

The Role of Leadership and Employee Engagement on Non-ASN Employee Retention Through Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of leadership and employee engagement on the retention of Non-ASN employees, with work motivation as a mediating variable at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai. The findings reveal that leadership and employee engagement both significantly enhance work motivation. Work motivation, in turn, has a direct positive effect on employee retention. Leadership and employee engagement also show significant direct effects on retention, indicating that supportive leadership practices and meaningful employee involvement strengthen employees' intention to remain in the organization. Additionally, work motivation mediates the relationships between leadership and retention as well as between employee engagement and retention. Overall, the study highlights the importance of effective leadership, strong employee engagement, and sustained work motivation in improving Non-ASN employee retention and enhancing organizational performance in the public sector.

Keywords: Leadership, Employee Engagement, Employee Retention, Work Motivation

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Introduction

In the dynamics of modern organizations, human resources are a strategic element that determines the success of an institution, both in the private and public sectors. For public organizations, the quality of services provided to the community is strongly influenced by the performance, loyalty, and commitment of employees. To achieve these goals, government institutions require human resources who are not only technically competent but also possess high work motivation and emotional attachment to the organization (Darmilisani, 2018). One of the main challenges faced by public institutions today is how to retain employees so that they remain motivated, committed, and willing to stay in the organization.

This phenomenon is also evident at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai, which is the focus of this study. The office is responsible for carrying out governmental functions related to public housing and settlement areas, and its operations rely heavily on the contributions of Non-Civil Servant (Non-ASN) employees as the front line in daily operations and public services. Based on preliminary observations and interviews, it was found that some Non-ASN employees showed suboptimal levels of motivation and engagement. Some appeared less enthusiastic in completing tasks, worked only to meet formal obligations, and often spent work hours on less productive activities. Complaints regarding the imbalance between workload and compensation, limited opportunities for self-development, and oneway communication patterns between leaders and subordinates further weakened work motivation. This condition also has the potential to decrease the retention and commitment of Non-ASN employees (Gunawan & Rizky, 2024).

In this context, leadership plays a crucial role in fostering work motivation and increasing employees' willingness to remain loyal to the organization. Effective leaders not only act as supervisors but also as role models who provide support, motivation, and recognition for the contributions of subordinates (Ginting & Rizky, 2025). Participative and communicative leadership styles can create a conducive work environment, enhance work motivation, and strengthen employees' attachment to the organization. Conversely, authoritarian leadership or leadership that lacks subordinate involvement in decision-making processes may reduce work enthusiasm, commitment, and ultimately employee retention (Fatimah & Darmilisani, 2025).

In addition to leadership, employee engagement also plays an important role in influencing work motivation and retaining productive and loyal employees. Employees who are emotionally and cognitively engaged in their work tend to have higher motivation and a stronger desire to contribute to the organization. Kahn (1990) explains that engagement is formed when individuals find meaning in their work, receive social support, and feel psychologically safe in the workplace. Thus, a high level of engagement not only contributes to improved performance but also strengthens motivation, which in turn has a positive impact on employee retention (Kurniawan & Rizky, 2025).

Previous studies also show that leadership and employee engagement significantly influence work motivation and retention. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) emphasize that effective leadership can create a positive work climate, increase trust, and foster employee enthusiasm and loyalty. This finding aligns with Subrata and Rizky (2024), who explain that the quality of leader–employee relationships directly affects retention through improved work quality. Arwita (2025) also finds that employee engagement has a positive and significant

effect on retention through increased job satisfaction and motivation. Furthermore, Affrizal and Mesra (2025) assert that improving leadership quality and work motivation plays a crucial role in strengthening retention because these factors create a supportive and meaningful work environment for employees.

Literature Review

2.1 Employee Retention

Employee retention is an important aspect of human resource management related to an organization's ability to retain its workforce for a long period of time. According to Mathis and Jackson (2016), employee retention reflects the extent to which an organization can create working conditions that make employees feel comfortable, satisfied, and willing to continue contributing. Meanwhile, Qomariah et al. (2023) define employee retention as a strategy to retain talented individuals by encouraging them to contribute more to the company. From these viewpoints, it can be concluded that employee retention is an organization's ability to retain high-quality employees by creating a supportive work environment, implementing fair reward systems, and fostering positive interpersonal relationships, so employees have the desire to stay and contribute to the organization.

2.2 Leadership

Leadership is an individual's ability to influence, direct, and motivate others to work effectively in achieving organizational goals. Gary Yukl (2013) states that leadership is a process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done, as well as facilitating individual or group efforts to achieve shared goals. Siagian (2015) describes leadership as the ability to direct, coordinate, and motivate subordinates so that they are willing to work effectively and efficiently in achieving organizational objectives. From these definitions, leadership can be concluded as an interpersonal process involving the ability to influence, motivate, and guide others to voluntarily and productively contribute to achieving organizational goals.

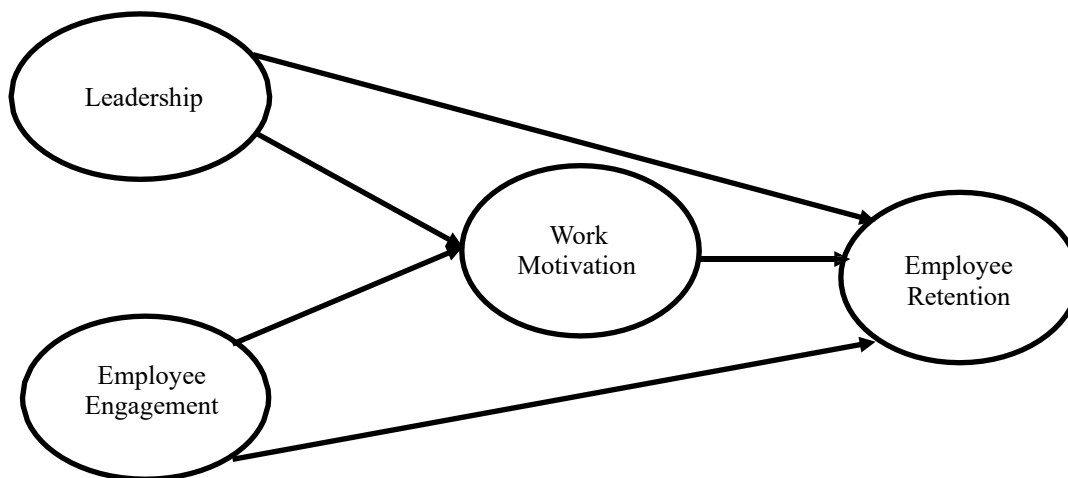
2.3 Employee Engagement

In the public sector, employee engagement is a crucial factor in ensuring effective and responsive public service delivery. Employees with high engagement levels tend to demonstrate loyalty, productivity, and proactive work behaviors (Kusumawardhani & Fitriani, 2023). Saks (2006) defines employee engagement as the level of commitment and emotional attachment an employee has toward their job and organization. He emphasizes that engagement consists of two dimensions: job engagement and organizational engagement. William A. Kahn (1990) explains that employee engagement is a condition in which individuals express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in performing their job roles. In other words, engagement involves an individual's full presence in their work—physical energy, mental focus, and emotional attachment. Meanwhile, Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) define employee engagement as a management strategy that enables employees to express their ideas and capabilities to achieve organizational goals. Based on these expert definitions, employee engagement reflects the extent to which individuals feel physically, emotionally, and cognitively involved in performing their job roles.

2.4 Work Motivation

Work motivation is a key aspect of organizational behavior that influences how individuals act, perform, and contribute to organizational objectives. Hasibuan (2016) defines work motivation as an internal drive that encourages a person to act in order to achieve specific goals, whether triggered by internal factors (such as needs, desires, and expectations) or external factors (such as rewards and work environment). Robbins and Judge (2017) describe motivation as a process explaining the intensity, direction, and persistence of an individual's efforts toward achieving work goals. Thus, individuals with high motivation will exert greater effort to complete tasks despite challenges. From these definitions, work motivation can be concluded as an internal and external drive that fosters enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence in individuals to carry out their duties to achieve organizational goals.

Research Model and Hypotheses



Research Framework

- H1 Leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation among Non-ASN employees at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai.
- H2 Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on work motivation among Non-ASN employees at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai.
- H3 Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee retention among NonASN employees at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai.
- H4 Leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee retention among Non-ASN employees at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai.
- H5 Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee retention among Non-ASN employees at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai.
- H6 Work motivation mediates the effect of leadership on employee retention among NonASN employees at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai.
- H7 Work motivation mediates the effect of employee engagement on employee retention among Non-ASN employees at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative method with a causal associative approach. The main objective is to examine the relationships and influences among variables, namely leadership style, training, competence, work discipline, and employee engagement. The data used consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through a direct survey of 42 NonASN employees working at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai. The primary data were collected through structured questionnaires. Data measurement was conducted using a Likert scale, which is a scale used to measure an individual's attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding a particular object or phenomenon (Siregar, 2016). The process of data processing and analysis was carried out using SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares), a software capable of testing structural models and latent variable influences simultaneously.

Result

5.1 SEM-PLS Model Analysis Results

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model was carried out to test the validity and reliability of the indicators toward the latent constructs.

1. Convergent Validity Test

Based on the data processing results using SmartPLS, all indicator outer loading values were above 0.70, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct were above 0.50. This indicates that all indicators meet the requirements for convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021).

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	
Leadership	0,627
Employee Engagement	0,640
Work Motivation	0,662
Employee Retention	0,710

All constructs have AVE values above 0.50. Thus, all constructs meet the criteria for convergent validity. This means that the indicators used are consistent in reflecting each measured construct, and the measurement model is appropriate to proceed to the next stage, such as discriminant validity testing or structural analysis.

2. Reliability Test

The reliability of the constructs was measured using two main indicators: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency among indicators within a construct, while Composite Reliability assesses the overall reliability of the construct by considering the indicator weights. According to Hair et al. (2019), the criteria used are:

1. Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70 indicates good reliability.
2. Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70 indicates that the construct has high internal consistency and is dependable.

Reliability Test Results Table			
Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability Description	
Leadership	0,965	0,968	Reliable
Employee Engagement	0,937	0,947	Reliable
Work Motivation	0,953	0,959	Reliable
Employee Retention	0,966	0,970	Reliable

Source: Processed Data, 2025

All constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, indicating that all variables in the model are reliable. This means that each indicator within the constructs consistently measures the intended concept, and the measurement results can be trusted for subsequent analyses.

3. Coefficient Determination (R^2)

The extent to which other variables influence the dependent variable can be measured using the coefficient of determination (R-square). The R-Square values generated from the data processing using SmartPLS 3.0 are as follows:

Coefficient of Determination Table	
Variable	R Square
Work Motivation	0,953
Employee Retention	0,900

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The R Square value indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous construct that can be explained by the exogenous constructs in the research model. Based on the analysis results, the Work Motivation variable has an R Square value of 0.953, meaning that 95,3% of the variance in work motivation can be explained by the independent variables in the model, while the remaining 4,7% is influenced by factors outside the study. This value falls into the very strong category, indicating that the model has a high predictive ability for work motivation. Furthermore, the Employee Retention variable achieved an R Square value of 0.900, indicating that 90% of the variance in employee retention is influenced by the variables used in the model, while the remaining 10% is explained by factors outside the model. This value also reflects a very strong level of explanation, suggesting that the overall model has a high predictive strength in explaining employee retention.

5.1 SEM-PLS Analysis

The latent variables in this study consist of four variables. In accordance with the operational definitions, each latent variable has its own unique manifest indicators. SEM-PLS analysis is used to determine the relationships among these variables through two evaluation stages: the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and the evaluation of the structural model (inner model).

a. Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The outer model is a measurement model used to assess the validity and reliability of the indicators for each latent construct (Ghozali, 2015). This evaluation ensures that each indicator consistently and accurately reflects the construct it is intended to measure. Convergent validity is assessed using loading factor values and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicators are considered valid if their loading factor exceeds 0.70 and their AVE value is greater than 0.50. Discriminant validity is then evaluated using cross-loading values, ensuring that each indicator correlates more strongly with its own construct than with other constructs. Construct reliability is tested using Composite Reliability, which measures the internal consistency of indicators within a construct. A Composite Reliability value above 0.70 indicates good reliability. Using the SmartPLS software, the validation and reliability of all latent variables were analyzed during the measurement model evaluation. The results of the data processing are summarized in the outer model diagram presented in Figure 1, which illustrates the relationships between indicators and latent constructs in this study.

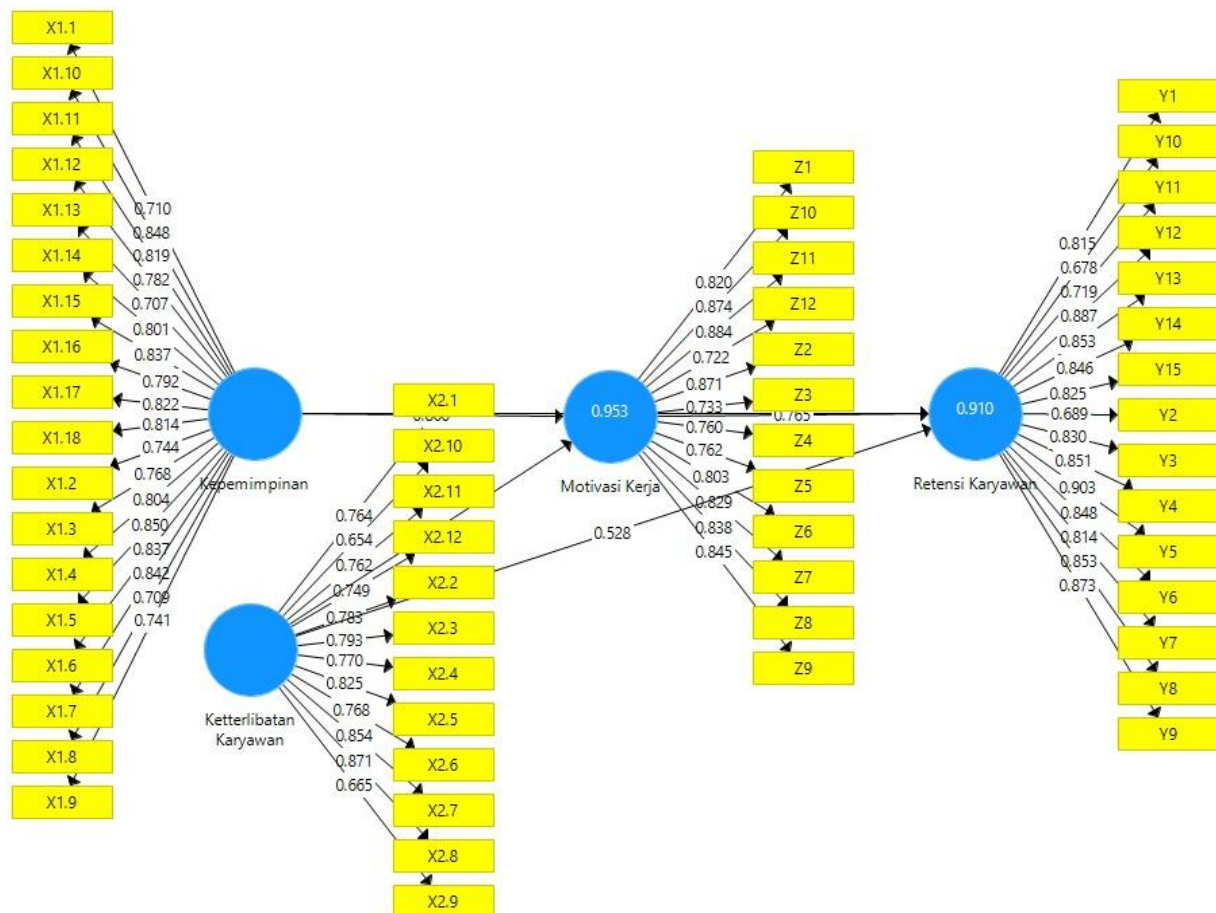


Figure 1. Outer Model

Based on the initial outer loading model shown in the figure above, it can be seen that three indicators were eliminated, namely X29, X210, Y2 and Y10, because their loading factor values were below the required threshold, generally below 0.70. This indicates that these indicators did not contribute sufficiently in reflecting the latent construct they were intended to measure. The removal of these indicators aims to improve the overall validity and reliability of the measurement model. After the elimination process, the final outer model demonstrates that the measurement structure has improved and fully meets the necessary requirements.

Therefore, the final outer model presented is considered complete and appropriate to proceed to the structural model analysis stage

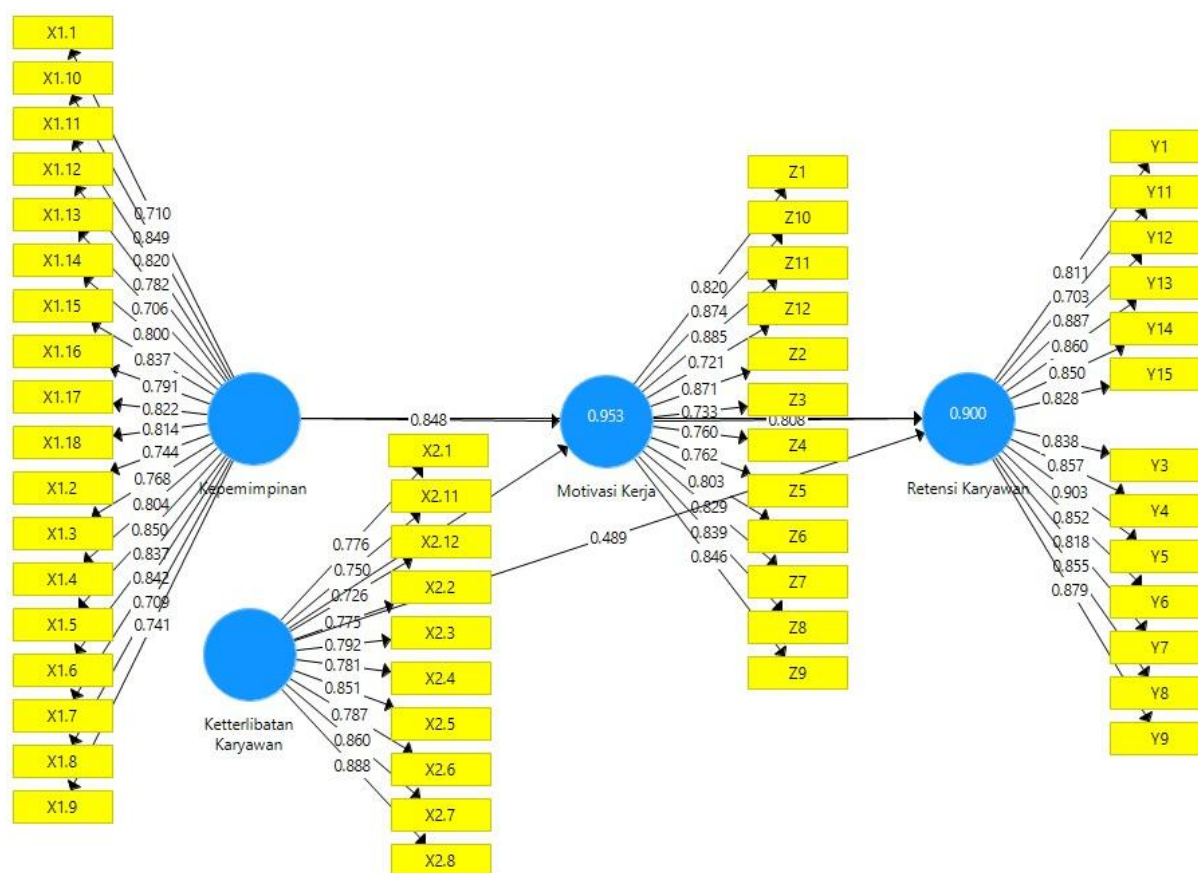


Figure 2. Fixed Model

b. Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model) – Hypothesis Testing

There are four latent variables in the inner model, and the assessment of the inner model is used to determine how these variables are related to each other. Path coefficients and Tstatistic values were obtained using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. The criteria used are T-statistic > T-table = 1.66 and P-value < 0.05, indicating that the variables in the model have a strong positive influence. The bootstrapping results using SmartPLS are shown in the table below.

Bootstrapping Results Table

	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	
Leadership → Work Motivation	19,564	0,000	H1 Accepted
Employee Engagement → Work Motivation	3,055	0,002	H2 Accepted
Work Motivation → Employee Retention	5,467	0,000	H3 Accepted
Leadership → Employee Retention	2,713	0,007	H4 Accepted

Employee Engagement → Employee Retention	5,980	0,000	H5 Accepted
Leadership → Work Motivation → Employee Retention	5,131	0,000	H6 Accepted
Employee Engagement → Work Motivation → Employee Retention	2,808	0,005	H7 Accepted

Significance testing in the structural model uses the T-statistic and P-value to determine whether the influence between variables is significant. Generally, a relationship is considered significant when T-statistic > 1.96 and P-value < 0.05 (Hair et al., 2021).

1. Leadership → Work Motivation

The T-statistic is 19,564 and the P-value is 0.000. Since T-statistic > 1.96 and P-value < 0.05, the effect is significant, and therefore H1 is accepted. This means that the better the leadership displayed by supervisors, the higher the employees' work motivation.

2. Employee Engagement → Work Motivation

The T-statistic is 3.055 and the P-value is 0.002 indicating a significant effect. Thus, H2 is accepted. This means that higher employee engagement leads to higher work motivation.

3. Work Motivation → Employee Retention

The T-statistic is 5.467 and the P-value is 0.000. Since it meets the significance criteria, H3 is accepted. This shows that work motivation positively influences employee retention, where motivated employees are more likely to remain in the organization.

4. Leadership → Employee Retention

The T-statistic is 2.713 and the P-value is 0.007, indicating a significant effect. Therefore, H4 is accepted. This means that effective leadership directly contributes to higher retention of Non-ASN employees in the organization.

5. Employee Engagement → Employee Retention

The T-statistic is 5.980 and the P-value is 0.000. Since the values are significant, H5 is accepted. This means that higher employee engagement increases the likelihood of employees remaining in the organization.

6. Leadership → Work Motivation → Employee Retention

The T-statistic is 5.131 and the P-value is 0.000. Since the effect is significant, H6 is accepted. This indicates that work motivation significantly mediates the effect of leadership on employee retention, meaning that good leadership increases retention through higher work motivation.

7. Employee Engagement → Work Motivation → Employee Retention

The T-statistic is 2.808 and the P-value is 0.005. Since these values are significant, this mediation hypothesis is accepted. This means that employee engagement can indirectly increase retention through increased work motivation.

Overall, the test results show that leadership and training have strong direct and indirect effects on employee engagement, while the influence of competence through work discipline has not been fully supported in this research model.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that leadership has a significant effect on the work motivation of Non-ASN employees at the Housing and Settlement Area Office of Binjai City. This finding reinforces the notion that leaders who provide clear direction, consistent support, and recognition for employee performance can enhance employees' work motivation. This result is consistent with the findings of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), who emphasized that supportive leadership contributes to increased motivation and work energy. A study by Ayu Rahma Suci (2025) also supports this, noting that transformational leadership styles can enhance motivation because they create positive, inspiring, and encouraging work relationships.

In addition to leadership, employee engagement was also found to significantly influence work motivation. When employees feel emotionally and cognitively involved in their tasks, they tend to show higher enthusiasm. This supports Kahn's (1990) theory of employee engagement, which arises when individuals find meaning in their work, gain social support, and feel psychological safety. Arwita (2025) similarly showed that employee engagement is directly correlated with increased motivation and work commitment, where employees who feel involved are more enthusiastic in completing their responsibilities.

Work motivation was also shown to significantly affect employee retention. This indicates that employees who feel motivated are more likely to remain in the organization. This finding aligns with the study by Rifki Suwaji et al. (2025), which stated that strong internal motivation strengthens employees' desire to stay, even when facing challenges in the work environment.

Furthermore, the direct influence of leadership on employee retention was also found to be significant. Leaders who can develop positive interpersonal relationships, act fairly, provide constructive feedback, and appreciate employees' achievements cultivate a sense of being valued, which in turn enhances loyalty. This result is consistent with the findings of Rifki Suwaji et al. (2025), emphasizing that positive leader–employee relationships play an important role in strengthening retention.

Similarly, employee engagement was shown to have a significant effect on retention. Employees who feel involved in organizational processes and perceive that their contributions matter tend to demonstrate stronger commitment to stay. Arwita (2025) also noted that higher levels of engagement are associated with better job satisfaction and retention, as employees feel they are part of the organization's success.

Furthermore, work motivation was found to mediate the relationship between leadership and retention, as well as between employee engagement and retention. This indicates that leadership and engagement not only have direct effects on retention but also indirect effects through increased work motivation. Employees who are well-led and feel involved in their work tend to be more motivated, which ultimately increases their intention to remain in the organization. This mediating effect is consistent with the study of Afrizal and Mesra (2025), which emphasized that work motivation strengthens the relationship between positive work experiences and the desire to stay.

The findings of this study reinforce previous research showing that employee retention is influenced by leadership quality, employee engagement levels, and the work motivation that

emerges. These factors are essential in maintaining the stability of Non-ASN employees in government institutions and improving the effectiveness of public service delivery.

Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the influence of leadership and employee engagement on the retention of Non-ASN employees, with work motivation as a mediating variable at Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman Kota Binjai. Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, several key conclusions can be drawn.

First, leadership is proven to have a significant effect on work motivation. This indicates that effective, communicative, and supportive leadership practices are able to enhance employees' intrinsic motivation in performing their duties. Second, employee engagement also has a significant effect on work motivation, indicating that emotional and cognitive involvement in work encourages higher energy and work commitment among employees. Third, work motivation has a direct influence on the retention of Non-ASN employees. Employees with high motivation tend to feel comfortable, valued, and have a strong desire to remain in the organization. Fourth, leadership has a direct effect on employee retention, meaning that the quality of the relationship between leaders and subordinates is an important factor in building employee loyalty to the organization. Fifth, employee engagement significantly increases retention. The greater the involvement of employees in organizational processes and activities, the stronger their intention to stay. In addition to its direct effects, this study also shows that work motivation serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership and retention, as well as between employee engagement and retention. This means that leadership and employee engagement not only directly influence retention but also indirectly through increased work motivation.

Overall, this study emphasizes that efforts to improve the retention of Non-ASN employees in government institutions must be carried out through strengthening effective leadership practices, enhancing employee engagement, and continuously managing work motivation. These three aspects serve as an essential foundation for maintaining workforce stability, improving the quality of public services, and reinforcing overall organizational performance.

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