

The Mediating Role of Work Motivation in Linking Leadership, Rewards, and Sales Performance at Astra Motor

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership and rewards on employee performance, with work motivation as a mediating variable, among contract salespeople at PT Astra International Tbk – Honda Sales Operation, Pontianak Patimura Branch. A quantitative approach was used, with data analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) through SmartPLS 4. The results show that transformational leadership and rewards have a significant effect on work motivation and employee performance. Work motivation also significantly influences performance and mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and rewards on performance. This study highlights the importance of inspirational leadership styles and fair reward systems in enhancing the motivation and performance of contract sales employees.

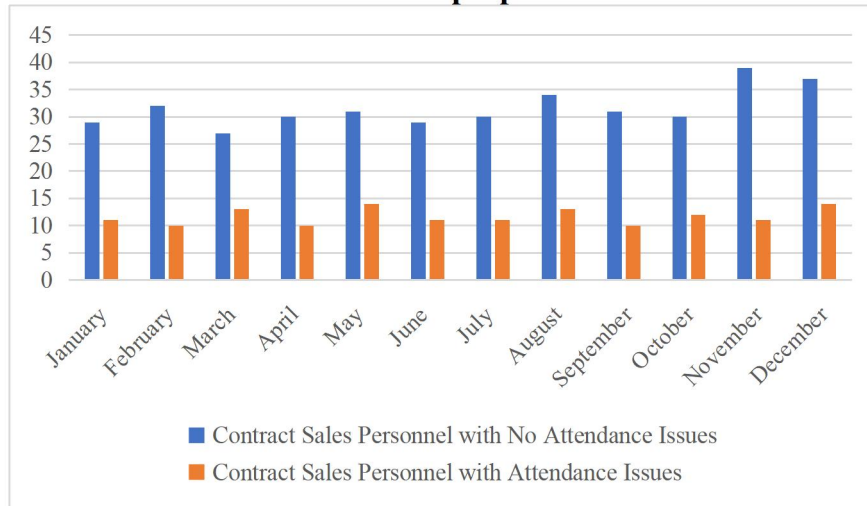
INTRODUCTION

In the context of ongoing globalization, the intensity of business competition has increased significantly. Companies across various sectors—industry, trade, and services—are required to develop effective and adaptive strategies to maintain their existence and secure the desired market share. Every business entity operates with a target-oriented approach, using these targets as benchmarks for performance and operational success. However, as companies evolve, they encounter numerous challenges, one of which is improving employee performance to achieve organizational goals. Competent employees with strong performance make a significant contribution to the attainment of corporate targets (Siswanto et al., 2021). Hence, employee performance plays a pivotal role in the overall success of an organization.

PT Astra International Tbk, through its business unit Astra Motor, plays a vital function in advancing Indonesia's automotive industry, particularly in the distribution and sales of Honda motorcycles. Astra Motor—officially known as PT Astra International Tbk – Honda Sales Operation—has long been a key partner of Honda, with a strong commitment to expanding its distribution network throughout the country. The company's competitive advantage is reflected in its extensive dealer network and reliable after-sales services. One of the branch dealers responsible for bringing the product closer to consumers is located on Jalan Patimura, Pontianak.

In striving to meet centrally determined sales targets, the Pontianak Pattimura branch faces operational challenges related to employee performance.

Picture 1. Contract Salespeople Attendance Data



According to the 2024 internal report of the Astra Motor Pattimura Branch, several performance-related issues were identified among contract sales personnel. One major issue is attendance discipline, which includes not only high absenteeism but also delays in clocking in. In addition, a significant number of contract salespeople failed to meet the company's sales targets. The following are the attendance and sales performance data of contract-based sales personnel.

Referring to the 2024 attendance records, the most significant instances of attendance issues were reported in December with 14 employees, followed by May, also with 14. This represents a notable increase compared to previous months. The lowest figures were recorded in February and September, with 10 employees each. Overall, problematic attendance remained relatively stable, ranging from 10 to 13 employees throughout the year. However, the spikes in May and December warrant further attention.

Table 1. Contract Salesperson Data Not Reaching Monthly Sales Targets

Month	Number of Contract Salespeople	Number of Contract Salespeople that did not meet their monthly sales target
January	40	11
February	42	12
March	40	11
April	41	13
May	43	14
June	41	11
July	44	13
August	45	14
September	37	10
October	42	13
November	50	15

December	51	16
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In addition to attendance problems, many contract salespeople failed to meet their assigned sales targets. The 2024 sales target data show that a considerable number of contract sales personnel did not achieve their goals. The highest number of underperforming employees was recorded in December, with 21 out of 50 salespeople failing to meet their targets. Conversely, the lowest was in September, with 12 out of 45. Although the proportion of underachieving employees varied monthly, the trend indicates an increase in missed targets toward the end of the year.

These issues related to attendance and sales performance highlight the need to evaluate the factors influencing the motivation and performance of sales personnel. Accordingly, human resource management strategies should be adapted to improve productivity and target achievement. Employee performance reflects the results of one's endeavors in fulfilling assigned duties to support the organization's objectives (Ruswandi & Irfani, 2025). A primary determinant of employee performance is work motivation, which refers to both internal and external stimuli that inspire individuals to invest greater effort toward meeting organizational targets. Motivation is a key factor in shaping employee behavior and outcomes (Nindita & Rani, 2025). Employees with strong motivation generally demonstrate higher enthusiasm, committed, and result-oriented, while those with low motivation are more likely to give up easily and struggle to complete their tasks (Syafitri & Astuti, 2025).

In the context of leadership and reward systems, work motivation serves as a bridge between managerial strategies and enhanced employee performance. Effective transformational leadership can inspire, provide a clear vision, and support employees, thereby increasing their motivation. Similarly, fair and performance-based rewards can reinforce employees' motivation to work. It is believed that transformational leaders motivate employees by demonstrating idealized influence, providing inspirational motivation, encouraging intellectual stimulation, and offering individualized consideration (Pires et al., 2023). At the Astra Motor Pontianak Dealer, particularly the Pattimura branch, team leaders play a vital role in guiding, supervising, and motivating contract-based sales personnel. Activities such as morning briefings, monthly evaluations, product knowledge training, and promotional strategy discussions reflect the implementation of transformational leadership practices.

Rewards are a form of appreciation given to employees for their performance (Alaina et al., 2025). The implementation of reward systems sets goals and expectations for employees to work optimally, as the drive to meet organizational targets becomes stronger when accompanied by appropriate rewards. Therefore, rewards serve as important motivators in enhancing performance (Abas et al., 2025). At the Pattimura Branch of Astra Motor, contract sales personnel receive financial incentives for each unit sold and additional bonuses for exceeding individual targets. Those who consistently meet or exceed targets are also considered for permanent employment.

Based on the aforementioned phenomena, this research seeks to examine the impact of transformational leadership and reward on the performance of contract-based sales personnel at the Astra Motor Pattimura Branch, both directly and through the mediating role of work motivation. By understanding the relationships among these variables, the study is expected to offer insights into the effectiveness of leadership and reward practices at the Astra Motor Pattimura Branch and to help formulate more optimal strategies for enhancing the motivation and

performance of contract-based salespeople. Consequently, this research has practical implications for improving the efficiency and productivity of the sales workforce at the Astra Motor Pattimura Branch.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Transformational Leadership

Leadership style is an external factor that can influence employee performance (Aeni & Kuswanto, 2021). Among leadership styles, transformational leadership is noteworthy—initially conceptualized by Burns (1978) and further refined by Bass (1985). Bass described transformational leadership as a leadership style that not only influences subordinates' responses but also builds strong relationships with them, understands individual needs, and supports their personal development. Adawiyah & Sopiah (2023) emphasized that transformational leadership aims to inspire change and foster relationships based on trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect between leaders and employees.

Based on these definitions, transformational leadership can be understood as an approach that motivates and elevates followers, encourages positive change, nurtures mutual trust and respect, and builds strong organizational commitment and motivation. Transformational leadership is measured using four dimensions proposed by Saputra et al. (2025): idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Rewards

According to V (2021), rewards are motivational strategies used to reinforce positive behavior among employees and recognize their contributions to the organization. Ariq & Prabowo (2024) define rewards as a means to appreciate employees for their contributions in terms of time, ideas, and achievements. Rosdiana & Johaness (2024) add that rewards serve as recognition for employee accomplishments, both financial and non-financial, given as acknowledgment of their performance over a certain period.

From these definitions, rewards can be concluded as strategies used by organizations to acknowledge and reinforce employee contributions and achievements. Rewards serve as motivational tools to appreciate employees' time, ideas, and accomplishments through various forms, whether financial or non-financial, over a given period.

Rewards may include salary increases, cash bonuses, or non-monetary recognitions such as outstanding service awards or task assignments aligned with employee interests. By offering rewards, organizations aim to attract, manage, and retain high-performing and motivated employees (V, 2021). Rewards are measured using four indicators based on Alhmoud & Rjoub (2020): extrinsic, intrinsic, and social rewards.

Work Motivation

Motivation represents an intrinsic force that prompts individuals to take action or serves as the rationale behind their behavior (Hajiali et al., 2022). In the workplace, work motivation functions as a driving force or incentive that encourages employees to perform their duties (Azra et al., 2024). Moreover, work motivation is the force that directs individual behavior toward achieving organizational goals (Alaina et al., 2025).

Viewed from this standpoint, motivation is perceived as an intrinsic stimulus that propels individuals to engage in task completion. It functions as an incentive guiding work behavior, thus supporting the achievement of organizational objectives. Motivation influences behavior, drives

action, and sustains consistency in goal pursuit. Work motivation is measured using four indicators from Kadyirov et al. (2024): dedication to hard work, future-oriented mindset, task focus, and drive for advancement.

Employee Performance

According to Choiriyah et al. (2021), employee performance encompasses the output—both in quality and quantity—generated by an individual or team in fulfilling assigned tasks and responsibilities over a specific time period, driven by natural ability, learning processes, and the desire to achieve goals. According to Chaerudin & Okaviani (2023), employee performance refers to the outcome of efforts made by employees in completing assigned tasks to support organizational objectives. Shintianingsih & Utomo (2024) define employee performance as the results achieved in terms of quantity and quality within a given period, based on established work principles.

Consequently, employee performance may be interpreted as the deliverables achieved by individuals or collectives in the execution of their roles over a particular timeframe. It is influenced by natural ability, learning, and individual motivation to achieve goals. Employee performance is also aligned with organizational objectives, focusing on quality and quantity based on defined work standards. Performance is evaluated using five indicators from R. W. Putri et al. (2025): quality, quantity, timeliness, teamwork ability, and independence. Performance includes effective task execution, emphasizing methods and actions that align with strategic goals and contribute positively to organizational productivity (Choiriyah et al., 2021).

Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

Transformational leadership plays a critical role in inspiring and motivating employees, cultivating a workplace environment that supports performance enhancement through increased engagement, innovation, and commitment. This leadership approach is marked by a leader's ability to craft a compelling vision, communicate it effectively, and motivate employees to surpass standard performance expectations (Aisyah et al., 2025). Kurniawan et al. (2025) also affirmed that transformational leadership significantly and positively affects employee performance. These findings suggest that transformational leaders establish strategic direction and empower and support employees through individualized attention, ultimately driving performance improvements. Consistent findings have been documented in the studies of Sena et al. (2025), Nurlaela et al. (2025), Sulistiyo (2025), and Sanezara et al. (2024).

Rewards and Employee Performance

An essential strategy employed by organizations to acknowledge employee contributions is the provision of rewards. The aim of distributing rewards is to boost employees' motivation and drive them to achieve optimal performance (Sandra, 2021). Empirical evidence from Abas et al. (2025) reveals that rewards have a significant and positive impact on employee performance. An effectively designed reward system offers clarity in expectations and motivates individuals to give their best effort. Therefore, rewards play a pivotal role in enhancing employee motivation, thereby improving their performance. These conclusions are supported by the work of Ruswandi & Irfani (2025), Sulvitri (2025), A. Z. Putri & Sugeng (2025), and Hadiananto & Wahyuningtyas (2025).

Motivation and Employee Performance

Motivation serves as a vital component in driving employee performance (Mulyasari & Asteria, 2025). Highly motivated employees are instrumental in increasing organizational productivity (Nadila & Oktaviannur, 2025). Tarigan et al. (2025) found a positive and significant link between work motivation and employee performance, indicating that heightened motivation yields improved results. Motivation energizes employees to work diligently, meet objectives, and maintain enthusiasm for their responsibilities. Contributing factors to motivation include acknowledgment of achievements, career development opportunities, and reward provision. In this regard, motivated employees tend to be more proactive, efficient, and committed to organizational success. This is in line with findings by Bagaskara & Heryanda (2021) and Ranisah et al. (2025).

Transformational Leadership and Work Motivation

Sukmawati et al. (2023) argue that transformational leadership substantially enhances employee motivation by exhibiting charisma, inspiration, and personalized support. Highly motivated employees typically demonstrate positive behaviors, clear direction in their tasks, and improved productivity. Rahman et al. (2023) assert that the more effectively transformational leadership is practiced, the greater the motivation levels among employees. On the contrary, ineffective leadership may diminish motivation. Furthermore, employees who feel acknowledged and appreciated are more likely to sustain high motivation levels. These observations are corroborated by studies conducted by Ramadayanti (2023) and Sudirman et al. (2024).

Rewards and Work Motivation

Rewards are another significant factor in influencing work motivation. According to Rahmadhon et al. (2024), rewards enhance enthusiasm and engagement. Siswanto et al. (2021) state that employee motivation increases when accomplishments are recognized. Moreover, fair allocation of rewards — such as salaries, bonuses, incentives, and promotions — is positively associated with higher motivation. This is supported by research from Nurofik & Yuliana (2022), while Alaina et al. (2025) confirmed the significant effect of rewards on motivation. These findings imply that a well-structured reward system fosters a sense of value and appreciation among employees, which elevates their motivation levels. Similar conclusions were drawn by Rahmada & Widhianto (2024), Kiem et al. (2024), and Asri & Fitrian (2024).

Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance through Work Motivation

Employee performance tends to increase when they are highly motivated — a condition that can be influenced by transformational leadership (Dami et al., 2024). Transformational leaders inspire enthusiasm and energy, which in turn boosts employee motivation. Noruliyanto et al. (2024) demonstrate that work motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. These results indicate that transformational leaders elevate performance by first enhancing motivation. Similar relationships were reported in studies by Karyono et al. (2023), Excelsa et al. (2024), and Pires et al. (2023).

Rewards and Employee Performance through Work Motivation

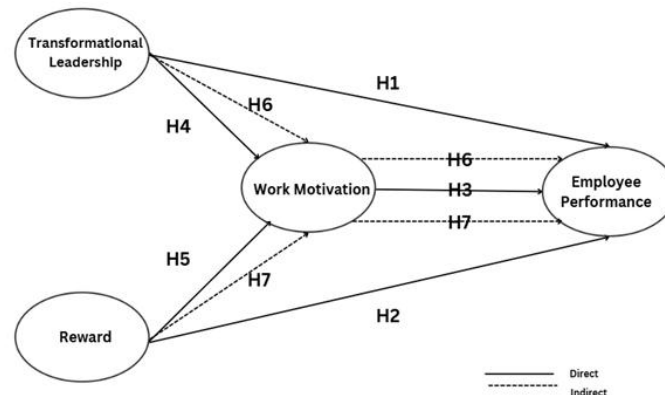
In addition, rewards contribute to performance improvements through heightened motivation (Azzahra & Barry, 2024). Motivation functions as a catalyst, especially when aligned with the rewards employees receive (Rahmada & Widhianto, 2024). Equitable and performance-based rewards strengthen motivation, subsequently fostering improved performance. Fahrizal et

al. (2025) found that motivation acts as a mediator in the relationship between rewards and performance. These insights underscore the value of integrating reward systems into human resource management to cultivate a motivated and goal-oriented workforce. Supporting studies include those by Rahmadhon et al. (2024), Hidayat & Heryjanto (2024), and Prayoga & Nurwulandari (2025).

Hypothesis and Conceptual Framework of the Research

Based on the past research, the proposed hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.
- H2: Rewards have a positive and significant effect on employee performance.
- H3: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.
- H4: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on motivation.
- H5: Rewards have a positive and significant effect on motivation.
- H6: Motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance.
- H7: Motivation mediates the relationship between rewards and employee performance.



Picture 1. Conceptual Framework of Research Figure

RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilized a quantitative methodology with a causal-associative approach. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The research population consisted of contract-based salespersons employed at Astra Motor's Pontianak Pattimura Branch. A census sampling technique was employed, as it is appropriate when the population size is fewer than 100 individuals (Sugiyono, 2017). Since there were only 50 contract sales personnel, all were included as respondents. The inclusion criteria required respondents to (1) currently work as contract salespersons at Astra Motor Pattimura and (2) have a minimum tenure of three months.

The data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4, employing the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Evaluation of the reflective measurement model involved assessing convergent validity by confirming that the average variance extracted (AVE) surpassed the threshold of 0.5 and that outer loading values exceeded 0.708, indicating adequate indicator reliability. Construct reliability was measured using composite reliability, with values between 0.60–0.70 considered acceptable for exploratory studies, 0.70–0.90 regarded as satisfactory, and values above 0.95 potentially indicating

redundancy among items. Cronbach's alpha was also utilized to support the assessment of internal consistency. R-square (R^2) values were interpreted according to standard benchmarks, where 0.75 indicates a strong effect, 0.50 a moderate effect, and 0.25 a weak effect. Hypotheses were deemed supported if the t-value exceeded 1.65 or the p-value was less than 0.05.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent Characteristics

Tabel. 2 Respondent Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Respondent	Percentage
Gender		
Men	35	70%
Women	15	30%
Age Range		
18 - 22 Year	15	30%
23 - 27 Year	27	54%
28 - 35 Year	8	16%
Location		
Pattimura Branch	50	100%
Work Status		
Pekerja Kontrak	50	100%
Work Duration		
3 - 5 Months	29	58%
> 5 Months	21	42%

The study involved 50 employees of PT Astra International Tbk – Honda Sales Operation, Pontianak Pattimura Branch. Based on gender, 35 respondents (70%) were male, and 15 (30%) were female. Regarding age, most respondents were aged 23–27 years (54%), followed by those aged 18–22 years (30%), and the remaining 16% were aged 28–35. All respondents were from the Pontianak Pattimura Branch (100%), which was the study site. In terms of employment status, all respondents were contract workers (100%) with no permanent staff included. Regarding length of service, 29 respondents (58%) had worked for 3–5 months, while 21 respondents (42%) had worked for more than 5 months. No respondents had less than 3 months of experience.

Outer Model

Tabel. 3 Validity and Reliability Test Result

Variable	Item Code	Item	Validity Test		Reliability Test		
			OL	Status	CA	AVE	Status
Transformational Leadership	TL1	My supervisor talks about the values and beliefs that matter to them.	0.954	Valid	0.972	0.921	Reliable

	TL2	My supervisor talks optimistically about the future.	0.965	Valid			
	TL3	My supervisor seeks different perspectives when solving problems.	0.959	Valid			
	TL4	My supervisor makes time to teach and mentor me.	0.961	Valid			
Reward	R1	The salary I receive is considered good.	0.946	Valid	0.962	0.898	Reliable
	R2	There are opportunities for promotion in the company.	0.961	Valid			
	R3	I am given opportunities to do things I am good at.	0.933	Valid			
	R4	This job allows me to interact with many people.	0.950	Valid			
Work Motivatioon	WM1	It is important for me to do my job as best as I can, even if it might cause conflict with coworkers.	0.958	Valid	0.971	0.920	Reliable
	WM2	If something does not go well for me, I will do my best to cope and move on to other things that might succeed.	0.964	Valid			
	WM3	When faced with setbacks, I strive to adapt and shift my focus toward alternative opportunities that have the potential for success.	0.959	Valid			
	WM4	I tend to perform tasks more efficiently when provided with overarching direction and autonomy, rather than being constrained by highly specific instructions.	0.954	Valid			
Employee Performance	EP1	I always meet the quality standards set in my work.	0.952	Valid	0.976	0.914	Reliable

	EP2	I am able to regularly increase my work productivity.	0.959	Valid			
	EP3	I can manage my time effectively to complete tasks.	0.959	Valid			
	EP4	I am able to build positive relationships with coworkers.	0.954	Valid			
	EP5	I am confident in my ability to complete the tasks assigned to me.	0.955	Valid			

The validity and reliability tests presented in Table 3, conducted using SmartPLS 4, indicate that all constructs meet the established measurement standards. Convergent validity is confirmed by outer loadings exceeding 0.708 and AVE values above 0.50. Reliability is supported by high composite reliability scores (ranging from 0.962 to 0.976) and Cronbach's alpha values above 0.90, demonstrating strong internal consistency. Therefore, the constructs are considered both valid and reliable for subsequent structural analysis.

Inner Model

R-square Evaluation

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is utilized to evaluate the extent to which exogenous constructs account for the variance in endogenous constructs. According to standard benchmarks, an R^2 of 0.75 indicates a strong level, 0.50 reflects a moderate level, and 0.25 denotes a weak level of explanatory power. In this research, the R^2 value for employee performance is reported at 0.998, while the R^2 for work motivation stands at 0.985.

Table 4. R-square Result

Construct	R-square	R-square Adjusted
Employee Performance	0.998	0.998
Work Motivation	0.985	0.985

Table 4 indicates that transformational leadership, rewards, and work motivation account for 99.8% of the variance in employee performance, while transformational leadership and rewards explain 98.5% of the variance in work motivation. These high R^2 values reflect the strong explanatory power of the structural model, confirming its effectiveness in capturing the influence of the independent variables on the outcomes measured.

Hypothesis Test

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis		T-statistics	P-values	Result
Direct Effect				
H1	TL -> EP	11.905	0.000	Accepted

H2	R -> EP	3.012	0.003	Accepted
H3	WM -> EP	10.388	0.000	Accepted
H4	TL -> WM	13.750	0.000	Accepted
H5	R -> WM	2.646	0.008	Accepted
Indirect Effect				Accepted
H6	TL -> WM -> EP	8.462	0.000	Accepted
H7	R -> WM -> EP	2.553	0.011	Accepted

The hypothesis testing results provide several significant findings. First, transformational leadership exerts a positive and significant influence on employee performance (T-statistic = 11.905; $p = 0.000$), meaning that stronger implementation of transformational leadership practices leads to improved employee outcomes. This supports the findings of Aisyah et al. (2025), who argue that transformational leaders drive employee engagement, motivation, and commitment through clear vision, effective communication, and individualized support.

Second, rewards are also found to have a significant and positive impact on employee performance (T-statistic = 3.012; $p = 0.003$). This aligns with the results of Abas et al. (2025) and Sandra (2021), who contend that well-designed reward systems boost morale and increase motivation, thereby enhancing job performance.

Third, work motivation significantly influences performance (T-statistic = 10.388; $p = 0.000$), reaffirming the conclusions of Tarigan et al. (2025) and Nadila & Oktaviannur (2025), who demonstrate that motivated employees tend to display higher productivity, greater proactivity, and a stronger commitment to organizational goals.

Fourth, transformational leadership is shown to significantly enhance work motivation (T-statistic = 13.750; $p = 0.000$), highlighting the role of inspiring leadership in fostering an internally motivated workforce. This result is consistent with Sukmawati et al. (2023), who state that transformational leaders cultivate motivation through supportive, visionary leadership.

Fifth, the influence of rewards on work motivation is also statistically significant (T-statistic = 2.646; $p = 0.008$), suggesting that appropriately structured and fairly distributed rewards elevate employees' intrinsic motivation. This finding supports the claims of Rahmadhon et al. (2024) and Alaina et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of reward systems in promoting motivation.

Sixth, work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance (T-statistic = 8.462; $p = 0.000$). This finding is in line with the studies by Noruliyanto et al. (2024), Dami et al. (2024), and Excelsa et al. (2024), which demonstrate that motivation acts as a bridge connecting transformational leadership with improved performance.

Seventh, work motivation is also found to mediate the effect of rewards on employee performance (T-statistic = 2.553; $p = 0.011$). This implies that rewards contribute to enhanced performance primarily by first increasing motivation levels. This result corroborates the work of Fahrizal et al. (2025) and Azzahra & Barry (2024), who suggest that effective reward strategies must target motivational factors to yield performance gains.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that transformational leadership and reward systems both have a positive and significant impact on the performance of contract-based sales personnel,

with work motivation playing a critical mediating role. Transformational leaders boost motivation by providing vision, inspiration, and individualized support, while fair and transparent reward structures enhance employee engagement. Work motivation thus acts as a central pathway through which leadership and rewards influence performance outcomes. Based on these results, it is recommended that PT Astra International Tbk – Honda Sales Operation Pontianak Patimura strengthen transformational leadership through targeted training and development initiatives, while also conducting regular evaluations of the reward system to ensure its continued effectiveness and alignment with employee expectations. Enhancing work motivation should be a strategic focus of human resource management due to its significant influence on employee performance. For future research, expanding the study to include other branches or industries and incorporating additional variables such as job satisfaction or organizational culture is suggested to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee performance.

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