



Responsible Leadership and Village Apparatus Performance: The Moderating Role of Village Development Status

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Abstract:

Responsible leadership has been associated with positive employee outcomes, yet little is known about its effectiveness across different governance contexts, particularly in village governments. This study investigates how responsible leadership influences village apparatus performance through work motivation and examines the moderating role of village development status. A quantitative survey was conducted among 300 village apparatus from 60 villages in Bungo Regency, Indonesia, using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a three-wave survey design to reduce common method bias and analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS Model 7. The results show that responsible leadership positively affects village apparatus performance both directly ($B = 0.24, p < .001$) and indirectly through work motivation (indirect effect = 0.16, 95% CI [0.10, 0.23]). Village development status significantly strengthens the relationship between responsible leadership and work motivation, producing stronger indirect effects in Self-reliant and Advanced villages. This study extends responsible leadership research by demonstrating that governance maturity serves as a contextual boundary condition for leadership effectiveness in village governments. The findings suggest that leadership development should be aligned with village development status and supported by governance capacity-building initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Village governments play a pivotal role in delivering public services, implementing local development programs, and strengthening community welfare across Indonesia (Tobing-David et al., 2024). As frontline public servants, village apparatus are responsible for translating government policies into effective public services and sustainable rural development (Ardiputra et al., 2025). Their performance is central to achieving the objectives of the Indonesian Village Index, which evaluates village progress across six dimensions, including governance quality. However, many village governments, including those in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, continue to face persistent challenges related to low and irregular salaries, non-civil-servant employment status, heavy workloads, limited career development opportunities, and weak leadership from village heads. These conditions can undermine work motivation and constrain village apparatus performance, resulting in ineffective public service delivery and community dissatisfaction (Fakhrurrazi

et al., 2025; Kusnadi et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening village apparatus performance is not only a practical priority for improving local governance but also an important organizational issue that warrants further empirical investigation.

Leadership has long been recognized as an important determinant of employee motivation and performance. Among contemporary leadership approaches, responsible leadership has received increasing scholarly attention because it emphasizes ethical conduct, stakeholder orientation, accountability, and long-term value creation (Maak & Pless, 2006; Voegtlin, 2011). Unlike transactional and transformational leadership, responsible leadership considers the interests of multiple stakeholders, including employees, citizens, local communities, and society, while encouraging leaders to make decisions that are ethically responsible and socially sustainable (Marques & Miska, 2021). Responsible leaders demonstrate transparency, accountability, fairness, and care for the broader impact of their decisions (Voegtlin et al., 2020). Such behaviors are particularly relevant in village government settings, where village heads are expected to serve not only their subordinates but also the wider community, while maintaining ethical integrity and fostering participatory governance. However, most RL research has focused on corporate or educational settings in developed countries (Akhtar et al., 2023; Haque et al., 2019) and on outcomes such as career commitment or pro-environmental behavior rather than job performance (Batool et al., 2025; Tuan, 2022; Usman et al., 2025), leaving a significant gap in understanding how RL operates in the unique context of rural village governments in emerging economies like Indonesia.

Work motivation is widely recognized as a key mechanism through which leadership influences employee behavior and performance. According to Self Determination Theory, employees are more likely to demonstrate high levels of engagement, persistence, and job satisfaction when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In public sector organizations, these motivational conditions are particularly important because employees are expected to maintain high service quality despite institutional and resource constraints (Kim & Choi, 2024). Social Learning Theory further explains that employees develop work-related attitudes and behaviors by observing and emulating their leaders (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Therefore, when village heads consistently demonstrate responsible leadership through ethical decision-making, fairness, stakeholder orientation, and concern for employee welfare, village apparatus are more likely to strengthen their work motivation, which subsequently enhances their job performance. Based on these theoretical perspectives, work motivation is expected to serve as an important psychological mechanism linking responsible leadership to village apparatus performance.

However, leadership effectiveness is rarely universal because it is shaped by the organizational context in which leaders and employees interact (Johns, 2018). In village governments, one important contextual factor is village development status, an official classification issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Villages based on the Village Index (Indeks Desa), which measures six dimensions, including governance quality (Susiaty et al., 2026). Villages are subsequently classified as Very Underdeveloped, Underdeveloped, Developing, Advanced, or Self-reliant. Villages with higher development status generally have stronger governance systems, greater transparency, and better institutional capacity, creating conditions that enable responsible leadership to enhance employees' work motivation more effectively (Andrews et al., 2012; Batool et al., 2025; Kusnadi M.

et al., 2024). Therefore, village development status is expected to strengthen the indirect relationship between responsible leadership and village apparatus performance through work motivation.

Despite the growing body of responsible leadership research, several important gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly examined outcomes such as career commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and pro-environmental behavior, while evidence regarding employee performance, particularly in public sector organizations, remains limited (Akhtar et al., 2023; Tuan, 2022). Second, although work motivation is a well-established construct in organizational behavior, its role as the mechanism through which responsible leadership enhances performance has received relatively little empirical attention compared with constructs such as status striving or trust (Usman et al., 2025). Third, existing studies have paid limited attention to the contextual conditions that shape leadership effectiveness. Most have focused on organizational climate or HRM practices (He et al., 2019), while governance quality has rarely been examined as a contextual factor. Fourth, responsible leadership has rarely been investigated in village governments, particularly in Indonesia, where governance quality and leadership play a central role in improving village performance (Bazzi et al., 2025; Fakhurrizi et al., 2025; Kusnadi M. et al., 2024). Accordingly, this study addresses these gaps by examining village development status, derived from the official Indonesian Village Index, as a contextual moderator that explains when responsible leadership is more effective in improving village apparatus performance through work motivation.

To address these gaps, this study develops and tests a moderated mediation model linking responsible leadership, work motivation, village development status, and village apparatus performance. Specifically, this study hypothesizes that responsible leadership positively influences village apparatus performance (H1), work motivation mediates this relationship (H2), village development status strengthens the relationship between responsible leadership and work motivation (H3), and consequently strengthens the indirect effect of responsible leadership on village apparatus performance through work motivation (H4). By examining these relationships among village apparatus in Bungo Regency, Indonesia, this study contributes to the responsible leadership literature by extending its application to village governments, identifying work motivation as an explanatory mechanism, and demonstrating the importance of village development status as a governance-based contextual factor. The findings also provide practical insights for designing leadership development and governance improvement programs that are tailored to village development status.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design with a stratified random sampling approach to test the proposed moderated mediation model. The population comprised all village apparatus members, including village secretaries, heads of affairs, heads of sections, and hamlet heads, working in 141 villages across 16 districts of Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. Bungo Regency was purposively selected because it comprises villages with diverse development statuses based on the official Village Index, providing an appropriate empirical setting to examine the moderating role of village development status. Village apparatus were selected as the unit of analysis because they are directly responsible for implementing village administration, delivering public services, and supporting local development programs, making them the most

relevant respondents for examining how responsible leadership influences work motivation and performance. Based on data from the Ministry of Villages, these villages were officially classified into four development statuses: Self-reliant (17.02%), Advanced (38.30%), Developing (43.97%), and Underdeveloped (0.71%). No villages were classified as Very Underdeveloped. The total estimated number of village apparatus was between 705 and 1,410 individuals, assuming an average of 5–10 apparatus per village, consistent with sampling practices in similar village governance studies in Indonesia (Fakhrurrazi et al., 2025; Kusnadi M. et al., 2024).

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across village development categories. Based on a 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample was 280 respondents; however, 300 village apparatus were targeted to increase the statistical power of the moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 7. The sample comprised 51 apparatus from Self-reliant villages, 115 from Advanced villages, 132 from Developing villages, and 2 from the only Underdeveloped village (*Renah Ilmu*). Overall, 60 villages were selected through systematic random sampling based on the official village list. Village apparatus were chosen as respondents because they directly support village heads in delivering public services and implementing village development programs, making them the most appropriate source for assessing responsible leadership, work motivation, and job performance.

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire through a three-wave time-lagged survey to reduce the potential for common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). At Time 1, respondents completed demographic information (age, gender, education, and tenure) and assessed responsible leadership and organizational culture. Two weeks later (Time 2), the same respondents completed the work motivation questionnaire. After another two-week interval (Time 3), they evaluated their job performance. All questionnaires were administered in person by trained enumerators. To ensure confidentiality and enable matching across the three data collection periods, each respondent received a unique identification code. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection.

All constructs were measured using established scales adapted to the Indonesian village context and assessed on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Responsible leadership was measured using the five-item scale developed by Voegtlin (2011), which captures stakeholder orientation, transparency, and accountability (sample item: "My village head tries to achieve consensus among affected stakeholders"). Work motivation was measured using the 12-item scale developed by Gagné et al. (2015) based on Self-Determination Theory (sample item: "I am motivated to work because I enjoy this work"). Village apparatus performance was assessed using the seven-item in-role performance scale from (Williams & Anderson 1991), adapted to the village government context (sample item: "I adequately complete my assigned duties as a village apparatus"). Organizational culture was measured using the six-item clan or collaborative culture subscale of the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Organizational culture was included as a control variable because previous studies have demonstrated that it independently influences employee motivation and performance, allowing the unique effect of responsible leadership to be estimated more accurately (Andrews et al., 2012; Kusnadi et al., 2024).

The moderating variable, village development status, was obtained from official secondary data. Based on the Ministry of Villages Decree No. 343 of 2025, each sampled village was classified as Underdeveloped, Developing, Advanced, or Self-reliant according to the Village Index (Indeks Desa) established under it. The index evaluates six dimensions, namely basic services, social capital, economy, environment, accessibility, and governance. Each respondent was assigned the official development status of the village in which he or she worked, allowing village development status to represent the organizational context surrounding individual perceptions and behavior. For analytical purposes, village development status was treated as an ordinal categorical variable.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. First, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using AMOS 28.0 to evaluate construct validity through factor loadings, average variance extracted, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). Second, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analyses were conducted using SPSS 28.0. Third, the proposed hypotheses were tested using PROCESS Macro Model 7 for SPSS (Hayes, 2018), which estimates a moderated mediation model in which the indirect effect of responsible leadership on village apparatus performance through work motivation is conditional on village development status. Gender, age, education, tenure, and organizational culture were included as control variables in all regression models. Indirect effects were estimated using 5,000 bootstrap resamples with 95% confidence intervals, and the index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2015) was used to determine whether the conditional indirect effect differed significantly across village development status.

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. The research protocol was approved by the institutional research ethics committee (approval number provided). Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the Village Community Empowerment Office of Bungo Regency and the heads of the selected villages. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. No financial incentives were provided. All responses were treated confidentially, stored on a password-protected computer, and used solely for research purposes. No personally identifiable information was included in the final dataset.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results are presented in three stages. First, the measurement model is evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity assessments. Second, descriptive statistics and correlations among the study variables are reported. Third, the proposed hypotheses are tested using PROCESS Model 7, including the direct effect, mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation analyses.

Measurement Model Assessment

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement properties of the four study constructs: responsible leadership, work motivation, village apparatus performance, and organizational culture. The hypothesized four-factor model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.81$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.06). All factor loadings exceeded 0.60 and were significant at $p < .001$, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. The average variance extracted ranged from

0.56 to 0.68, while composite reliability ranged from 0.84 to 0.92, exceeding the recommended thresholds (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was also supported because all HTMT values were below 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 further confirmed the internal consistency of all constructs. Overall, these findings indicate that the measurement model was reliable and valid, providing an adequate basis for subsequent hypothesis testing. Table 1 presents the factor loadings, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's alpha for each construct.

Table 1. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	No. of Items	Factor Loading Range	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
Responsible Leadership	5	0.72 – 0.89	0.65	0.90	0.89
Work Motivation	12	0.61 – 0.85	0.58	0.91	0.90
Village Apparatus Performance	7	0.68 – 0.83	0.62	0.88	0.87
Organizational Culture	6	0.63 – 0.80	0.56	0.84	0.83

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the study variables. Responsible leadership had a mean score of 4.19 (SD = 1.85), while work motivation and village apparatus performance had mean scores of 5.03 (SD = 1.24) and 4.85 (SD = 1.45), respectively. Organizational culture also showed a relatively favorable mean score (M = 4.62, SD = 1.38). These descriptive statistics indicate that respondents reported relatively favorable perceptions of responsible leadership, organizational culture, work motivation, and village apparatus performance.

The correlation analysis shows that responsible leadership was positively associated with organizational culture ($r = .45$, $p < .01$), work motivation ($r = .51$, $p < .01$), and village apparatus performance ($r = .46$, $p < .01$). Work motivation also demonstrated the strongest positive correlation with village apparatus performance ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). Organizational culture was positively correlated with both work motivation ($r = .38$, $p < .01$) and village apparatus performance ($r = .34$, $p < .01$). Overall, these findings provide preliminary support for the proposed relationships and justify proceeding with the hypothesis testing.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender (male=1)	1.58	0.49	1							
2. Age (years)	2.41	1.12	.05	1						
3. Education	2.83	0.94	.12	.18*	1					
4. Tenure (years)	2.08	1.03	.09	.42**	.23*	1				
5. Organizational Culture	4.62	1.38	.08	.11	.20*	.14	1			
6. Responsible Leadership	4.19	1.85	.06	.13	.18*	.11	.45**	1		
7. Work Motivation	5.03	1.24	.04	.09	.22*	.13	.38**	.51**	1	
8. Village Apparatus Performance	4.85	1.45	.02	.07	.19*	.10	.34**	.46**	.59**	1

*Note: n = [insert sample size]; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Education coded: 1=junior high, 2=senior high, 3=diploma, 4=bachelor.*

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were examined using PROCESS Model 4. As presented in Table 3, responsible leadership had a significant positive direct effect on village apparatus performance ($B = 0.24$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.14, 0.34]), indicating that higher levels of responsible leadership were associated with better employee performance.

Therefore, H1 was supported.

When work motivation was included as the mediator, the indirect effect of responsible leadership on village apparatus performance remained significant ($B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.23]). Because the direct effect remained significant after the mediator was included ($B = 0.08$, $p < .05$), the results indicate partial rather than full mediation. These findings suggest that responsible leadership enhances village apparatus performance both directly and indirectly through work motivation, thereby supporting H2.

Table 3. Mediation Results (PROCESS Model 4)

Effect	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect (RL → Performance)	0.24	0.05	4.80	<.001	0.14	0.34
Indirect effect (RL → Motivation → Performance)	0.16	0.03	-	-	0.10	0.23

* Note: Bootstrap resamples = 5,000. Unstandardized coefficients reported. RL = Responsible Leadership. *

Hypothesis 3 proposed that village development status moderates the relationship between responsible leadership and work motivation. As shown in Table 4, the interaction between responsible leadership and village development status was positive and statistically significant ($B = 0.11$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 2.75$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.19]). This result indicates that the positive relationship between responsible leadership and work motivation becomes stronger as village development status increases. The simple slope analysis further supports this finding, showing that the effect of responsible leadership on work motivation was strongest in Self-reliant villages ($B = 0.34$, $p < .001$), followed by Advanced villages ($B = 0.23$, $p < .01$) and Developing villages ($B = 0.12$, $p < .05$). In contrast, the relationship was not significant in the Underdeveloped village ($B = 0.02$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H3 was supported.

Table 4. Moderation Results (PROCESS Model 7)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.95	0.18	16.39	<.001	2.60	3.30
Responsible Leadership (RL)	0.23	0.05	4.60	<.001	0.13	0.33
Village Development Status (VDS)	0.15	0.06	2.50	.013	0.03	0.27
RL × VDS	0.11	0.04	2.75	.006	0.03	0.19
Controls (gender, age, education, tenure, org culture)	Included					

Note. $N = 300$. Bootstrap resamples = 5,000. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Gender, age, education, tenure, and organizational culture were included as control variables. RL = Responsible Leadership; VDS = Village Development Status.

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction. As shown in the figure, the line for Self-reliant villages rises most sharply, indicating that the same level of responsible leadership produces a greater increase in work motivation compared to Advanced or Developing villages. This visual pattern confirms the statistical moderation finding: village development status progressively strengthens the positive influence of responsible leadership on work motivation. The gap between the three lines widens as responsible leadership increases, suggesting that investments in responsible leadership are most effective in villages with higher institutional maturity. Conversely, in developing villages, the flatter slope implies that leadership efforts alone may have limited impact without complementary governance improvements.

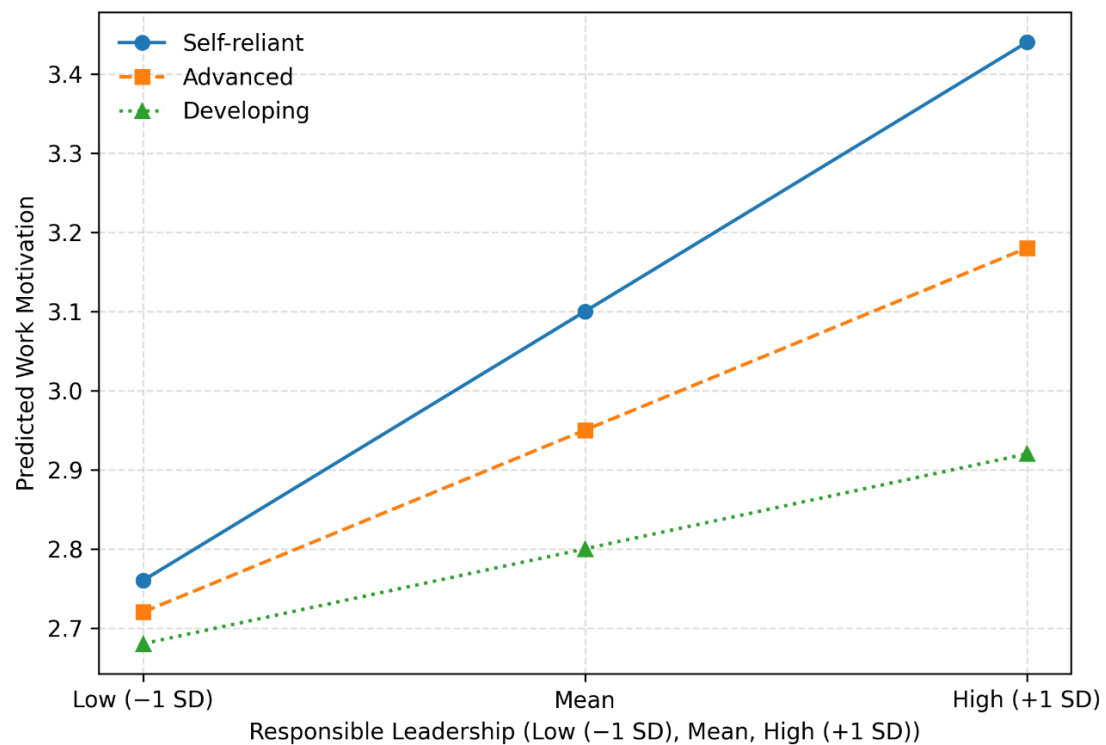


Figure 1. Moderating Effect of Village Development Status on The Relationship between Responsible Leadership and Work Motivation

Hypothesis 4 proposed that the indirect effect of responsible leadership on village apparatus performance through work motivation varies according to village development status. The index of moderated mediation was significant (Index = 0.05, SE = 0.02, 95% CI [0.01, 0.10]), indicating that the indirect effect differed significantly across village development categories. As presented in Table 5, the indirect effect was strongest in Self-reliant villages (B = 0.18, 95% CI [0.09, 0.29]), followed by Advanced villages (B = 0.12, 95% CI [0.06, 0.20]) and Developing villages (B = 0.06, 95% CI [0.01, 0.13]). In contrast, the indirect effect was not significant in the Underdeveloped village because the confidence interval included zero (B = 0.01, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.07]). These findings support Hypothesis 4.

Table 5. Conditional Indirect Effects of Responsible Leadership on Performance via Work Motivation at Different Levels of Village Development Status

Village Development Status	B (Indirect Effect)	Boot SE	95% LLCI	95% ULCI
Underdeveloped (1)	0.01	0.03	-0.04	0.07
Developing (2)	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.13
Advanced (3)	0.12	0.04	0.06	0.20
Self-reliant (4)	0.18	0.05	0.09	0.29

Note. Bootstrap confidence intervals are based on 5,000 resamples. An indirect effect is considered significant when the 95% confidence interval does not include zero.

Discussion

This study examined how responsible leadership influences village apparatus performance through work motivation and how this relationship varies according to village development status. Overall, the findings support the proposed moderated

mediation model and demonstrate that leadership effectiveness depends not only on leader behavior but also on the governance context in which village apparatus perform their duties (Batool et al., 2025; Johns, 2018).

The findings first indicate that responsible leadership has a significant positive effect on village apparatus performance, supporting Hypothesis 1. This finding is consistent with previous research linking ethical and stakeholder-oriented leadership to positive employee outcomes (Akhtar et al., 2023; Haque et al., 2019). In the village context, when village heads demonstrate transparency, involve apparatus in decision-making, and show genuine concern for staff and community welfare, village apparatus are more likely to perform their duties effectively. This finding extends responsible leadership theory to rural public administration, where formal performance management systems are often limited, making leadership behavior particularly influential. Recent studies also report similar evidence across different institutional settings (Abdelwahab et al., 2025; Kyambade et al., 2025; Saini et al., 2025), suggesting that responsible leadership consistently contributes to improved employee outcomes. Overall, the present findings reinforce the importance of responsible leadership as an effective approach to enhancing village apparatus performance.

The findings further demonstrate that work motivation partially mediates the relationship between responsible leadership and village apparatus performance, supporting Hypothesis 2. This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977), which suggest that employees become more motivated when leaders demonstrate ethical behavior, fairness, collaboration, and concern for their well-being. In the village government context, responsible leaders serve as role models whose behaviors encourage village apparatus to internalize these values, thereby strengthening their work motivation and improving job performance. This finding contributes to the responsible leadership literature by identifying work motivation as an important psychological mechanism linking responsible leadership to employee performance. This mechanism has received less attention than status striving or career commitment. It is also consistent with recent studies showing that public sector employees are motivated not only by extrinsic rewards but also by autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as proposed by Self-Determination Theory (Panzabekova & Fazylzhan, 2025; Steijn et al., 2025). Overall, the present findings indicate that responsible leadership enhances village apparatus performance partly through stronger work motivation, although other psychological and organizational mechanisms may also contribute to this relationship.

The findings further indicate that village development status strengthens the positive relationship between responsible leadership and work motivation, supporting Hypothesis 3. Specifically, the influence of responsible leadership becomes progressively stronger as village development status increases, suggesting that leadership effectiveness depends on the institutional maturity of the village. In Self-reliant and Advanced villages, where governance systems, financial transparency, and community participation are generally stronger, responsible leadership is more likely to foster higher work motivation among village apparatus (Prasetya et al., 2025). In contrast, weaker governance systems and limited institutional capacity in developing and Underdeveloped villages may reduce the motivational impact of responsible leadership. These findings support the contextual perspective (Johns, 2006, 2018), which argues that leadership effectiveness is shaped by organizational context rather than leadership behavior alone.

They are also consistent with previous studies showing that governance quality and institutional conditions enhance leadership effectiveness in public organizations (Fakhrurrazi et al., 2025; Koeswayo et al., 2024; Kusnadi et al., 2024; Listiyanto et al., 2026).

Moreover, the present findings are consistent with recent studies in Indonesian village governments showing that governance quality and managerial competencies strengthen the effectiveness of leadership in improving employee performance (Fakhrurrazi et al., 2025; Kusnadi M. et al., 2024). Previous evidence further suggests that leadership becomes more effective when supported by sound governance practices, including transparent budgeting, accountability, and participatory management (Kusuma et al., 2024). These findings support our argument that leadership effectiveness depends on institutional conditions; without adequate governance infrastructure, leadership may have only a limited influence on employee performance. Similarly, evidence from Indonesian village governments indicates that leadership positively influences village apparatus performance, whereas work motivation alone is insufficient to improve performance without supportive organizational conditions (Rusmawati & Darmawati, 2025). Taken together, these findings reinforce the present study by demonstrating that village development status provides the institutional context in which responsible leadership more effectively strengthens work motivation and ultimately improves village apparatus performance.

The findings indicate that responsible leadership alone may be insufficient to improve village apparatus performance when governance systems and institutional capacity remain weak. Leadership interventions are therefore more effective when combined with governance strengthening initiatives, including improved financial management, performance monitoring, and participatory planning. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that village development status, measured through the official Village Index, serves as an important contextual condition that strengthens the indirect effect of responsible leadership on performance through work motivation. These findings extend context-sensitive leadership literature by showing that governance maturity influences the effectiveness of leadership mechanisms in improving employee outcomes (Johns, 2018; Singh et al., 2025).

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that investments in village governance, including capacity building, financial management, and participatory planning, can enhance the effectiveness of responsible leadership (Andrews et al., 2012; Fakhrurrazi et al., 2025). Accordingly, leadership development programs should not be implemented uniformly across villages. In Self-reliant and Advanced villages, leadership training is likely to produce greater benefits because governance systems are already well established. In contrast, Developing and Underdeveloped villages require leadership development to be accompanied by institutional strengthening so that responsible leadership can effectively improve work motivation and village apparatus performance.

This study provides several theoretical contributions by extending responsible leadership research into the underexplored context of village governments in emerging economies. The findings demonstrate that responsible leadership improves village apparatus performance through work motivation, highlighting the mediating role of intrinsic motivation based on Self-Determination Theory. Furthermore, this study introduces village development status, measured through the official Village Index, as a contextual moderator that integrates governance evaluation with organizational

behavior research. Consistent with the contextual perspective (Johns, 2018), the findings confirm that leadership effectiveness depends on organizational conditions, suggesting that responsible leadership does not produce identical outcomes across different governance contexts.

The findings also provide practical implications for policymakers and village practitioners. Leadership development programs should strengthen responsible leadership competencies, including transparency, ethical decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and employee development. Such interventions should be adapted to village development status, as developing and Underdeveloped villages may require additional governance capacity-building in areas such as financial management, performance monitoring, and participatory planning. The Village Index can also function as a diagnostic tool to identify villages where leadership interventions are most needed. In addition, strengthening work motivation through feedback, recognition, clear expectations, and professional development opportunities can further improve village apparatus performance.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. Although the three-wave survey design reduces common method bias, the observational nature of the study limits causal interpretation. The single-regency sample and reliance on self-reported performance measures may restrict generalizability and introduce potential bias. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs, include broader geographical contexts, use objective performance indicators, and apply multilevel analysis with larger village-level samples. Future studies may also explore additional mechanisms, such as psychological safety, organizational trust, and perceived organizational support. Despite these limitations, this study provides evidence that responsible leadership, supported by work motivation and appropriate governance conditions, contributes to stronger village apparatus performance and improved public service delivery.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how responsible leadership influences village apparatus performance through work motivation and how village development status moderates this relationship. Based on survey data from 300 village apparatus in Bungo Regency, Indonesia, the findings demonstrate that responsible leadership directly improves village apparatus performance and indirectly enhances performance through work motivation. Furthermore, village development status strengthens both the relationship between responsible leadership and work motivation and the indirect effect on performance, with stronger effects observed in Self-reliant and Advanced villages than in Developing or Underdeveloped villages. Theoretically, this study extends responsible leadership research by integrating Self-Determination Theory and the contextual perspective (Johns, 2018) within the context of village governments and by introducing the official Village Index as a contextual moderator. Practically, the findings suggest that leadership development programs for village heads should be integrated with governance strengthening initiatives, particularly in villages with lower development status, to maximize leadership effectiveness and improve public service performance. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal or multilevel designs, examine additional mediating and moderating variables, and replicate this model in different institutional and cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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