

## LEADERSHIP AND WORK-LIFE AS DRIVING FACTORS FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

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| Informasi Artikel                                                                                                                         | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| <p>Vol: 3 No: 9 September 2026<br/>Halaman: 1-10</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>Leadership<br/>Work-Life Balance<br/>Employee Engagement</p> | <p><i>This study examines how leadership and work-life balance influence employee performance directly and indirectly through employee engagement at the Fisheries Service of Central Maluku Regency. A descriptive quantitative, causal-correlational design was applied to the entire population of 49 employees using total sampling. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, path analysis, and Sobel tests to estimate direct, indirect, and mediating effects. The findings show that leadership significantly affects employee engagement (<math>\beta = 0.582</math>; <math>p &lt; 0.001</math>), while work-life balance also has a significant, although smaller, effect on engagement (<math>\beta = 0.129</math>; <math>p = 0.005</math>). Employee engagement strongly affects performance (<math>\beta = 0.942</math>; <math>p &lt; 0.001</math>). In contrast, the direct effects of leadership (<math>\beta = 0.034</math>; <math>p = 0.613</math>) and work-life balance (<math>\beta = -0.008</math>; <math>p = 0.756</math>) on performance are not significant. Sobel testing confirms that employee engagement mediates the effect of leadership on performance (<math>p = 0.00015</math>) and the effect of work-life balance on performance (<math>p = 0.03</math>). The model explains 92.4% of the variance in performance. The study's novelty lies in demonstrating, within a local public-sector context, that leadership and work-life balance improve performance primarily by strengthening employee engagement rather than through direct effects. These findings imply that public organizations should prioritize engagement-oriented leadership and work-life policies to achieve sustainable employee performance.</i></p> |

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh langsung dan tidak langsung kepemimpinan serta keseimbangan kehidupan kerja terhadap kinerja melalui keterikatan karyawan pada Dinas Perikanan Kabupaten Maluku Tengah. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuantitatif deskriptif dengan tipe korelasional kausal. Seluruh populasi sebanyak 49 pegawai dijadikan sampel melalui teknik sampling total. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, analisis jalur, dan uji Sobel untuk mengestimasi pengaruh langsung, tidak langsung, dan mediasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan berpengaruh signifikan terhadap keterikatan karyawan ( $\beta = 0,582$ ;  $p < 0,001$ ), sedangkan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja juga berpengaruh signifikan, meskipun lebih kecil, terhadap keterikatan karyawan ( $\beta = 0,129$ ;  $p = 0,005$ ). Keterikatan karyawan berpengaruh kuat terhadap kinerja ( $\beta = 0,942$ ;  $p < 0,001$ ). Sebaliknya, pengaruh langsung kepemimpinan ( $\beta = 0,034$ ;  $p = 0,613$ ) dan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja ( $\beta = -0,008$ ;  $p = 0,756$ ) terhadap kinerja tidak signifikan. Uji Sobel menegaskan bahwa keterikatan karyawan memediasi pengaruh kepemimpinan terhadap kinerja ( $p = 0,00015$ ) dan pengaruh keseimbangan kehidupan kerja terhadap kinerja ( $p = 0,03$ ). Model menjelaskan 92,4% variasi kinerja. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada bukti dalam konteks organisasi publik daerah bahwa kepemimpinan dan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja meningkatkan kinerja terutama melalui penguatan keterikatan karyawan, bukan melalui pengaruh langsung. Temuan ini mengimplikasikan perlunya kepemimpinan dan kebijakan keseimbangan kerja yang berorientasi pada keterikatan pegawai.

**Kata Kunci:** Kepemimpinan; Keseimbangan Kehidupan Kerja; Keterikatan Karyawan

### INTRODUCTION

The state apparatus, which is an element of human resources for government agencies, has a role that determines the success of government administration and development. To form a good government apparatus to improve performance, a study is required regarding what factors influence the employee's performance. Research on how employees work continues to be a major concern for HR experts and practitioners. Many factors influencing performance have been studied, both from the

company's perspective and the personal point of view. This research involves various perspectives and indicates that understanding how employees work involves many complex aspects.

Employee engagement is a very important contributor to the success of an organization (Siswono, 2016). However, in contrast to this statement, it is still straightforward to find in many organizations with low levels of employee engagement. As reported by Sutiye et al. (2020) only a small percentage of employees feel tied to their place of work, even though engaged employees will have a desire to be connected which creates passion for their work, willing to sacrifice more put a lot of energy and time into their work, and become more proactive in achieving their work goals. A study by Kusumawati (2017) found that employees with high engagement tend to have above-average productivity (38% more likely) & good performance. Similar results were found in the research by Sucahyowati and Hendrawan (2020), Siswono (2016), and Azzam et al. (2021), (Yunus et al., 2023) and (Zacharias, 2024).

Researchers such as Gede & Priartini (2018) and Hasni et al. (2020) in the context of leadership, and Saifullah (2020) and Pebiyanti & Winarno (2021) in the context of work-life balance seek to understand their influence and roles. The findings of these studies provide further insight into how leadership and work-life balance (WLB) can impact the performance of individuals or organizations.

The organizational culture significantly influences how employees are engaged in their work. A positive and supportive culture enhances motivation and commitment, while a disconfirming culture can hurt employee engagement. Organizational cultural conditions that support employee work and development, as well as friendly and mutually helpful working conditions, can also help in forming an engaged attitude towards work. Adequate and proportionate compensation and benefits can also make employees feel engaged in their work. Other things regarding organizational culture that can help in forming employee engagement are a clear organizational mission and vision, treatment of other organizational members, work policies and work balance can influence the formation of employee engagement (Leung & Wijaya, 2016). Employee engagement at FKB and FEB Telkom University is influenced by organizational culture by 43.1% (Octaviani & Fakhri, 2017).

According to Ariani (2014) and Purwanto S.K. (2015), leaders must create a positive organizational environment to foster employee engagement. Research by Sari et al. (2017) indicates the importance of a leader's role in stimulating employee engagement, emphasizing that the success of creating organizational conditions that support engagement heavily depends on the actions and leadership style implemented by the leader.

Leadership style is a pattern that emphasizes leadership behavior or attitudes adopted by a leader in interacting with his subordinates. The leadership style used by an organizational leader will influence the feelings of his employees, including employee involvement. The importance of Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a crucial factor for organizations and employees, especially for the Y generation, is highlighted. Organizations are expected to meet these expectations because the Y generation is projected to be the largest group of workers in the future, as found in the study by Riyanto et al. in 2019. The research by Bezuidenhout and Schultz in 2013 indicates that transformational leadership positively impacts employee engagement, enhancing emotional and motivational attachment to work. Maintaining a balance between work and personal life is also essential to increase job satisfaction and reduce employee stress. Combining these two factors is vital to creating a positive work environment and enhancing employee well-being.

The balance between work and personal life is about finding ways to maintain equilibrium between work and personal time, and it is essential for everyone regardless of the type of job. The goal is to help employees feel balanced between work and personal life, making them more productive and achieving better results in their work. Creating this balance is crucial for employees to feel good and keep their work in good shape (Wardani & Firmansyah, 2019).

Based on research conducted by Aslam (2015) with 150 respondents showed that 95.8 percent of changes in performance for the better were caused by work-life balance. The research by Anugrah and Priyambodo (2021) indicates that the balance between work-life balance does not affect the level of performance. The study by Soomro et al. (2018) shows a positive impact on work-life balance and personal life productivity. In other words, both research findings demonstrate differences, suggesting variations in perspectives on the relationship between performance and work-life balance, which may be influenced by the context and research methodologies employed.

## METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive-quantitative approach with a correlational cause-and-effect type involving qualitative and quantitative data collection. The study's purpose is to identify the cause-and-effect relationship between independent and dependent variables, providing a framework to understand the impact or causes of the phenomenon under investigation. The sampling method in this study employs a total sample, where the entire population of 49 employees from the Fisheries Service of Central Maluku Regency is included. There is no specific selection of employees; instead, the entire relevant population is considered for the research.

The data analysis was conducted using two main methods: descriptive analysis to summarize conditions or variables and path analysis to identify the direct and indirect effects of exogenous variables. The results of path analysis provide in-depth insights into specific pathways that influence each other. This research aims to understand the investigated phenomena comprehensively. In a two-way equation model, two structural equations connect endogenous variables ( $Y_2$  &  $Y_1$ ) and exogenous variables ( $X_3$ ,  $X_2$ , &  $X_1$ ) based on a conceptual framework. The following notation is written for the path coefficients between the variables under investigation:

### Path Coefficients

1. From  $X_1$  to  $Y_2 = pY_2X_1$
2. From  $X_2$  to  $Y_2 = pY_2X_2$
3. From  $X_1$  to  $Y_1 = pY_1X_1$
4. From  $X_2$  to  $Y_1 = pY_1X_2$
5. From  $Y_1$  to  $Y_2 = pY_2Y_1$

The path analysis model contained in the conceptual framework can be written in the structural equation as follows:

### Substructure Equation 1

$$Y_1 = pY_1X_1 + pY_1X_2 + e_1$$

$X_1$  = Leadership

$X_2$  = Work-Life Balance

$Y_1$  = Employee Engagement

$e_1$  = Error term

$pY_1X_1$  = Path coefficient of  $X_1$

$pY_1X_2$  = Path coefficient of  $X_2$

### Substructure Equation 2

$$Y_2 = pY_2Y_1 + pY_2X_1 + pY_2X_2 + e_2$$

$Y_2$  = Performance

$Y_1$  = Employee Engagement

$X_1$  = Leadership

$X_2$  = Work-Life Balance

$e_2$  = Error term

$pY_2Y_1$  = Path coefficient of  $Y_1$

$pY_2X_1$  = Path coefficient of  $X_1$

$pY_2X_2$  = Path coefficient of  $X_2$

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The research explores the extent to which the balance between leadership variables and work-life can influence performance through the intervening variable of employee engagement. A statistical path analysis test is conducted to analyze this objective through the following equation:

### Structural Equations

1. First substructure equation

$$Z = b_1ZX_1 + b_2ZX_2 + E_1$$

## 2. Second substructure equation

$$Y = b_3 YX_1 + b_4 YZ + b_5 YX_2 + E_2$$

**Y** = Work performance

**Z** = Employee Engagement

**X<sub>1</sub>** = Leadership

**X<sub>2</sub>** = Work-Life Balance

**E<sub>2</sub>** = Unrevealed variables (error term)

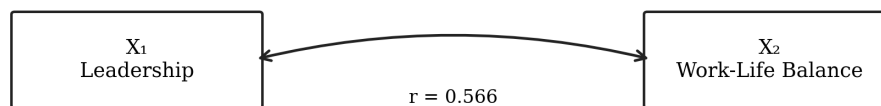
Data analysis is conducted as evidence to support the hypothesis, and the results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Correlation Analysis Between Variables**

| Variable | X1    | X2    |
|----------|-------|-------|
| X1       | 1,000 | 0,566 |
| X2       | 0,566 | 1,000 |

*Source: Primary data after processing, 2024*

The significant relationship between variables can be observed in Table 1, particularly in leadership and work-life balance (correlation 0.566). Figure 1 provides details on the relationships between the studied variables.



**Figure 1. Correlation between Variables X<sub>1</sub> and X<sub>2</sub>**

*Source: Primary data after processing, 2024*

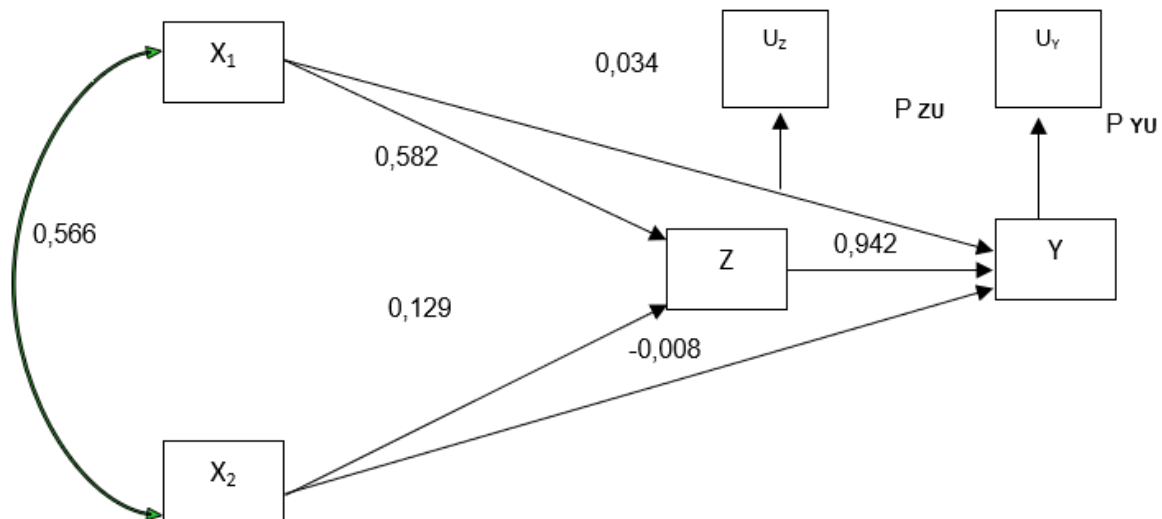
The following table illustrates the extent to which variables X1 and X2 influence Z and how much Z influences Y.

**Table 2. Path Analysis Statistical Test Results**

| Parameter Structure                                       | Path Coefficient (beta) | t-count | t-table | Sig.  | Decision                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|-------|-------------------------|
| X <sub>1</sub> to Z (pZ.X <sub>1</sub> )                  | 0.582                   | 7.778   | 2.000   | 0.000 | Ha accepted             |
| X <sub>2</sub> to Z (pZ.X <sub>2</sub> )                  | 0.129                   | 2.876   | 2.000   | 0.005 | Ha accepted             |
| Z to Y (pY.Z)                                             | 0.942                   | 26.077  | 2.000   | 0.000 | Ha accepted             |
| X <sub>1</sub> to Y (pY.X <sub>1</sub> )                  | 0.034                   | 0.929   | 2.000   | 0.613 | H <sub>0</sub> accepted |
| X <sub>2</sub> to Y (pY.X <sub>2</sub> )                  | -0.008                  | 0.264   | 2.000   | 0.756 | H <sub>0</sub> accepted |
| R <sup>2</sup> (X <sub>1</sub> , X <sub>2</sub> , Z to Y) | 0.924                   | -       | -       | -     | F = 500.400             |
| R <sup>2</sup> (X <sub>1</sub> , X <sub>2</sub> to Z)     | 0.528                   | -       | -       | -     | F = 69.285              |

*Source: Primary data after processing, 2024*

The table analysis indicates that the path coefficient tested simultaneously is declared significant, leading to the rejection of H<sub>0</sub> and acceptance of H<sub>1</sub>. The obtained results demonstrate a significant relationship in the model. In individual testing for the first path, the path coefficients from X<sub>1</sub> and X<sub>2</sub> to Z are also statistically significant, resulting in the rejection of H<sub>0</sub> and acceptance of H<sub>a</sub> for that path. The table analysis implies that variables X<sub>1</sub> and X<sub>2</sub> significantly influence variable Z. In the second path, the influence from X<sub>1</sub> and X<sub>2</sub> to Y is not significant, while the impact from variable Z to Y is significant. This information is further explained in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Structure of the Relationship Between Variables  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  with Performance (Y) through Employee Engagement (Z)**

*Source: Primary data after processing, 2024*

Based on the figure and table, the following is an explanation of the direct and indirect influence of each variable:

**Table 3. Direct and Indirect Effects of Leadership and Work-Life Balance on Employee Engagement and Performance**

| Effect                                     | Leadership (X1) | Work-Life Balance (X2) | Employee Engagement (Z) |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Direct to Z                                | 0,338           | 0,0166                 | -                       |
| Direct to Y                                | 0,001           | 0,000064               | 0,887                   |
| Indirect through correlative relationships | 0,00424         | 0,00424                | -                       |
| Indirect through Z                         | 0,343           | 0,0209                 | -                       |
| Total Effect                               | 0,686           | 0,004                  | 0,888                   |

*Source: Primary data after processing, 2024*

The analysis indicates that employee engagement has the most significant impact on performance, as evidenced by the coefficient of 0.887. In other words, every 1% increase in employee engagement can increase employee performance by 88.7%. Work-life balance has a more minor impact. A 1% increase in work-life balance will only increase employee engagement by 1.6%. Leadership also plays a role, with every 1% increase in leadership potentially increasing employee engagement by 33.8%. This conclusion provides insight into the most influential factors in improving employee performance.

The research indicates that work-life balance, leadership, and employee engagement collectively significantly influence employee performance by 88.8%. Employee engagement is a mediating factor that strengthens the positive impact of leadership and work-life balance on performance. In other words, strong support from leadership and work-life balance, especially when reinforced by high employee engagement, tends to enhance employee performance. The results show the direct impact of leadership, work-life balance, and employee engagement on performance.

Leadership and work-life balance variables do not directly influence performance, but their impact is conveyed through employee engagement. The Sobel test is used to assess the significance of this mediating role, and if the p-value is  $< 0.05$ , employee engagement is considered to mediate the influence significantly. Employee engagement is crucial as a connector or mediator, strengthening the positive impact of work-life balance and leadership on performance.

**Table 4. Sobel Test Results for the Mediating Role of Employee Engagement**

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | Mediating Variable  | p-value | Decision    |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|-------------|
| Leadership           | Performance        | Employee Engagement | 0.00015 | Significant |
| Work-Life Balance    | Performance        | Employee Engagement | 0.03    | Significant |

*Source: Primary data after processing, 2024*

Based on the Sobel test results, employee engagement significantly mediates the impact of leadership and work-life balance on performance. The p-value for leadership is 0.00015 and for work-life balance is 0.03, both less than 0.05, indicating meaningful mediation by employee engagement.

## **Discussion**

### **1. Direct Influence of Leadership on Employee Engagement**

The results of descriptive statistical analysis show that the perception of leadership by employees of the Central Maluku Regency Fisheries Service is very high based on seven key indicators. Leadership has a direct impact on employee engagement by 33.8%. With a significance value of 0.000 and a t-value of 7.778, which is higher than the critical t-table value of 2.000, it is evident that leadership significantly influences employee engagement.

Sari et al. (2017) also confirm these findings by emphasizing the importance of the leader's role in promoting employee engagement. The studies by Purwanto (2015) and Ariani (2014) underline the importance of leadership in creating a positive organizational climate and enhancing employee engagement. It emphasizes the need for a supportive work environment to motivate organization members. Ariani shows that the effectiveness of leadership in enhancing employee engagement highly depends on the applied leadership style. Both studies support that good adaptive leadership is vital to improving engagement and organizational effectiveness.

### **2. Direct Influence of Work-Life Balance on Employee Engagement**

The descriptive statistical analysis results indicate that most employees at the Central Maluku Regency Fisheries Service agree that they have a relatively good work-life balance, considering all existing indicators. This means they feel capable of managing their time and activities well between work and personal life. Work-life balance means creating conditions where we can perform well at work and have enough time to relax, enjoy entertainment, and interact with colleagues. This finding confirms that work-life balance is considered essential and beneficial for these employees in maintaining their quality of life.

Work-life balance has a significant impact on employee engagement by 1.66%. Statistical analysis with a t-value of 2.876 indicates that the observed differences are not by chance, with a significance value of 0.005, lower than the confidence level of 0.05. Therefore, work-life balance significantly influences employee engagement, and hypothesis 2 is accepted.

The balance between work and personal life (WLB) positively impacts organizations and employees, according to the research by Riyanto et al. (2019). Achieving WLB reduces stress, gives control to employees, and enhances job satisfaction, especially for Generation Y. Similar findings are found in the study by Wardani & Firmansyah (2019), highlighting the importance of WLB in improving productivity, engagement, and employee performance. Assistance in achieving WLB is considered a strategic step for these positive benefits.

### **3. Direct Influence of Employee Engagement on Performance**

The analysis results show a significant relationship between employee engagement and employee performance, with employee engagement having an impact of 88.7%. The high t-value indicates practical strength and vital statistical significance, with the t-value exceeding the set critical value. The low significance level confirms that this relationship is not coincidental. The results support the third hypothesis that was proposed, consistent with previous research by Munparidi & Sayuti (2020), which shows that employee engagement can improve worker performance.

Actively engaged employees demonstrate productive behavior, facilitating effective teamwork to achieve organizational goals and enhancing employee performance. This success is attributed to the ability of engaged employees to spread their positive feelings throughout the organization, creating a

positive atmosphere that motivates everyone. In simple terms, employee engagement benefits individuals and has a positive impact on the team and the organization as a whole.

Employee involvement refers to a condition in which employees have the motivation to improve their performance beyond the required job requirements, with a focus on the success of the company. Furthermore, employee engagement is considered something that can provide change to individuals, teams, and organizations (Letsoin & Ratnasari, 2020). Employee involvement influences changes in thought patterns and behavior determined by needs, motivation, and job satisfaction. Employee involvement results in higher productivity, increased production quality, production quantity, customer service, increased sales and management initiatives (Putri et al., 2018).

#### **4. Direct Influence of Leadership on Performance**

The analysis results show that the direct impact of leadership on performance is relatively small, about 0.1%, meaning that the way a leader leads has minimal direct impact on performance. Statistical analysis indicates that this difference is not statistically significant, as the calculated t-value is lower than the critical t-table value (2,000), and the significance value is higher than the commonly used confidence level (0.05). The findings lack strong statistical significance. The results obtained indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between leadership style and performance observed in this study. This study differs from previous research (Arianty, 2015), which emphasized the critical role of leadership in shaping and supporting individuals to achieve organizational goals. Leadership is considered critical for organizational success, especially in the context of high employee performance. These findings underscore the importance of the relationship between leadership and employee performance in achieving organizational goals. Given the importance of leadership to performance, leaders are needed who can indeed carry out their functions properly so that all parties in an organization can carry out their duties well.

The direct influence of leadership on performance is not significant, indicating that competent leadership does not necessarily improve performance. For government organizations, especially the Central Maluku Regency Fisheries Service, effective governance is needed to align with the goals, objectives, and organizational culture that will contribute to its success. Leaders must be committed to implementing the vision and mission they carry out. The organization's success depends not only on good leadership or governance but is influenced by several factors. Teamwork, subordinates' maturity, leadership, and entrepreneurial spirit all contribute to achieving the goals and overall success of the organization. In other words, these various elements are interconnected in shaping the success of an organization.

#### **5. Direct influence of work-life balance on performance**

The analysis indicates that the direct impact of WLB on performance is very minimal, approximately 0.0064%, with a statistically insignificant t-value ( $0.264 < 2.000$ ). The significance value of 0.756, exceeding the 0.05 confidence level, confirms this lack of significance. So the fifth hypothesis is rejected. Normatively, work-life balance cannot directly improve performance. Central Maluku Regency Fisheries Service employees are unable to improve their performance, even though the employees have a high work-life balance as indicated by the high balance of work life and the employee's personal life.

This statement notes a difference from the research by Riyanto et al. (2019), which states that some organizations provide employees with the option to choose between working or not, according to their needs. The study indicates that balancing work and personal life can significantly increase employees' contributions to organizational performance and strengthen their attachment to the company. In short, this option is favorable as it supports work-life balance, enhancing employee engagement and assistance within the organization.

Employees need to maintain a balance between work and personal life because career and job are inseparable parts. Therefore, assisting employees in achieving this balance is crucial. This effort improves productivity, engagement, and employee performance (Wardani & Firmansyah, 2019).

#### **6. Indirect Influence of Leadership on Performance Through Employee Engagement Mediation**

This study reveals that leadership significantly indirectly influences performance through employee engagement, contributing to 34.3% of the effect. The Sobel test confirms the presence of this mediating relationship with a very low p-value (0.00015), far below the standard significance threshold

(0.05), indicating that employee engagement is a crucial mediator in the relationship between leadership and performance. Employee engagement has been shown to increase loyalty and reduce the desire to leave the company, emphasizing the importance of effective leadership in enhancing performance and retaining employees. Hermawan's study (2011) highlights that employee engagement influences performance improvement, contributes to increased loyalty, and reduces employees' desire to leave the organization. Employee engagement is a crucial element in enhancing performance and retaining employees.

### **7. Indirect Influence of Work-Life Balance on Performance Through Employee Engagement Mediation**

WLB indirectly impacts employee performance, explained through the mediating role of employee engagement. The indirect effect is 2.09%, with a Sobel test p-value of 0.03, meeting the significance threshold of 0.05. the seventh hypothesis is accepted, confirming that employee engagement mediates the relationship between performance and work-life balance. This finding aligns with the perspective of Natalia and Rosiana (2020), stating that employee engagement reflects the positive attitude of employees toward the organization and the values upheld by that organization.

Employee engagement is the interest and positive participation of an employee through initiatives, efforts, and perseverance to achieve organizational goals. Employee engagement involves commitment, enthusiasm, and an individual's ability to contribute sustainably to the success of the organization, characterized by dedication and honesty. Engaged employees demonstrate high commitment and enthusiasm to contribute to achieving organizational success sustainably, and they possess dedication and integrity in their actions.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings demonstrate that leadership and work-life balance have significant positive effects on employee engagement, while employee engagement has a strong and significant effect on performance. Leadership and work-life balance do not directly exert significant effects on employee performance. However, both variables positively and significantly influence performance through employee engagement. Thus, employee engagement is the principal mechanism connecting leadership and work-life balance with employee performance at the Fisheries Service of Central Maluku Regency. Strengthening supportive leadership practices and work-life balance policies should therefore be directed toward building stronger employee engagement to improve sustainable performance.

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