

## Work Motivation Role in Mediating Strategic Leadership Style and Cognitive Behavior Impact on the Performance of The Aceh Provincial Education Department

Rachmadi<sup>1\*</sup>, Said Musnadi<sup>2</sup>, Syafruddin Chan<sup>3</sup>

Management Department, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia

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### Abstract

This study investigates the influence of strategic leadership styles and cognitive behavior on work motivation and organizational performance within the Aceh Provincial Education Department. The research involved a sample of 152 employees, selected through proportional stratified random sampling from a population of 815 civil servants. Data was collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire, and the analysis employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results reveal that a strategic leadership style has both a direct and indirect positive impact on organizational performance, with work motivation serving as a partial mediator. Similarly, cognitive behavior exhibits a direct and indirect positive effect on organizational performance, also partially mediated by work motivation. These findings underscore the significant role of antecedent variables within the model, suggesting that fostering strategic leadership and enhancing cognitive behavior among employees can substantially boost motivation and, in turn, improve organizational performance.

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership, Work Motivation, Cognitive Behavior, Organizational Performance, Public Sector Management

### 1. Introduction

Organizational performance is a vital indicator of an organization's effectiveness, often assessed by comparing actual outputs with intended outcomes or goals. This performance reflects the success or fulfillment of the organization upon the completion of a program or project. As highlighted by Chandler and Hanks (2003), organizational performance can be understood in terms of growth and survival. Leaders assess and manage organizational performance to optimize asset utilization, enhance the delivery of customer value, and increase organizational knowledge, all of which contribute to shaping the organization's reputation. These principles are equally applicable to the Aceh Provincial Education Department, which holds the responsibility of advancing education in Aceh.

The Aceh Provincial Education Department functions as an autonomous regional entity responsible for overseeing educational affairs within the government. It is led by a Head of Department who reports to the Governor through the Regional Secretary. The department's responsibilities encompass both general governance and developmental duties in the realm of education and teaching, in accordance with applicable legislation. Its functions include general administrative management, as well as the planning of annual, medium-term, and long-term work programs. Additionally, it oversees the implementation of technical policies in basic,

secondary, and vocational education, along with the planning and execution of educational development programs. The performance of the Aceh Provincial Education Department is evaluated using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which were not fully achieved in 2021. Table 1 shows that several key indicators fell short of their targets, such as the Net Enrollment Rate (NER), dropout rate, graduation rate, continuation rate, and average length of schooling for both genders.

**Table 1. Key Performance Indicators for Improving Access to Education Services in 2021**

No	Indicator	Unit	Target	2019 Realization	Medium-term Achievement (%)
1	Net Enrollment Rate (NER)	%	83.34	76.57	92%
2	Dropout Rate	%	2.65	3.69	72%
3	Graduation Rate	%	95.71	79.55	83%
4	Continuation Rate	%	99.27	91.95	93%
5	Average Length of Schooling	Years	8.9	9.1	98%

**Source:** Aceh Provincial Education Department (2022)

Suboptimal performance may be linked to employee work motivation, as indicated by (Osabiya & Joseph, 2015) and (Manzoor, 2012), who found a strong correlation between organizational performance and employee motivation. Preliminary research involving 30 randomly selected respondents from the department highlighted issues in job security, individual recognition, promotion opportunities, workplace environment, and fair compensation, all averaging below 3.40 on a 5-point scale, suggesting significant motivational deficits.

**Table 2. Employee Motivation Perception**

No	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Less Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average
1	Job Security	0	2	13	15	0	3.43
2	Recognition as Individual	6	5	7	5	7	3.07
3	Advancement Opportunities	2	3	13	9	3	3.27
4	Good Workplace	0	2	14	10	4	3.53
5	Fair Compensation	0	1	10	18	1	3.63
	Average						3.39

Effective organizational performance is influenced not only by motivation but also by strategic leadership styles and cognitive behaviors of employees. Strategic leadership, as emphasized by (Putera et al., 2019), and (Carter & Greer, 2013), is crucial in navigating the complexities of modern strategic environments characterized by social, economic, political, and institutional challenges. Leaders with a strategic vision can guide organizations through uncertain and

dynamic global landscapes, maintaining flexibility and empowering employees to drive strategic changes (Oladele & Akeke, 2016). Moreover, cognitive behavior significantly impacts work motivation and, consequently, organizational performance. Wright (2004) noted the influence of cognitive behavior on employee motivation, bridging behavioral psychology and employee performance. Strategic leadership can also affect performance through work motivation, as evidenced by studies linking leadership styles, motivation, and performance outcomes (Zoogah, 2009); (Osabiya & Joseph, 2015); (Obiwuru et al., 2011).

This study explores the impact of entrepreneurial strategic leadership—a blend of entrepreneurial spirit and strategic management—on employee performance. This leadership style fosters innovation, risk-taking, and strategic vision, essential for adapting to rapidly changing business environments (Dess et al., 2003). By examining this leadership approach alongside work motivation and cognitive behavior, this research aims to provide valuable insights for public sector organizations, such as the Aceh Provincial Education Department. The study's findings will offer practical and theoretical contributions, aiding policymakers in improving employee performance through entrepreneurial strategic leadership. It will also enhance the academic understanding of leadership's role in organizational effectiveness, particularly in the public sector. By addressing the gap in research on entrepreneurial strategic leadership, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact on organizational performance.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Organizational Performance**

Organizational performance is frequently defined as the translation of "performance," referring to appearance, demonstrations, or achievements (Agu et al., 2017). It represents the continuous achievement of organizational goals. According to (Qiu & Srikant, 2004), performance is the extent to which a program, activity, or policy achieves its targets, objectives, vision, and mission, as outlined in an organization's strategic planning. Organizations tend to measure performance across various aspects, including financial metrics, customer satisfaction, internal business operations, employee satisfaction, community satisfaction, and time management (Balabonienė & Večerskienė, 2015). Financial aspects involve routine budgets and development projects in government agencies. Customer satisfaction is crucial in the global trade context, pushing government agencies to consistently provide high-quality services. Internal business operations ensure that all governmental activities align to achieve organizational goals. Employee satisfaction recognizes employees as valuable assets needing effective management. Community satisfaction acknowledges that government agencies do not operate in isolation and must interact with stakeholders. Lastly, time is a critical variable in designing performance measurement systems.

### **Work Motivation**

Work motivation is defined as the willingness to exert high levels of effort to achieve organizational goals, influenced by the individual's efforts (Luthans, 2011). It includes three key elements: effort, organizational goals, and needs. Effort indicates the intensity or drive, and although high effort does not always result in beneficial organizational performance, it is crucial. Needs refer to internal states that make certain outcomes attractive, creating tension that drives behavior to satisfy those needs, reducing the tension (Akmal et al., 2012). Work

motivation is a complex psychological concept vital to overall employee performance, satisfaction, and well-being. It encompasses internal and external factors driving individuals to initiate and maintain job-related behaviors. Understanding work motivation is essential for organizations as it significantly impacts productivity, employee retention, and organizational goal achievement. Several theories have been developed to explain work motivation:

1. **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:** Abraham Maslow's theory suggests individuals have a hierarchy of needs, starting with basic physiological needs and culminating in self-actualization. In the workplace, this implies employees are motivated by unmet needs, which vary from person to person.
2. **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory:** Frederick Herzberg proposed that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from different sets of factors. Hygiene factors (extrinsic) cause dissatisfaction when absent, while motivators (intrinsic) drive satisfaction and motivation. Hygiene factors include salary and working conditions, while motivators include recognition and growth opportunities.
3. **Expectancy Theory:** Victor Vroom's theory posits that employees are motivated when they believe their efforts will lead to high performance, resulting in valued rewards. It involves expectancy (effort leads to performance), instrumentality (performance leads to rewards), and valence (value of rewards).
4. **Self-Determination Theory:** Developed by Deci and Ryan, this theory asserts that intrinsic motivation is driven by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Providing opportunities for choice, skill development, and meaningful relationships enhances motivation.
5. **Goal-Setting Theory:** Edwin Locke's theory emphasizes the importance of setting clear, challenging goals. Employees are motivated when they have specific goals, especially when they believe their efforts will achieve these goals.

### **Leadership Styles**

Leadership style refers to the specific manner, pattern, and ability a leader uses to influence, direct, motivate, and control others to achieve organizational goals (Iqbal et al., 2015). Leaders with clear vision and mission can express these to their teams, transforming individual visions into group objectives. (Carter & Greer, 2013) identify several leadership styles:

- **Strategic Leadership:** Balances tasks and development opportunities, ensuring a stable and conducive working environment.
- **Authoritarian Leadership:** Makes decisions unilaterally without considering the impact on others.
- **Transformational Leadership:** Strives to improve the team by enhancing skills and increasing efficiency.
- **Bureaucratic Leadership:** Adheres strictly to rules and SOPs, typically resistant to change and cautious in decision-making.

Strategic leadership involves anticipating, envisioning, maintaining flexibility, and empowering others to create necessary strategic changes (Masungu et al., 2015). It is multifaceted, requiring managing through others, accommodating internal and external conditions, and handling complexity and ambiguity. Top-level managers are crucial assets, with essential components like vision, business knowledge, team integration, adaptability, and managerial capabilities (Zoogah, 2009).

## **Cognitive Behavior**

Cognitive behavior encompasses mental activities related to perception, thought, memory, and information processing, allowing individuals to gain knowledge (Porter et al., 2003). It involves intellectual abilities in thinking, knowing, and problem-solving. (Yidong & Xinxin, 2012) categorizes cognitive domain objectives into six parts: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These stages range from basic recall of information to the creation of new patterns and critical evaluation of information. Cognitive development stages (Ratiu et al., 2016) include:

- Sensory Motor Stage (birth to 2 years): Instinctive movements to symbolic thought.
- Pre-operational Stage (2-7 years): Representing the world with words and images.
- Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years): Logical thinking about concrete events.
- Formal Operational Stage (11-15 years): Abstract, logical, and idealistic thinking.

Individual differences in cognitive development arise from potential differences influenced by the environment (Ho et al., 2011). These differences manifest in various aspects, including talent, interests, personality, physical and social conditions, and intelligence, significantly impacting learning processes and outcomes.

## **Impact of Strategic Leadership on Work Motivation and Organizational Performance**

Previous research highlights the influence of strategic leadership on work motivation and organizational performance. (Zoogah, 2009) examined strategic leadership's impact on motivation in African cultural contexts, suggesting it is crucial for organizational effectiveness. Similarly, (Iqbal et al., 2015) investigated the impact of strategic leadership styles on employee performance, highlighting the importance of various leadership styles, including strategic, authoritarian, democratic, and participative, on employee performance.

## **Impact of Cognitive Behavior on Work Motivation and Organizational Performance**

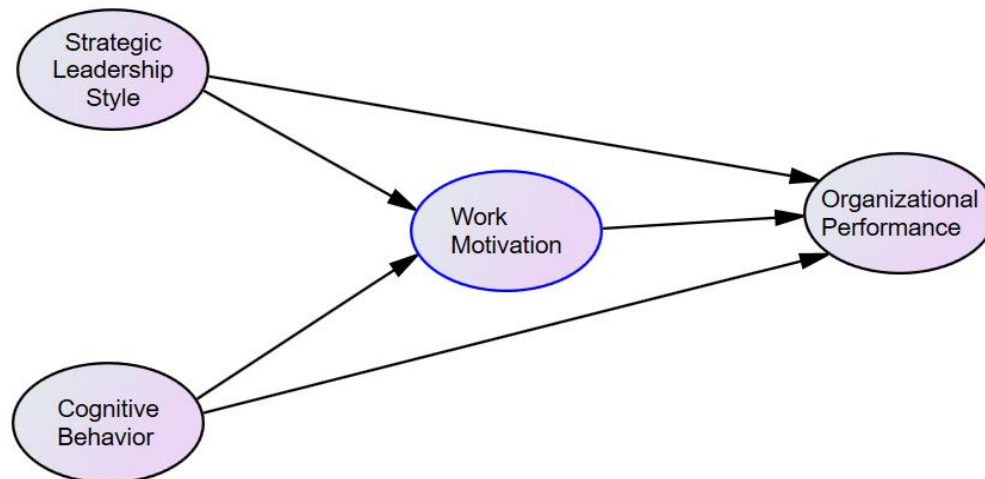
Studies by (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) link social cognitive theory and self-efficacy to improved understanding and practice of work motivation. Cognitive variables like intellectual ability, technical competence, and relevant experience significantly affect group performance (Fiedler, 1986). Understanding these variables can enhance organizational performance through better leadership and employee management.

## **Impact of Work Motivation on Organizational Performance**

Research indicates that work motivation significantly impacts organizational performance. (Osabiya & Joseph, 2015) explored factors influencing motivation and identified key motivators impacting productivity, such as teamwork, contract-based work, leadership through example, and providing necessary equipment. Understanding the intricate relationships between organizational performance, work motivation, leadership styles, and cognitive behavior is essential for improving organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction. Organizations can enhance their performance and achieve their goals by applying relevant theories and strategies.

## **Research Hypothesis**

From the existing theoretical basis, this research forms the paradigm and its hypotheses as follows.



**Figure 1. Research Paradigm**

H1 : strategic leadership style influences work motivation

H2 : cognitive behavior influences work motivation

H3 : strategic leadership style influences organizational performance

H4 : cognitive behavior influences organizational performance

H5 : work motivation influences organizational performance

H6 : strategic leadership style influences work motivation through work motivation

H7 : cognitive behavior influences work motivation through work motivation

### 3. Method

#### Research Location and Subject

This research was conducted at the Department of Education of Aceh Province. The subjects were employees of the Department, while the objects were Strategic Leadership Style, Cognitive Behavior, Work Motivation, and Department Performance.

#### Population and Sample

The population encompasses all individuals or objects possessing specific characteristics relevant to the research (Hasan, 2012). Here, the population included 815 Civil Servants at the Aceh Department of Education. A proportional stratified random sampling method was employed to select participants, ensuring representation from different employee strata. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula (Umar, 2008):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} \quad n = \frac{1}{1 + (e^2)N}$$

With  $N=815$   $N=815$  and  $e=5\%$   $e=5\%$ , the sample size calculated was 152 employees. The proportional distribution of the sample across employee groups is shown in Table 1.

**Table 3. Employee Distribution**

Employee Group	Population	Sample
Group II	32	6
Group III	199	37
Group IV	74	14
Technicians	510	95
<b>Total</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>152</b>

**Data Collection Technique**

Data collection involved primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through a Likert-scale questionnaire, measuring Strategic Leadership, Cognitive Behavior, Work Motivation, and Educational Performance. The Likert scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), providing quantitative data for analysis. Secondary data were gathered from organizational documents, literature reviews, and related sources, including performance reports from the Aceh Department of Education.

**Variable Operationalization**

In order to operate this research, indicators are needed to measure the existing variables. The indicators used in this research have been determined and are shown in the following table.

**Table 4. Operational Definitions and Indicators**

Variable	Definition	Indicators	Measurement Scale	Items
<b>Educational Performance (Z)</b>	The level of achievement of organizational goals.	Input, Output, Outcome, Benefit, Impact	Interval	A1-A5
<b>Work Motivation (Y1)</b>	Willingness to exert high effort towards organizational goals.	Work Quality, Innovation, Productivity, Challenge	Interval	B1-B5
<b>Strategic Leadership (X1)</b>	Leadership that influences people and organizational change.	Strategic Orientation, Action Translation, Goal Direction, Decision Making, Strategic Capability Development	Interval	C1-C5
<b>Cognitive Behavior (X2)</b>	Mental activities related to perception, thought, memory, and information processing.	Task Performance, Success, Desired Action, Preparation, Comprehension	Interval	D1-D5

Instrument testing included several procedures: The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check if data distribution was normal, with data considered normal if the p-value was greater than 0.05. Outliers were identified using Z-scores within the range of -2.5 to +2.5. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance were used to detect multicollinearity, where VIF values below 10 indicated no multicollinearity. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used for the validity test, with valid items showing a correlation coefficient greater than 0.3. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.6 indicating reliability. Finally, a descriptive analysis with a One-Sample T-Test was conducted to evaluate whether sample means differed significantly from predefined values using specified statistical steps.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used, involving Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the validity and reliability of measurement models. Hypotheses were tested using regression weights, critical ratio (CR), and probability (P) values, with  $CR > 1.96$  and  $P < 0.05$  indicating significant results. This methodology ensured a comprehensive analysis of the effects of Strategic Leadership, Cognitive Behavior, and Work Motivation on the Educational Performance at the Aceh Department of Education.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **Characteristics of Respondents**

The characteristics of respondents in this study reveal several interesting patterns. First, the majority of respondents are male, comprising approximately 58.6%, while females account for about 41.4%. This may reflect the gender dynamics within the Aceh Provincial Education Department. Second, in terms of age, the 26-30 year age group is the most dominant, followed by those under 25 years. The significant number of respondents under 25 suggests that the majority are entry-level staff new to the workforce. Third, a substantial proportion of respondents are unmarried, at over 68.4%, indicating that most are young and energetic individuals. Fourth, regarding education, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree, possibly reflecting the qualification level required for jobs at the Education Office. The relatively low number of respondents with postgraduate education suggests that further education is not yet a priority for most staff. Furthermore, the tenure of respondents is dominated by those who have worked for less than 5 years, accounting for about 69.1%. This indicates that the majority of respondents are very young, with potential for productivity and energy to enhance the quality of education. Thus, the analysis of respondents' characteristics provides a comprehensive overview of the professions, age, marital status, education level, and tenure of the respondents involved in this study.

### **Instrument Testing Results**

The quality of data obtained from the research instruments was evaluated through several tests commonly used in social science research.

### **Validity Testing**

Validity testing of the questionnaire was conducted in two forms: factor validity and item validity. Factor validity is measured when items are structured using more than one factor (when there is a similarity between factors). This is done by correlating the factor scores (sum of items within one factor) with the total factor scores (sum of all factors). Item validity is

shown by the correlation or support for the total item (total score), calculated by correlating the item score with the total item score. If more than one factor is used, item validity testing involves correlating the item score with the factor score, followed by correlating the item score with the total factor score.

### **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

Validity can be tested per indicator and per variable using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The AVE value represents the extent to which the manifest variables are explained by the latent construct. A higher AVE value indicates a greater contribution of indicators to the measured construct. In this context, the Strategic Leadership Style has an AVE of 0.647, indicating a significant contribution of the indicators to the construct. Similarly, Organizational Performance, Work Motivation, and Cognitive Behavior have AVE values of 0.608, 0.626, and 0.579, respectively, suggesting effective reflection of the desired constructs by the indicators and indicating good convergent validity. High AVE values for these variables indicate reliable measurement for understanding and analyzing the relationships among these variables in the study context.

### **Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity ensures that each concept in the latent model differs from other variables. Validity testing assesses how accurately a measurement tool performs its measurement function. If the diagonal value  $>$  other values in the same row, it indicates a difference. Discriminant validity evaluates the extent to which a construct can be distinguished from other constructs. Constructs should have weaker relationships with each other than with themselves. The provided correlation table shows correlations among four constructs: Strategic Leadership Style, Organizational Performance, Work Motivation, and Cognitive Behavior. The main diagonal, representing correlations of constructs with themselves, shows values above 0.7, while correlations between different constructs are lower, indicating good discriminant validity.

### **Reliability Testing: Cronbach's Alpha (CA)**

Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability measure used to evaluate the internal consistency of a measurement instrument or questionnaire. Alpha values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency. In this context, Cronbach's Alpha values for Strategic Leadership Style, Organizational Performance, Work Motivation, and Cognitive Behavior are 0.818, 0.838, 0.851, and 0.818, respectively. These values indicate high internal consistency for each construct's measurement. For example, a value of 0.818 for Strategic Leadership Style indicates good internal consistency among the indicators used to measure this construct. Similar reliability is observed for other constructs, showing that the measurement instruments used in this study are reliable for measuring the respective constructs with adequate internal consistency.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis and interpretation are crucial for answering research questions and revealing specific phenomena. The analysis model used in this study is causal, examining relationships or influences, and hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Models (SEM). SEM identifies the dimensions of a construct and measures the degree of relationship between identified factors and their indicators.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

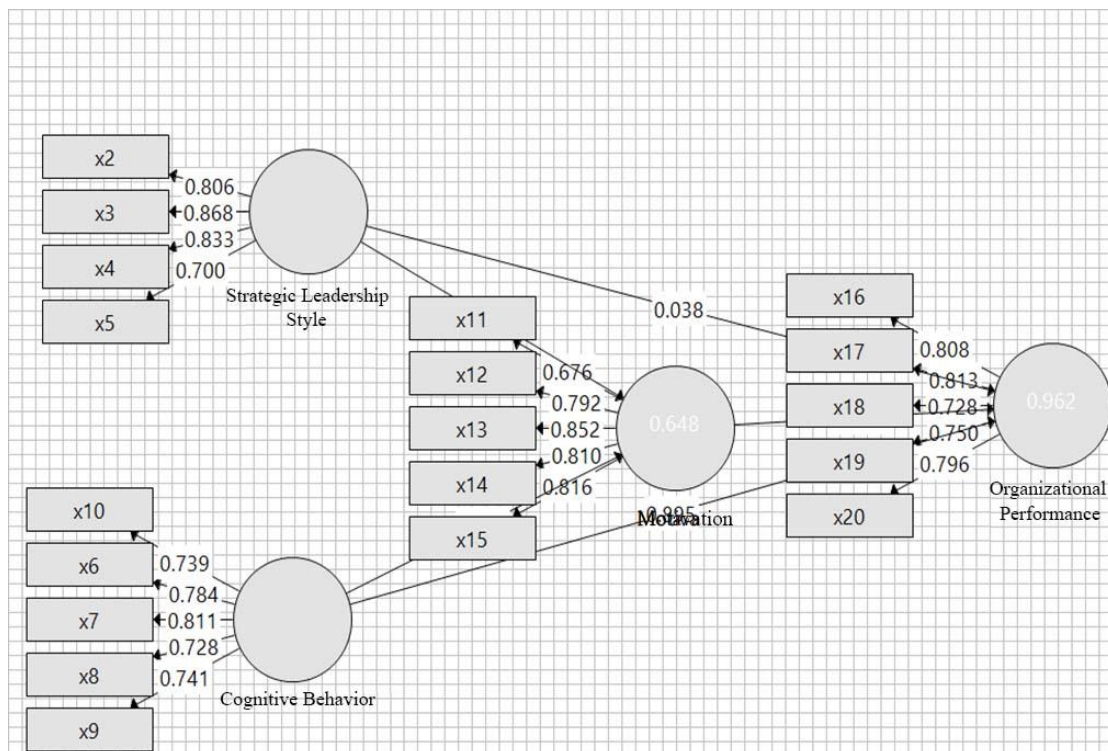
CFA measures the dimensions forming latent variables in the research model. The latent variables consist of three exogenous variables and two endogenous variables, including mediating and dependent variables. CFA aims to test the unidimensionality of the dimensions forming each latent variable.

### Direct Hypothesis Testing

**Table 5. Direct Influence**

Direct Effect	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Strategic leadership style -> Work motivation (H1)	0.317	0.056	5.636	0.000
Cognitive behavior -> work motivation (H2)	0.564	0.05	11.397	0.000
Strategic leadership style -> organizational performance (H3)	0.038	0.017	2.287	0.023
Cognitive behavior -> organizational performance (H4)	0.895	0.024	36.736	0.000
Work motivation -> organizational performance (H5)	0.078	0.024	3.241	0.001

Source: Primary Data, 2024 (processed)



**Figure 2. Structural Model**

The structural model and standardized coefficients for hypothesis testing are shown in Table 5 and Figure 2. The results reveal that :

1. The relationship between Strategic Leadership Style and Work Motivation is highly significant (t-statistic = 5.636, p-value = 0), showing a strong impact of Strategic Leadership Style on Work Motivation.
2. Cognitive Behavior also significantly affects Work Motivation (t-statistic = 11.397, p-value = 0), showing that cognitive characteristics of behavior impact employee motivation.
3. The relationship between Strategic Leadership Style and Organizational Performance is statistically significant (t-statistic = 2.287, p-value = 0.023), indicating a significant impact of Strategic Leadership Style on Organizational Performance.
4. Cognitive Behavior significantly impacts Organizational Performance (t-statistic = 36.736, p-value = 0), indicating the crucial role of cognitive aspects of employee behavior in organizational performance.
5. Work Motivation significantly affects Organizational Performance (t-statistic = 3.241, p-value = 0.001), suggesting that employee motivation influences organizational goal achievement.

### Indirect Hypothesis Testing

Indirect effects were tested using bootstrapping. Results in Table 6 indicate significant indirect effects:

1. Strategic Leadership Style influences Organizational Performance through Work Motivation (t-statistic = 2.845, p-value = 0.005)
2. Cognitive Behavior affects Organizational Performance through Work Motivation (t-statistic = 3.02, p-value = 0.003)

**Table 6. Indirect Influence**

Indirect Effect	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Strategic leadership style -> work motivation -> organizational performance (H6)	0.025	0.009	2.845	0.005
Cognitive behavior -> work motivation -> organizational performance (H7)	0.044	0.015	3.02	0.003

**Source:** Primary Data, 2024 (processed)

Moreover, the strategic leadership style and cognitive behavior directly influence organizational performance (with H3 and H4 confirmed as valid). It can be established that in this research model, work motivation serves as a partial mediator. This means it may or may not be involved in the impact of strategic leadership style on organizational performance and cognitive behavior on performance.

### Managerial Implications

From the overall results, there are several implications that can be described. The significant direct impact of Strategic Leadership Style on Organizational Performance has important

managerial implications. Managers should strengthen leadership strategies by developing skills and behaviors that support strategic decision-making and actions. Effective leadership strategies that enhance employee motivation will positively impact organizational performance.

Furthermore, the significant impact of Cognitive Behavior on Organizational Performance also has strong managerial implications. Managers should focus on developing cognitive-behavioral characteristics in their teams through training and coaching. Understanding how cognitive behavior influences motivation and performance helps in designing strategies to improve organizational outcomes. Overall, the study highlights the importance of innovative and strategic leadership approaches in enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and employee performance, which is crucial for achieving the key performance indicators set by the Aceh Provincial Education Department.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into both academic and managerial aspects, particularly within the Aceh Provincial Education Department. The workforce at this institution is predominantly composed of young, unmarried, and relatively inexperienced employees, suggesting a dynamic and potentially adaptable team. However, this demographic may also necessitate more targeted training and development to maximize their productivity and impact. Additionally, the educational qualifications, primarily at the undergraduate level, indicate a solid foundational knowledge while also presenting an opportunity to encourage further education to enhance skill sets. Moreover, the results of the influence test reveal that a strategic leadership style has both a direct and indirect positive impact on organizational performance, with work motivation serving as a partial mediator. Similarly, cognitive behavior exhibits a direct and indirect positive effect on organizational performance, also partially mediated by work motivation. These findings underscore the significant role of antecedent variables within the model, suggesting that fostering strategic leadership and enhancing cognitive behavior among employees can substantially boost motivation and, in turn, improve organizational performance. This research can serve as a foundation for future studies, although it does acknowledge limitations regarding the involved variables and subjects. Practically, these insights are crucial for the Aceh Provincial Education Department and similar institutions, emphasizing the importance of developing strategic leadership, enhancing cognitive skills, and providing motivational support to improve overall organizational outcomes and achieve performance targets.

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