

In this context, the performance of PNS at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province becomes highly significant. The Secretariat consists of eight bureaus that serve as technical and administrative support to the Governor. The performance of these bureaus directly influences the success of regional development and the implementation of local government policies. Achieving the Governor's vision, "To realize a prosperous, competitive, and cultured Riau Islands," relies heavily on the competence and motivation of its civil servants.

Leadership has long been recognized as a key factor influencing employee performance. Among various leadership styles, transformational leadership is considered the most effective in public institutions, where innovation and accountability are often lacking. Transformational leaders inspire employees by articulating a compelling vision, motivating them to exceed expectations, and fostering adaptability in a dynamic environment. In the bureaucratic setting of the Riau Islands Provincial Secretariat, transformational leadership is expected to play a crucial role in enhancing employee commitment and performance.

Besides leadership, competence is a decisive determinant of employee performance. Competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that directly impact how tasks are performed. In government institutions, however, there remains a mismatch between educational background and job responsibilities. Many civil servants lack adequate training or technical skills, especially in adapting to digital governance systems. It creates performance gaps and dependency on more capable colleagues, ultimately reducing organizational efficiency.

The importance of competence in civil service is reinforced by McClelland's theory, which emphasizes that competence is a fundamental characteristic predicting performance. For PNS, competence encompasses formal education, technical expertise, and relevant work experience. Without sufficient competence, civil servants are unable to execute tasks effectively, which undermines institutional performance and public trust in government institutions.

The work environment also plays a vital role in influencing performance. A conducive physical environment, including adequate office facilities, equipment, and workspaces, enables employees to perform efficiently. Conversely, limited resources, such as insufficient computers and printers, as observed in the Riau Islands Secretariat, hinder productivity by forcing staff to take turns completing tasks. This inefficiency not only delays service delivery but also negatively impacts employee morale.

Non-physical aspects of the work environment, such as communication, teamwork, and managerial support, are equally significant. A lack of attention, recognition, and guidance from leaders reduces motivation and engagement among employees. Civil servants generally seek acknowledgment and direction to improve their work quality. When such elements are absent, employees become less enthusiastic and less accountable in carrying out their duties.

Work motivation emerges as a critical intervening variable that connects leadership, competence, and work environment to performance. Motivation drives employees to exert effort and persist in achieving organizational goals. In public institutions, motivation can be both intrinsic, derived from dedication and professionalism, and extrinsic, driven by recognition, promotion, and career advancement. Without motivation, even competent employees may fail to deliver optimal performance.

Unfortunately, motivation among civil servants at the Riau Islands Secretariat has not always been optimal. Limited opportunities for career promotion and inadequate recognition from leaders diminish enthusiasm. Data from 2022–2024 reveal that only a small number of employees received promotions, both in structural and functional positions. Such stagnation discourages employees, weakening their drive to perform at higher levels.



Another critical factor influencing performance is the implementation of performance appraisal systems. The Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 6/2022 emphasizes that performance management must enhance employee quality, strengthen roles, and foster collaboration. However, evaluation reports indicate that performance accountability scores in the Riau Islands Secretariat remain below expectations. Inconsistent use of performance data as the basis for appraisal further hampers improvement efforts.

Previous studies consistently highlight the significance of transformational leadership, competence, and work environment in shaping employee performance. However, empirical findings suggest that motivation plays a mediating role in strengthening these relationships. Without motivation, the influence of leadership, competence, and work environment on performance becomes less effective. It underscores the importance of studying work motivation as an intervening variable within the civil service context.

The case of the Riau Islands Secretariat illustrates the interconnected challenges of leadership gaps, limited competence, inadequate work environments, and weak motivation. These issues collectively hinder civil servants from achieving optimal performance, which in turn affects the overall effectiveness of regional governance. Understanding how these variables interact is essential for developing strategies to improve organizational outcomes and public trust.

Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze the effect of transformational leadership, competence, and work environment on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of Riau Islands Province, with work motivation as an intervening variable. This research is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on public sector HR management and by providing recommendations for policymakers in enhancing governance, accountability, and service delivery in regional government institutions.

METHODS

This study employs a causal associative research design with a quantitative approach to examine the influence of transformational leadership, competence, and work environment on civil servants' (PNS) performance with work motivation as an intervening variable. The research was conducted at the Regional Secretariat of Riau Islands Province from November 2024 to July 2025. The population consisted of 220 civil servants with a minimum of four years of service, distributed across eight bureaus. Using the Yamane formula with a 5% margin of error, the sample size was determined to be 142 respondents, selected through purposive and simple random sampling techniques to ensure proportional representation from each bureau. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documentation, with measurement instruments using a Likert scale for all variables. The analytical method employed was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS, which allowed testing of direct and indirect relationships among variables.

Table 1. Respondent Distribution Table

No	Bureau Name	Population	Calculation	Sample
1.	Governance and Regional Autonomy	18	$18/220 \times 142$	12
2.	Public Welfare	15	$15/220 \times 142$	10
3.	Legal Affairs	18	$18/220 \times 142$	12
4.	Economy and Development	19	$19/220 \times 142$	12
5.	Procurement of Goods and Services	51	$51/220 \times 142$	33
6.	Organization	17	$17/220 \times 142$	11
7.	General Affairs	52	$52/220 \times 142$	33
8.	Administrative Leadership	30	$30/220 \times 142$	19



Total	220	142
Source: Processed Data by Author, (2025)		

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis Testing: Direct Effect. Hypothesis testing for the direct effect between variables was carried out by examining the path coefficient values and the significance values (p-value) obtained through the bootstrapping analysis in SmartPLS 3.0. An effect is considered significant if the p-value < 0.05 and the t-statistic > 1.96.

Table 2. Results of Hypothesis Testing for Direct Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
KPM -> KIN	,665	,669	,067	9,902	,000
KPM -> MOT	,725	,722	,036	20,342	,000
KOM -> KIN	,078	,080	,026	2,929	,004
KOM -> MOT	,177	,181	,035	5,019	,000
LING -> KIN	-,043	-,041	,029	1,475	,141
LING -> MOT	,123	,122	,043	2,826	,005
MOT -> KIN	,305	,298	,087	3,522	,000

Source: Processed data using SmartPLS (2025)

Based on the results of the direct effect hypothesis testing obtained through data analysis using SmartPLS:

1. Effect of Transformational Leadership on Performance. The results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants (PNS) at the Regional Secretariat of Riau Islands Province. The Original Sample (O) value of 0.665 indicates a strong positive influence. With a T-statistic of 9.902 and a p-value of 0.000, the findings confirm that transformational leadership positively and significantly influences PNS performance.
2. Effect of Competence on Performance. The results indicate that competence has a positive and significant effect on PNS performance. The Original Sample (O) value of 0.078 indicates a positive influence. With a T Statistic of 2.929 and a P Value of 0.004, competence is confirmed to have a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants.
3. Effect of Work Environment on Performance. The results show that the work environment has an effect, but it is not significant on PNS performance. The Original Sample (O) value is -0.043, with a T Statistic of 1.475 and a P Value of 0.141. It shows that the work environment does not significantly influence civil servants' performance.
4. Effect of Transformational Leadership on Motivation. The results reveal that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on civil servants' motivation. The Original Sample (O) value of 0.725 indicates a very strong positive effect. With a T Statistic of 20.342 and a P Value of 0.000, it is clear that transformational leadership significantly influences motivation.
5. Effect of Competence on Motivation. The results indicate that competence has a positive and significant effect on civil servants' motivation. The Original Sample (O) value is 0.177, with a T Statistic of 5.019 and a P Value of 0.000. It demonstrates that competence positively and significantly influences motivation.



6. Effect of Work Environment on Motivation. The results show that the work environment has a positive and significant effect on motivation. The Original Sample (O) value of 0.123 indicates a positive influence. With a T Statistic of 2.826 and a P Value of 0.005, the work environment significantly influences motivation.
7. Effect of Motivation on Performance. The results reveal that motivation has a positive and significant effect on PNS performance. The Original Sample (O) value is 0.305, with a T Statistic of 3.522 and a P Value of 0.000. It indicates that motivation significantly influences performance.

Hypothesis Testing: Indirect Effect (Intervening Effect). Hypothesis testing of indirect effects aims to determine whether there is a mediating effect of the intervening variable in the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 3. Results of Hypothesis Testing for Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/ STDEV)	P Values
KPM -> MOT -> KIN	,221	,214	,063	3,530	,000
KOM -> MOT -> KIN	,054	,053	,018	2,990	,003
LING -> MOT -> KIN	,038	,037	,019	1,998	,046

Source: Processed data using SmartPLS (2025)

The following is a discussion of the results of the Hypothesis Testing for Indirect Effect (Intervening Effect):

1. Effect of Transformational Leadership on Performance through Motivation. The results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on performance through motivation for civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of Riau Islands Province. The Original Sample (O) value is 0.221, with a T Statistic of 3.530 and a P Value of 0.000. It demonstrates that motivation significantly mediates the influence of transformational leadership on performance. In other words, transformational leadership not only directly affects performance but also effectively enhances civil servants' performance by first increasing their motivation.
2. Effect of Competence on Performance through Motivation. The results show that competence has a positive and significant effect on performance through motivation. The Original Sample (O) value is 0.054, with a T Statistic of 2.990 and a P Value of 0.003. It indicates that motivation significantly mediates the effect of competence on performance. Thus, improving the competence of civil servants contributes to better performance, primarily because it enhances their motivation.
3. Effect of Work Environment on Performance through Motivation. The results reveal that the work environment does not have a significant direct effect on performance but does have a significant indirect effect through motivation. The Original Sample (O) value is 0.038, with a T Statistic of 1.998 and a P Value of 0.046. Although the direct effect of the work environment on performance is not significant, the work environment still influences performance indirectly by improving motivation.

Coefficient of Determination (R-Square). The coefficient of determination (R-Square) is a statistical measure that shows how much of the variability in the dependent variable can be



The Effect of Competence on the Performance of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. The results of hypothesis testing show that Competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. It means that civil servants who possess the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for their tasks tend to achieve higher performance. Competence enhancement can be seen through participation in higher formal education programs and involvement in various training and development programs, both internal and external. For example, technical training related to procurement management, mastery of digital government applications, or improved communication and coordination skills across institutions. Civil servants who continuously develop their competence are more adaptive to policy changes, capable of solving problems more effectively, and able to provide higher-quality public services to the community of the Riau Islands Province.

These findings align with prior studies by Wulandari and Riyadi (2020), which found that competence has a strong and positive relationship with employee performance. It supports the argument that investing in civil servants' competence is an effective strategy for improving their performance within the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.

The Effect of Work Environment on the Performance of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. The results of hypothesis testing indicate that the Work Environment does not have a statistically significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. Changes or conditions in the work environment are not the main factor directly influencing civil servants' performance. The situation at the Regional Secretariat may indicate that, even if the physical or non-physical work environment is adequate or not extreme, these factors do not directly drive performance improvement or decline. It is possible that civil servants have adapted to the existing work conditions, or that other factors such as personal competence, intrinsic motivation, or leadership play a more dominant role in determining work output. For example, a stable work atmosphere or harmonious relationships with colleagues may no longer provide significant additional motivation. Employees tend to avoid conflicts and strive to maintain positive relationships.

This finding is similar to the study by Putri and Supriyanto (2020), which found that the work environment does not always have a direct significant impact on employee performance if other factors are more dominant. From a theoretical perspective, this can be linked to John Locke's Tabula Rasa theory, which suggests that individuals are born as blank slates, and experiences shape their development. In this context, civil servants' performance is shaped more by acquired experiences, learning, and personal development rather than the immediate work environment. Thus, the main driver of performance at the Regional Secretariat may lie outside the direct influence of the work environment.

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on the Motivation of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. The results of hypothesis testing indicate that Transformational Leadership has a positive and significant effect on the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat. It shows that enhancing transformational leadership within the Secretariat directly impacts the improvement of civil servants' motivation. The more effective leaders are in inspiring, providing intellectual stimulation, and attending to the individual needs of employees, the higher the work motivation experienced by civil servants. By setting high but realistic performance standards and encouraging innovation and creativity, leaders can foster a



desire among PNS to learn and grow continuously. It is not merely about meeting targets but about creating a culture where civil servants feel challenged to exceed their limits, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. High levels of enthusiasm and dedication from civil servants significantly support the achievement of regional government visions and missions.

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Suryani and Susanti (2021), which found that transformational leadership significantly increases employee motivation. It underscores the importance of transformational leadership in maintaining high motivation levels among civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.

The Effect of Competence on the Motivation of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. The results of hypothesis testing show that Competence has a positive and significant effect on the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat. In other words, when civil servants are confident in their abilities and expertise, their drive to achieve and perform optimally increases. At the Regional Secretariat, this is evident in how competent civil servants tend to demonstrate initiative, proactively seek solutions, and possess high self-confidence in completing tasks. When civil servants master their field, they not only feel capable but are also motivated to take on new challenges, contribute more significantly, and achieve more ambitious targets. It can create a more dynamic work environment where civil servants learn from and are motivated by the successes of their competent colleagues.

These findings are in line with prior research by Fitriani and Wijayanto (2021), which found that competence has a significant effect on employee work motivation. It reinforces the argument that enhancing competence is a key factor in boosting the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.

The Effect of Work Environment on the Motivation of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. The results of hypothesis testing indicate that the Work Environment has a positive and significant effect on the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. It means that aspects such as office atmosphere, relationships among colleagues, availability of facilities, and support from superiors play an important role in fostering civil servants' work enthusiasm. A positive work environment, where open communication and team support are prioritized, can make civil servants feel more valued and psychologically safe. For example, a clean and organized workspace, adequate work-support tools, and positive interactions with colleagues and supervisors can reduce stress and increase job satisfaction. When civil servants feel comfortable and supported by their surroundings, they are more likely to be motivated to come to work and perform at their best.

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Indrasari and Mustika (2020), which found that a good work environment significantly enhances employee motivation. It reinforces the argument that creating a conducive work environment is an effective strategy to increase civil servants' motivation at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.

The Effect of Motivation on the Performance of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province. The results of hypothesis testing indicate that Motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat. It suggests that both internal and external factors forming civil servants' motivation are crucial in achieving work targets and quality public service. Motivated civil servants tend to be more enthusiastic in performing tasks, show greater initiative, and persevere in facing challenges. For



instance, motivation can manifest in the desire to excel, a sense of responsibility toward public service, or satisfaction with the work performed. When civil servants have strong motivation, they do not merely complete tasks but strive to deliver their best, seek innovative solutions, and improve work efficiency, ultimately enhancing bureaucratic quality and service delivery to the Riau Islands community.

These findings are consistent with prior studies by Wirawan and Supriyono (2020), which found that work motivation has a strong impact on improving employee performance. It underscores the importance of motivation in driving civil servants' performance at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.

The Indirect Effect of Transformational Leadership on the Performance of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province through Motivation as an Intervening Variable. The results indicate that Transformational Leadership positively and significantly affects performance through the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat. It means that transformational leadership not only directly enhances performance but also effectively drives civil servants' performance by first increasing their motivation. Transformational leaders do not merely provide direction or inspiration directly; they successfully foster enthusiasm and work passion (motivation) among civil servants. This motivation serves as a strong mediator that encourages civil servants to achieve higher performance. For example, a transformational leader may set a clear vision, provide personal support, and encourage innovation. These actions foster ownership, commitment, and intrinsic motivation in civil servants, which ultimately manifest in improved work quality and productivity.

These findings align with prior studies by Wijaya and Sutanto (2021), which found that employee motivation significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. It strengthens the understanding that to optimally improve civil servants' performance at the Regional Secretariat, building strong motivation through transformational leadership is a highly effective strategy.

The Indirect Effect of Competence on the Performance of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province through Motivation as an Intervening Variable. The results indicate that Competence positively and significantly affects performance through civil servants' motivation at the Regional Secretariat. Motivation acts as a significant mediating variable explaining how civil servants' competence influences their performance. In other words, enhancing competence not only directly contributes to performance but also effectively improves civil servants' performance by first increasing their motivation. When a civil servant feels more competent in their work, their confidence and job satisfaction increase, which in turn triggers higher motivation. This motivation then serves as a "bridge" connecting enhanced competence to better performance outcomes. For instance, a civil servant who has completed training and feels more proficient in digital archiving systems will be more motivated to apply their knowledge and achieve higher efficiency.

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Setiawan and Hidayat (2020), which found that work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between competence and employee performance. It reinforces the understanding that to optimally improve civil servants' performance at the Regional Secretariat, enhancing competence that triggers motivation is a highly effective strategy.



The Indirect Effect of Work Environment on the Performance of Civil Servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province through Motivation as an Intervening Variable.

The results indicate that the Work Environment has a statistically significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat. Although the Work Environment may not directly correlate strongly with performance, it can indirectly influence performance by enhancing motivation. The motivational effect arising from the work environment may play a greater role in maintaining morale and preventing demotivation rather than serving as a primary driver of productivity or innovation. For example, a comfortable work environment can make civil servants feel at ease and enjoy their work, but it does not automatically make them more proactive or achieve performance far beyond the standard. Other factors may play a more dominant role in translating motivation into measurable performance improvement.

These findings are consistent with Ayu (2021), who reported that motivation is always a significant or dominant mediator between work environment and performance. It further emphasizes that at the Regional Secretariat, the pathway of work environment influence on performance through motivation may not be the most dominant mechanism, and management should consider other stronger influence pathways to enhance employee performance effectively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the influence of transformational leadership, competence, work environment, and motivation on the performance of civil servants (PNS) at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
2. Competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
3. The work environment has an insignificant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
4. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
5. Competence has a positive and significant effect on the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
6. The work environment has a positive and significant effect on the motivation of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
7. Motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
8. Motivation, as an intervening variable, has a positive and significant effect in mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
9. Motivation, as an intervening variable, has a positive and significant effect in mediating the relationship between competence and the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.
10. Motivation, as an intervening variable, has a positive and significant effect in mediating the relationship between work environment and the performance of civil servants at the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province.

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