations or general public institutions. Empirical evidence investigating how organizational commitment mediates these relationships within village governments is still scarce, especially in the context of Indonesian villages. This limitation constitutes the primary research gap addressed in the present study.

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of leadership style, competence, and organizational commitment into a comprehensive mediation model tested simultaneously within the context of village government in Kuningan Regency. By examining both direct and indirect effects, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing village apparatus performance and to enrich the literature on public sector and village governance.

This study is grounded in several theoretical perspectives. General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968; Skyttner, 2020) explains that organizational performance results from interactions among interconnected organizational subsystems. Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985; Avolio, 1994) suggests that leaders can improve employee performance through inspirational motivation and individualized consideration. The Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) conceptualizes commitment as affective, continuance, and normative attachment to the organization. Competency Framework Theory (Spencer & Spencer, 1993) emphasizes that knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal characteristics determine work effectiveness, while Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) views competence as a strategic investment that enhances organizational productivity.

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical findings, this study proposes seven hypotheses: H1: Leadership style positively and significantly affects village apparatus performance; H2: Competence positively and significantly affects village apparatus performance; H3: Leadership style positively affects organizational commitment; H4: Competence positively affects organizational commitment; H5: Organizational commitment positively affects village apparatus performance; H6: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between leadership style and performance; and H7: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between competence and performance.

2. METHODS

This study employed a causal research design with a quantitative-verificative approach to examine the direct and indirect relationships among leadership style, competence, organizational commitment, and village government performance. The study was conducted in Kuningan Regency, West Java, Indonesia, which consists of 32 sub-districts and 376 villages. The research population comprised all village apparatus serving in village governments throughout Kuningan Regency. Considering the large population size and geographical distribution, a sample of 361 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. To ensure proportional representation, respondents were selected through proportionate random sampling, whereby the number of respondents from each sub-district was adjusted according to the number of village apparatus in the respective area.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a ten-point rating scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 10 ("strongly agree"). The use of a ten-point scale was intended to increase response variability and improve measurement sensitivity.

Four latent variables were examined in this study:

- a. **Leadership Style (X1)**, adapted from Northouse (2022), measured through four indicators: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.
- b. **Competence (X2)**, adapted from Spencer and Spencer (1993), measured through four indicators: knowledge, skills, self-concept and attitudes, and work motivation.
- c. **Organizational Commitment (Z)**, based on Meyer and Allen (1991), measured through three indicators: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.
- d. **Village Government Performance (Y)**, adapted from Moeheriono (2014), measured through six indicators: work quality, work quantity, timeliness, teamwork, budget efficiency, and supervision effectiveness.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to assess construct validity and reliability. Convergent validity was examined using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with recommended thresholds of loading > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 . Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings. Reliability was evaluated through Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability.

The structural model (inner model) was subsequently assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. Mediation effects were examined using indirect effect analysis and Upsilon V statistics to determine the magnitude of mediation.

The SEM-PLS approach was selected for several reasons. First, the study aimed to simultaneously examine multiple direct and indirect relationships among latent variables. Second, SEM-PLS is suitable for predictive and theory-development research. Third, the method is robust when dealing with complex mediation models and does not require strict multivariate normality assumptions. Therefore, SEM-PLS was considered the most appropriate analytical technique for investigating the proposed research model.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

All variables were in the medium category (60.11%–60.31% on continuum analysis). The lowest indicators were: motivation and direction giving (GK4), communication ability (KM4), organizational advancement focus (KO3), and inter-employee cooperation (KP5). This indicates significant room for improvement in all aspects.

3.2 Measurement Model

All indicators had loading factors above 0.70 (Leadership Style: 0.828–0.864; Competence: 0.838–0.872; Organizational Commitment: 0.870–0.878; Performance: 0.813–0.835). AVE values exceeded 0.50 for all constructs (0.684–0.765). HTMT values were all below 0.90 (0.786–0.845). Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability were all above 0.70. VIF values were all below 5.

Table 1. Outer Model Evaluation Results

Variable	Loading	AVE	CR (p_c)	Alpha	VIF	Status
Leadership Style	0.828–0.864	0.724	>0.70	>.70	<5	Valid & Reliable
Competence	0.838–0.872	0.739	>0.70	>.70	<5	Valid & Reliable
Org. Commitment (Z)	0.870–0.878	0.765	>0.70	>.70	<5	Valid & Reliable
Performance (Y)	0.813–0.835	0.684	>0.70	>.70	<5	Valid & Reliable

3.3 Structural Model

R^2 for Performance = 0.868 (adjusted 0.867): substantial explanatory power. R^2 for Organizational Commitment = 0.767 (adjusted 0.766): substantial. Q^2 predict values were positive (Performance: 0.835; Commitment: 0.764). SRMR = 0.042 (<0.08), NFI = 0.903 (>0.90): excellent model fit.

3.4 Hypothesis Testing

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Path	β	t-stat	p-value	f ²	Decision
H1	Leadership→Performance	0.332	7.572	<0.001	0.172 (Med)	Accepted
H2	Competence→Performance	0.286	6.933	<0.001	0.137 (Low-Med)	Accepted
H3	Leadership→Org.Commit.	0.499	10.620	<0.001	0.283 (Med-High)	Accepted
H4	Competence→Org.Commit.	0.409	8.636	<0.001	0.191 (Med)	Accepted
H5	Org.Commit.→Performance	0.365	9.550	<0.001	0.234 (Med)	Accepted
H6	Leadership→CommitM.→Perf (indirect)	0.182*	7.198	<0.001	High (≥ 0.175)	Accepted
H7	Competence→CommitM.→Perf (indirect)	0.149*	6.346	<0.001	Med (≥ 0.075)	Accepted

*indirect effect coefficient (bootstrapping + Upsilon V)

Discussion

The findings reveal that leadership style has a positive and significant effect on village government performance ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. This result is consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985) and the perspective of Northouse (2022), which suggest that leaders who provide clear direction, motivation, and support are more likely to encourage higher levels of employee performance. In the context of village governance, leadership plays a crucial role in coordinating administrative activities, mobilizing village apparatus, and ensuring the successful implementation of development programs and public services. Effective leaders are able to foster cooperation, strengthen accountability, and create a shared commitment toward organizational goals. However, the descriptive analysis indicates that leadership style remains at a moderate level (60.24%), with motivation and direction-giving identified as the weakest indicator. This finding suggests that village leaders still need to strengthen their ability to inspire, guide, and motivate village apparatus to achieve higher levels of performance.

Competence was also found to positively and significantly affect village government performance ($\beta = 0.286$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. This finding aligns with the Competency Framework proposed by Spencer and Spencer (1993) and Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which emphasize that knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal capabilities are essential determinants of work effectiveness. Village apparatus are increasingly required to manage administrative, financial, and developmental responsibilities in a professional manner. Therefore, higher competence enables them to perform tasks more efficiently, solve problems effectively, and provide better public services. Nevertheless, descriptive findings indicate that competence is also only at a moderate level, with communication ability emerging as the weakest indicator. This suggests that communication and public service skills remain areas requiring

improvement, particularly because village apparatus frequently interact with citizens, stakeholders, and development partners.

The results further demonstrate that leadership style significantly influences organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.499$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. This indicates that transformational leadership behaviors contribute substantially to strengthening employees' emotional attachment and loyalty to the organization. Leaders who communicate a clear vision, provide recognition, and involve employees in organizational processes create a positive work environment that encourages stronger commitment. In village government organizations, such leadership practices help cultivate a sense of belonging and collective responsibility among village apparatus.

Similarly, competence has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.409$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. Village apparatus who possess adequate knowledge and skills tend to feel more confident and capable in performing their duties. This sense of competence enhances job satisfaction and strengthens employees' identification with organizational goals. Consequently, investments in competency development not only improve technical performance but also foster stronger affective and normative commitment toward the organization.

Organizational commitment itself was found to positively and significantly influence village government performance ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H5. This finding is consistent with the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and the work of Robbins and Judge (2019), which emphasize that committed employees are more likely to demonstrate dedication, persistence, and responsibility in carrying out their tasks. In the context of village governance, committed apparatus are more willing to contribute beyond minimum job requirements, cooperate with colleagues, and prioritize public interests in delivering services and implementing development programs.

The most important finding of this study concerns the mediating role of organizational commitment. The results show that organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between leadership style and performance (indirect $\beta = 0.182$, $p < 0.001$) as well as the relationship between competence and performance (indirect $\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H6 and H7. These findings confirm that organizational commitment serves as a psychological bridge through which leadership and competence translate into improved performance outcomes. Effective leadership and strong competencies may enhance employee capabilities and motivation; however, their impact on performance becomes stronger when employees develop a deeper commitment to the organization. Without such commitment, the benefits of leadership and competence may not be fully transformed into productive work behaviors and sustainable performance improvements.

Furthermore, the high explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.868$) indicates that leadership style, competence, and organizational commitment collectively explain a substantial proportion of village government performance. This finding supports General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968), which argues that organizational effectiveness is the result of interactions among interconnected subsystems. Leadership, competence, and commitment function as mutually reinforcing elements that jointly determine organizational outcomes.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that improving village government performance requires a comprehensive strategy. Local governments should not only strengthen leadership capacity and technical competencies through training and development programs but also cultivate organizational commitment by creating supportive work environments, recognizing employee contributions, and promoting shared organizational values. Such an integrated approach is essential for enhancing governance quality, accountability, and public service effectiveness at the village level.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of leadership style and competence on village government performance, as well as the mediating role of organizational commitment among village apparatus in Kuningan Regency. Based on the SEM-PLS analysis of 361 respondents, all seven proposed hypotheses were supported. The findings demonstrate that leadership style and competence significantly enhance village

government performance, both directly and indirectly through organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was also found to play a crucial mediating role, indicating that the positive effects of leadership and competence on performance become stronger when village apparatus develop a higher level of commitment to their organization.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the public administration and village governance literature by integrating leadership style, competence, and organizational commitment into a comprehensive mediation model. The findings extend the application of Transformational Leadership Theory, Human Capital Theory, and the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment within the specific context of Indonesian village governance. Furthermore, the study helps address inconsistencies in previous empirical findings by demonstrating the strategic role of organizational commitment as a mechanism linking leadership and competence to performance outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest several policy implications for local governments and village administrations. First, village heads should strengthen transformational leadership practices by improving motivational skills, communication, coaching, and regular evaluative meetings with village apparatus. Second, local governments should implement continuous capacity-building programs focusing on technical, managerial, and communication competencies to improve the effectiveness of public service delivery. Third, organizational commitment should be strengthened through participatory decision-making processes, recognition and reward systems, transparent career development opportunities, and the cultivation of a supportive organizational culture. Fourth, district governments may consider developing more systematic performance evaluation and monitoring systems to ensure that improvements in leadership, competence, and commitment are translated into sustainable organizational performance.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias, while the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time. In addition, the study was conducted exclusively in Kuningan Regency, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different administrative and socio-cultural characteristics. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal designs, incorporate objective performance indicators, and expand the geographical scope of investigation. Further studies may also explore additional variables, such as organizational culture, employee engagement, job satisfaction, digital governance capabilities, or public service innovation, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing village government performance.

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