

Mediating Role of Public Service Motivation in Enhancing the Effect of Spiritual Leadership on Felt Obligation and Affective Commitment

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ABSTRAK

Mendorong perasaan positif di tempat kerja adalah penting dalam organisasi publik. Sedangkan kepemimpinan dan motivasi diakui sebagai hal yang dapat meningkatkan bentuk positif sikap dan perilaku individu antar individu. Dengan mengintegrasikan konsep kepemimpinan dan motivasi sebagai determinan sikap karyawan, tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis tentang bagaimana motivasi pelayanan publik dapat memediasi pengaruh kepemimpinan spiritual terhadap komitmen afektif dan kewajiban yang dirasakan. Metode kuantitatif digunakan sebagai paradigma deduktif penelitian dengan teknik purposive sampling yang digunakan untuk memperoleh 97 PNS yang berperan sebagai responden dalam penelitian ini yang bekerja di dua Instansi Pemerintah di Provinsi Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa lima hipotesis yang diajukan dalam penelitian ini dikonfirmasi, tetapi ada satu hubungan yang ditemukan memiliki efek yang tidak signifikan, yaitu efek langsung dari kepemimpinan spiritual pada kewajiban yang dirasakan. Implikasi utama dari temuan ini mengungkapkan tentang peran penting motivasi pegawai layanan publik dalam memperkuat kepemimpinan spiritual dalam meningkatkan komitmen afektif dan kewajiban yang dirasakan.

ABSTRACT

Encouraging positive feelings at work is important in a public organization. While leadership and motivation are recognized as things that can improve the positive form of individual attitudes and behavior among individuals. By integrating the concepts of leadership and motivation as determinants of employee attitudes, the purpose of this research is to analyze about how public service motivation could mediate the effect of spiritual leadership towards affective commitment and felt obligation. Quantitative method is used as a research deductive paradigm with a purposive sampling technique used to obtain 97 civil servants that take part as respondent in this study who work in two Government Agencies in the Province of North Sumatra, Indonesia. Findings indicate that five hypotheses proposed in the study were confirmed, but there was one relationship that was found to have an insignificant effect, which is the direct effect of spiritual leadership on felt obligation. Main implication of the findings reveals about the significant role of public service employee motivation in strengthening spiritual leadership in improving both affective commitment and felt obligation.

1. INTRODUCTION

A public organization is a form of organization that is not profit-oriented but has added value to the community. Government agencies that are active in providing quality public services are important to continue to be managed properly so that it can encourage satisfaction for service users (Dewi & Suparno, 2022; Duriat & Vaughan, 2020; Erlianti, 2019; Giovanis et al., 2015). While the performance of public services from government agencies is an important issue and its management is certainly supported by important elements in the organization, one of which is the civil servants who work in it (Abdussamad, 2019; Muhdar et al., 2018; Prasetya et al., 2017). Therefore, managing public organizations contains interesting challenges, especially in attracting individuals who are willing to be involved in the process of delivering services to the community. While many people are considering that the goals of public

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organizations are not the same as private organizations, nowadays the challenges for both public and private organizations are growing and more dynamic. It has brought a new understanding of how to manage existing resources to achieve organizational goals. Managing human resources is well known and recognized as very important for organizations, and how much sense of obligation a person has in his work certainly has a positive impact on the resulting work outcomes. In public organizations, human resources have an important role to help the organization reach its goals. Therefore, encouraging felt obligation for employees is important to increase added value and competitiveness for the public organization (Paillé & CccValéau, 2021; Roch et al., 2019; Simo et al., 2014). This shows the importance of studying felt obligation as the main outcome in behavioral research on public organizations.

As previously stated, managing employees in public organizations are often oriented toward proactive behavior in the job as well as strong felt obligation to support their work when providing services to the public (Agustina & Harijanto, 2022; Caesens et al., 2016; Strauss et al., 2015; Zagenczyk et al., 2021). In addition to the individual outcomes, it is argued that the leadership characteristics could support the creation of a positive work climate and encouragement for individuals who work in organizations, especially public organizations (Bellé & Cantarelli, 2018; Gupta et al., 2017). However, although normatively leadership is often seen as crucial in organizational management, the extent to which it can encourage a sense of obligation and a positive attitude in general from employees working in public organizations is still a matter of debate. As far as the researcher is concerned, from the previous literature, there has not been a well-considered or solid relationship between spiritual leadership and felt obligation. Several previous empirical results have discussed group-focused leadership as a determinant of felt obligation, or responsible leadership that is considered an antecedent of felt obligation (Lorinkova & Perry, 2019; Zhu et al., 2021). In the context of a research model involving spiritual leadership, felt obligation can moderate the effect of career success expectation (as an outcome of spiritual leadership) toward employee voice. Therefore, the weak effect from spiritual leadership on felt obligation, either directly or indirectly, is one of the important research gaps in this study. Theoretically, leadership has been considered as something that can be related to the form of individual attitudes and behaviors in organizations (Chen & Li, 2013; Noruzy et al., 2013). Leadership is a form of external encouragement from a leader in intervening individual attitudes and behavior to direct activities towards achieving organizational goals. The right leadership pattern has been believed to have a major impact on changes in the results or outcomes achieved by the organization (Jeon & Choi, 2020; Rumangkit, 2020). The role of the leader in an organization is fundamental not only in making important decisions regarding the organization but also in allocating resources and directing activities within the organization to achieve its goals. It is generally known that good quality leadership is certainly expected to encourage employee motivation at work. Employees who have great motivation at work can certainly increase their sense of psychological and emotional attachment to the organization.

In its development, the concept of leadership has grown rapidly in its application in various sectors. Leadership pattern applied in various cross-sectoral organizations provides an understanding that different leadership patterns have the potential to bring different results in all level within the organization (Bauer et al., 2022; Caldwell, 2017). Leadership is what makes the difference in managing an organization, as a leader must be able to make decisions, allocate resources, and lead to the better accomplishment. As one form of leadership, spiritual leadership is believed to be able to create positive climate as spiritual based and contribute to organizational effectiveness (Braun & Peus, 2018; Iqbal & Zaidi, 2021). Spiritual leadership was initially studied in military organizations and its development has been applied to various cross-sectoral organizations (Braun & Peus, 2018; Iqbal & Zaidi, 2021). Spiritual leadership is a non-mainstream leadership pattern that can contribute positively, especially in efforts to modify individual attitudes and behaviors in an organization.

Concerning about individual attitudes, organizational commitment is one of the constructs that is commonly studied in various cross-sectoral organizations, and certainly cannot be separated from public organizations (Permadi et al., 2018; Putranto et al., 2018). Organizational commitment is often associated with leadership in an organization. In its conceptual development since it was first introduced by experts, a review of commitment has provided very interesting descriptions and information for researchers and practitioners in organizations (Meyer et al., 2013; Meyer & Morin, 2016). With various patterns of relationships that are formed in the mechanism of organizational attitudes, affective commitment is often considered the most prominent aspect of commitment (Mercurio, 2015; Moldogaziev & Silvia, 2015). Previous findings have shown that oftenly affective commitment is considered as outcome of the model framework developed in a study (Agustina et al., 2021; Ida Bagus Agung Dharmanegara et al., 2016; Mercurio, 2015; Pradesa, 2018; Pradesa & Tanjung, 2021).

Individual motivation could be understood as the form of internal encouragement that is about what people feel about their driver to do something. The motivation given to government employees is

different from the motivation given to private company employees. motivation in government employees is called public service motivation, which its aims focusing to encourage employees to provide the best service for public (Perry, 2014a; Van Witteloostuijn et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2017). The development and dynamics of this concept always occurs with the emergence of expert opinions, therefore this concept is still relevant till today (Amegavi & Mensah, 2020; Caillier, 2015; Perry, 2014b; Triono et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). It is argued by many authors that the role of public service motivation in organizations is undeniable and very essential, especially in building internal encouragement from employees to work well. Empirically the form of internal encouragement to work in public sector is an substantial factor in making impact on other forms of attitudes and behaviors such as organizational commitment and specifically affective commitment (Agustina et al., 2021; Frastika & Franksiska, 2021; Im et al., 2016; Putranto et al., 2018). As previously reviewed, public service motivation can be closely linked to several antecedents such as compensation received and viewed from the perspective of job-demand resources such as burnout and engagement (Agustina et al., 2022; Borst et al., 2019; I. B. A. Dharmanegara et al., 2021; Ugaddan & Park, 2017). This form of motivation for public officers becomes the basis for strengthening the organizational values and goals which is manifested in the form of individual attitudes and behavior.

While public service motivation can be seen as the most important thing in internal strengthening for individuals who work in public organizations, examining how leadership can strengthen this as well as encourage its impact on other forms of attitude becomes interesting to do in the area of organizational behavior studies. One of the appealing things about the conceptual framework that is built in this study is the connection between spiritual leadership and felt obligation. While previous research highlighted affective commitment as a result of various mechanisms such as organizational justice and leadership, affective commitment as the main component of organizational commitment considered as a shape of attitude towards the organization related to psychological and emotional attachment (Dawud et al., 2018; Mercurio, 2015; Nazir et al., 2019; Pradesa & Tanjung, 2021; Rahayu & Kusumaputri, 2016; Rumangkit, 2020; W. Lam & Liu, 2014). Some previous empirical research has reviewed the connection between spiritual leadership with affective commitment and recently felt obligation considered an important outcome as a social exchange mechanism (Harijanto et al., 2022; Jeon & Choi, 2020; Pradesa & Tanjung, 2021; Rahayu & Kusumaputri, 2016; Zagenczyk et al., 2021). The effect of spiritual leadership on public service motivation will be more interesting to review. It is hoped that it can encourage an employee to complete his work with his spiritual leadership. The question that arises from the background above is what is the role of public service motivation in mediating the effect of spiritual leadership on affective commitment and felt obligation? Investigate the role of public service motivation in the theoretical framework of leadership towards the results in the form of a good attitude mechanism towards the organization (affective commitment) and work (felt obligation) provides an important picture of how to manage employees in the public sector. An important objective of this study is to test empirically about how the spiritual leader can encourage employee willingness in serving the public and increase psychological attachment to the organization and feel obliged to give the best at job.

2. METHODS

Based on the research background, as well as the research questions that have been determined, a conceptual research framework can be drawn up as shown in Figure 1. A more suitable positivist paradigm is applied, therefore quantitative methods are used in this research. As explanatory research, the subjects are civil servants who work in two government agencies of North Sumatra Province, Indonesia.

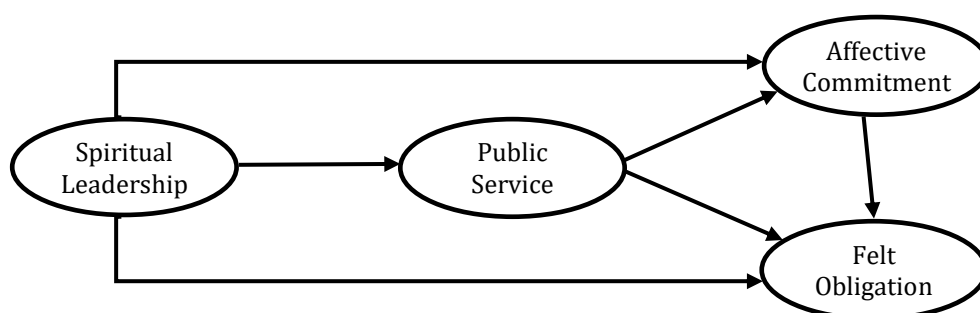


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Theoretically, leadership can be associated with motivation, commitment, and felt obligation. The conceptual framework in Figure 1 implies the important role of public service motivation in mediating the effect of spiritual leadership on affective commitment and felt obligation. This research was conducted at two government agencies in Medan, which are Department of Population and Civil Registration of North Sumatra Province and Research and Development Agency of North Sumatra Province. Data was collected by providing an online questionnaire to the target sample who worked in the two government offices for one month. Procedurally, the survey link containing the research instrument was given to the personnel department and then distributed to all previously identified employees. A total of 97 civil servants participated and willing to become respondents and respond to questionnaires were distributed in this study. As explanatory research, this research goal is to explain the key role of intervening variables that could mediate the effect of spiritual leadership on affective commitment and felt obligation. Analyzing felt obligation among employees is very crucial and this can be related to other forms of attitude such as motivation and affective commitment.

The instruments that will be developed in this study are the following existing concepts, and there are four research instruments developed in this study, including spiritual leadership as an independent variable, public service motivation as an intervening variable, affective commitment and felt obligation as a dependent variables. Three indicators adopted from previous research measuring spiritual leadership came from scales, while four other indicators were also adopted from similar research in measuring public service motivation (Iqbal & Zaidi, 2021; Perry, 2014a). Meanwhile, the affective commitment instrument adopted by consists of six indicators (Meyer et al., 2013). Felt obligation adopts an instrument from consisting of five indicators (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015). The questions are arranged using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument goes through a process of reliability testing, to assess the constancy of the research instrument used. The results of the Cronbach alpha value found above the critical value (α spiritual leadership = 0.662; α public service motivation = 0.751; α affective commitment = 0.786; α felt obligation= 0.840). Based on the conceptual framework and hypotheses proposed in this study, structural equation modeling is used to answer research questions as well as to test each of the proposed hypotheses. The data collected was analyzed using Smart-PLS, considering the number of samples below 150.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Primary data that has been collected is compiled and processed using statistical software tools. The primary data collected in this case in the form of answers from 97 respondents to the statements available in the questionnaire that has been distributed before. One of the primary data collected was information regarding demographic data in the form of gender, age, educational background, and work tenure of the employees who were respondents in this study. Table 1 explain about demographic data of the respondents.

Table 1. Categories of Respondent Characteristics

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	38	39.2
Female	59	60.8
Age		
Under 25 years	3	3.1
25 - 35 years	30	30.9
36 - 45 years	41	42.3
Above 45 years	23	23.7
Educational Background		
Junior High School	1	1.0
Senior High School	40	41.2
Bachelor Degree	56	57.7
Work Tenure		
< 5 years	11	11.3
6 - 10 years	47	48.5
above 10 years	39	40.2

Referring to [Table 1](#), the characteristics of respondents can be identified based on several categories, ranging from age, gender, educational background, to work tenure. Respondents in this study are known to be the majority of female employees (59 people or 60.8 percent of the respondents), and the remaining 38 people, or 39.2 percent of respondents are male employees. From the age category, the majority of respondents are 36-45 years old (41 people or 42.3 percent of respondents), then 30 people, or 30.9 percent of respondents are employees aged 25-35 years. A total of 23 people or 23.7 percent of respondents are employees above 45 years, with a total of 3 people, or 3.1 percent of respondents under 25 years of age. Based on educational background, the majority of employees are bachelor's degree graduates (56 people or 57.7 percent) and 40 people or 41.2 percent of respondents are senior high school graduates. It is known that 1 person or 1 percent of the respondents have graduated from junior high school. The majority of respondents work in the North Sumatra Provincial Government offices and have tenure of 6-10 years (47 people or 48.5 percent of respondents). Then 39 people or 40.2 percent have a working period of more than 10 years, and the remaining only 11 people, or 11.3 percent have a working period of fewer than 5 years.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic, Standard Deviation, and Correlation of Each Construct

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Spiritual Leadership	4.10	1.508	(.662)			
Public Service Motivation	3.91	2.415	.743**	(.751)		
Affective Commitment	3.94	3.188	.604**	.664**	(.786)	
Felt Obligation	3.52	3.286	.546**	.666**	.664**	(.840)

Notes: **p, 0.01; *p, 0.05.

[Table 2](#) shows the mean and standard deviation of each construct, as well as the value of the coefficient of correlation between the variables in this study. Findings have shown that the mean value for the variables found ranged from 3.52 to 4.10. In this research model, it is found that respondents perceive spiritual leadership as the highest perceived by employees, while it is surprising that felt obligation is found to be the lowest perceived by employees.

Table 3. Variables, Mean and Loading Factor

Variables	Indicator	Mean	Loading Factor
Spiritual Leadership $\alpha = 0.662$	Vision	3.88	0.838
	Hope / Faith	4.12	0.768
	Altruistic Love	4.30	0.664
Public Service Motivation $\alpha = 0.751$	Attraction to policymaking	4.05	0.843
	Compassion	4.10	0.649
	Commitment to the public interest	3.60	0.723
	Social Justice	3.91	0.801
Affective Commitment $\alpha = 0.786$	Working in an organization has great personal value	4.25	0.439
	Feel a great sense of belonging	4.16	0.818
	Proud to tell about working for the organization	3.98	0.797
	Emotionally and psychologically attached to the organization	3.99	0.670
	Care about the organization's overall	3.76	0.836
	Feel as if the organizational problem is also personal	3.52	0.584
	A personal obligation to help the organization to achieve its goals	3.37	0.716
Felt Obligation $\alpha = 0.840$	A personal obligation convincing to get high-quality results	3.53	0.805
	Obligation to take time from personal schedule	3.16	0.786
	Obligation to serve others and satisfy them	3.72	0.832
	Owe to give about 100 percent energy	3.86	0.738

Based on [Table 3](#), from the value of the loading factor, vision is the thing that most reflects spiritual leadership according to respondents. Meanwhile, attraction to policymaking is the thing that most reflects public service motivation. Furthermore, feeling caring about the organization entirely reflects affective commitment. Finally, the feeling of obligation to serve and satisfy others is the indicator that best reflects the felt obligation of the employees. The loading factors between variables range from 0.546 to 0.743.

Cronbach's alpha for each variable (greater than 0.60), which ranges from 0.625 to 0.843. Based on these results, all of the observed variables in this model are categorized as reliable.

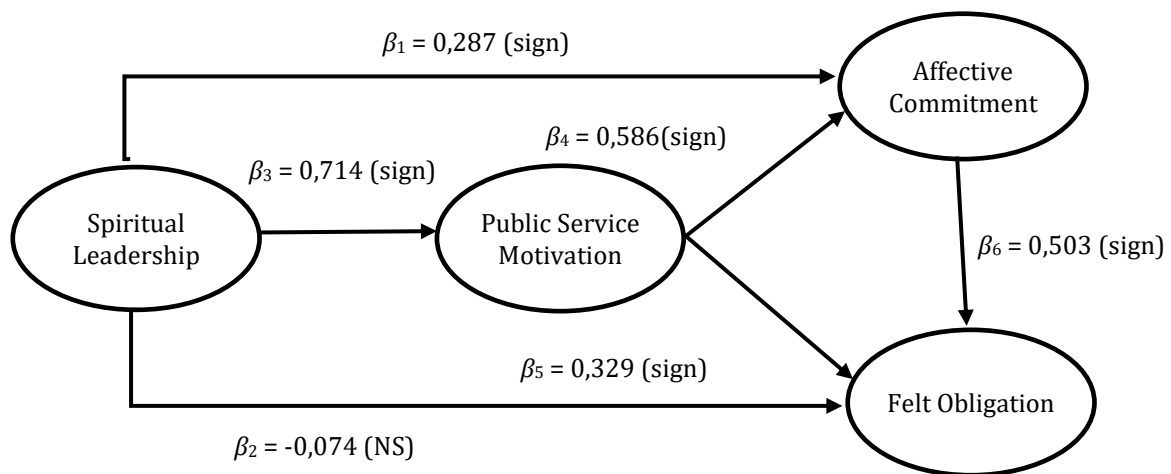


Figure 2. Path Coefficient

The results of the calculation of the beta coefficient value for each relationship between variables in the research model can be seen in Figure 2. Based on the results of the study, interesting findings can be revealed, including: (a) The enormous effect of spiritual leadership on public service motivation. The value of this coefficient was even found to be the largest effect in the connection between variables in the model. The findings are interesting when considered about how the typology of public service motivation as a form of motivation felt by individuals working in the public sector can be influenced by spiritual leadership, which considered as a leadership pattern that is different and unique to be applied to public sector organizations; (b) Public service motivation was known as the most crucial factor in determine affective commitment when compared with another antecedent such as spiritual leadership. The findings of this study indicate that in order to make individuals who work in the public sector feel more committed and have a strong bond with the organization, it should be started with encouraging their motivation in providing better services in the public sphere; (c) The affective commitment was considered as key determinant of felt obligation when compared with public service motivation. This finding reveals that a person's sense of obligation in completing work to support the achievement of organizational goals tends to be driven by a person's strong emotional bond to the organization. Furthermore, for each relationship between variables and the value of the influence as well as the nature of the influence can be seen in Table 4. The table also provides information about the calculated t value of each effect between variables. The standardized beta value is taken into account in this study.

Table 4. Beta Coefficient for Connection Between Variables

Relationship	Beta Coefficient	t _{statistic}	p	Remarks
Spiritual Leadership → Public Service Motivation	0.714050	12.393756	0,0000	Significant
Spiritual Leadership → Affective Commitment	0.287674	2.855947	0,0053	Significant
Spiritual Leadership → Felt Obligation	-0.074839	0.709529	0,4797	NS
Public Service Motivation → Affective Commitment	0.586807	6.838392	0,0000	Significant
Public Service Motivation → Felt Obligation	0.329734	2.605310	0,0107	Significant
Affective Commitment → Felt Obligation	0.503124	4.271625	0,0000	Significant

The hypothesis that has been proposed in this study was tested based on the result in Table 4. Hypothesis testing uses a significance level of 5 percent with a t-table criterion of 1.960 (n = 97). Based on the research findings in Table 2, it was revealed that the effect of spiritual leadership on affective commitment is categorized as significant ($\beta_1 = 0.287$ Sign = 0.005). The p-value found is still under the tolerance level of 5 percent. This means that the first hypothesis is confirmed, indicating that employees'

assessment of spiritual leadership from leaders in organizations can lead to a significant increase in the psychological and emotional attachment felt by employees. The value of the increase is categorized as moderate with a coefficient of 0.287. Based on the research findings shown in [Table 2](#), it was revealed that the value of the influence of spiritual leadership on felt obligation was insignificant ($\beta_2 = -0.074$ Sign = 0.479). The p-value found is above the tolerance level of 5 percent. This means that the second hypothesis is rejected, indicating that employee assessment of spiritual leadership from leaders in the organization was found to be unable to increase the sense of obligation felt by employees in completing their work that supports the achievement of organizational goals. Based on the research findings shown in [Table 2](#), it is shown that the effect of spiritual leadership on public service motivation was significant ($\beta_3 = 0.714$; Sign = 0.000), while the effect of public service motivation on affective commitment was also significant ($\beta_4 = 0.586$; Sign = 0.000). The third hypothesis in this study is accepted, indicating that public service motivation felt by employees can increase the role of the spiritual leadership pattern applied in the organization in encouraging psychological and emotional attachment of employees to the organization.

Based on the research findings shown in [Table 2](#), it is shown that the effect of spiritual leadership on public service motivation was significant ($\beta_3 = 0.714$; Sign = 0.000), while the effect of public service motivation on felt obligation was also significant ($\beta_5 = 0.329$; Sign = 0.010). The fourth hypothesis in this study is confirmed, indicating that public service motivation felt by employees can increase the role of the spiritual leadership pattern applied in organizations in encouraging employees' sense of obligation in completing their work. Based on the research findings shown in [Table 2](#), it is shown that the effect of public service motivation on affective commitment was found to be significant ($\beta_3 = 0.714$; Sign = 0.000), while the effect of affective commitment to felt obligation was also significant ($\beta_6 = 0.503$; sign = 0.000). The fifth hypothesis in this study is confirmed, indicating that the affective commitment felt by employees can increase the effectiveness of public service motivation among civil servants on their sense of obligation to their job.

There are three R-square values for public service motivation (Rsquare = 0.5098), affective commitment (Rsquare = 0.6682), and felt obligation (Rsquare = 0.5419). The value of Rsquare = 0.5098 indicates that the variance of the diversity of spiritual leadership in explaining public service motivation was found to be 50.98 percent with the remaining 49.02 percent being the determinant of public service motivation other than spiritual leadership. The value of Rsquare = 0.6682 indicates that the variance of the diversity of spiritual leadership and public service motivation in explaining affective commitment was found to be 66.82 percent with the remaining 33.18 percent being things other variables outside of what is in the research model. The value of Rsquare = 0.6682 on felt obligation shows that the variance of diversity from spiritual leadership, public service motivation, and affective commitment was able to explain felt obligation about 54.18 percent. The remaining 45.82 percent are things outside of what is in the research model. From the Rsquare value, it can be calculated for the Qsquare value of 0.925. These results indicate that the various level of the model is about 92.50 percent which indicates a very large value.

Discussion

Based on the path of the relationship between variables implies that leaders who have practiced their spiritual leadership will be more able to motivate their employees. This form of motivation is a specific and different type of motivation as manifested as public service motivation, which is further known to increase the felt obligation of employees in completing their work. Findings also show that public service motivation could be well influenced by spiritual leadership. When compared with other pathways in the research model, the effect value found in this study is quite large. This finding confirms the previous study that emphasizes the importance of leadership in encouraging motivation for public employees ([Caillier, 2014](#); [Schwarz et al., 2020](#); [Ugaddan & Park, 2017](#)). In other words, leaders who apply spiritual leadership in public organizations can contribute positively to strengthening public service motivation.

The research findings show partial support for the results of previous studies that describe spiritual leadership as an important determinant of affective commitment ([Jeon & Choi, 2020](#); [Pradesa & Tanjung, 2021](#); [Rahayu & Kusumaputri, 2016](#)). This is due to the finding that public service motivation is well-known as more powerful to increase affective commitment among individuals. Support for several previous research results is to determine felt obligation by increasing affective commitment. This finding could be explained with a social exchange perspective which points out about norm of reciprocity. When a person feels more emotionally and psychologically attached to the organization, this will tend to make him feel more obligated to complete work or assignments within the organization. Findings also indicate that spiritual leaders can not contribute to building employees' felt obligation. How one leads spiritually does not provide necessary reinforcement for one's attitude towards the job and fulfill their obligation in work.

This finding cannot support the empirical results of previous research on leadership and felt obligation (Lorinkova & Perry, 2019; Zhu et al., 2021). This form of spiritual leadership applied by leaders in an organization can have an indirect effect on felt obligation through the strengthening of public service motivation. In addition, the strengthening of public service motivation can encourage the effect of spiritual leadership on affective commitment among civil servants who work in two government agencies in Medan, North Sumatera. Findings about the greatest effect of spiritual leadership on public service motivation were conformable with previous research; specifically, the results supported previous findings that a good leader often managing public organization could foster relatively high motivation for service to the public (Andersen et al., 2018; Belrhiti et al., 2020; Caillier, 2014). How well spiritual leadership that is applied in the organization can increase public service motivation and affective commitment could be the most important issue in this research.

With the majority of respondents being women, the research result shows that all the effect values between variables are significant except for one path of the relationship between variables. This path is known as the direct effect of spiritual leadership on felt obligation. Although the effect is not significant, the research findings show that the value of the influence of spiritual leadership on felt obligation is negative, indicating that an increase in spiritual leadership will directly reduce the felt obligation of employees even though the value is still very small and insignificant. These results indicate that the reciprocal nature was found to be unable to apply to the relationship between spiritual leadership and felt obligation. The majority of employees in this study were found to have worked years of more than five years. Felt obligation among employees is found in the moderate category. These conditions indicate that the moderate level of feeling of obligation from employees is evidence that there is still no really good value in the form of feeling obliged to complete work to support the achievement of organizational goals. When compared with public service motivation, the affective commitment was found to have the greatest influence on the felt obligation felt by employees. Self-determination theory could explain this phenomenon by tending to be seen as valid in increasing one's emotional and psychological attachment to the organization, as opposed to encouraging feelings of obligation to complete work that supports the achievement of organizational goals (Olafsen et al., 2015; Van den Broeck et al., 2021).

Another important implication of this research is that spiritual leadership is revealed as an unimportant determinant of felt obligation. With the nature of reciprocity in the perspective of social exchange, the felt obligation cannot be considered as a result or benefit of the spiritual leadership pattern applied by leaders in public organizations in North Sumatra Province (Colquitt et al., 2014; Cropanzano et al., 2017). The pattern of reciprocity is visible in the interactions between public service motivation, affective commitment, and felt obligation. Findings show that the higher the motivation of employees in serving the public, this will further increase the emotional and psychological attachment of employees to their organization. These findings can support previous empirical results that show an important effect of public service motivation toward affective commitment (Agustina et al., 2021; Im et al., 2016). On the other hand, increasing employee motivation to serve the public also has the potential to encourage the felt obligation they feel. This is one of the important research findings where public service motivation can be considered as a determinant of the felt obligation among public officers. However, the reciprocal pattern is also visible in the relationship between affective commitment and felt obligation. It appears empirically that affective commitment is the most important determinant of felt obligation when compared to spiritual leadership and public service motivation. However, research findings also show that spiritual leadership is crucial in fostering public service motivation. Generally, it can be summarized that pattern of spiritual leadership applied to public organizations has positive benefits in managing employees in the workplace. This research has several limitations. First, the nature of the self-assessment used in this study may indicate the subjectivity of the respondent. Second, the cross-sectional data only captures the phenomenon at one time may limit the generalizability of the research findings. Suggestion for future studies is about encouragement to investigate the direct effect of spiritual leadership toward felt obligation which is still found to be insignificant in this study. Examining the relationship between the two in other research designs is recommended to complement the results of this research. Future research would study other potential outcomes of spiritual leadership and public service motivation and combine them into a future research model. Future research may also consider expanding the scope of research, in which policymakers and leaders in the public sector may gain more important knowledge for managing public organizations better.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on findings, this result confirms that all hypotheses are accepted. However, there is one path of the effect that was found to be unimportant, which is the direct effect of spiritual leadership on felt

obligation. The findings shed light on the question of whether the spiritual leader is a necessary determinant of felt obligation among civil servants working in a public organization. The study implies to provide an important empirical result that non-mainstream types of leadership such as spiritual leaders are known to have an important impact on the perceived motivation of employees in providing services to the public. Public service motivation was found important to reinforce the effect of spiritual leadership on affective commitment and felt obligation. The research findings show that increasing the felt obligation of civil servants, will be more effective if it can increase their emotional and psychological attachment (known as affective commitment). Although public service motivation from civil servants can increase felt obligation, the effect is not as large as the effect of affective commitment on felt obligation. Meanwhile, to increase this type of commitment, it is very important to encourage public service motivation among civil servants. The effect was found to be greater when compared to another relationship such as the effect of spiritual leadership on affective commitment. As a motivational model that existed in a public organization, public service motivation could reinforce self-determination among civil servants with spiritual leaders in a public organization to enhance positive individual attitudes toward the organization and the job. Social exchange theory seems to be able to explain how the relationship between public service motivation, affective commitment, and felt obligation is felt by employees working in the public sector.

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