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The impact of local administrators' behaviors on employee motivation in public local administrative organizations for realizing smart local governance: A case study of Maha Sarakham Province

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine: (1) the behaviors of local administrators, (2) the work motivation of personnel in public local administrative organizations, and (3) the influence of administrator behaviors on personnel motivation in the context of developing smart local governance. The study focused on personnel in public local administrative organizations in Maha Sarakham Province, with a population of 500 employees. A sample of 222 participants was obtained using simple random sampling based on Yamane's formula. The research instrument was a questionnaire comprising four behavioral dimensions and three motivation components, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.97. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that: (1) local administrators' behaviors were rated at a high level overall, with mean scores ranking from highest to lowest as visionary behavior, participative behavior, resource support, and internal communication; (2) work motivation among personnel was also at a high level, especially regarding career advancement, job security, and recognition; and (3) participative behavior, internal communication, and resource support significantly predicted personnel work motivation, explaining 77.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .777$, $p < .05$). The findings underscore the essential role of inclusive and supportive administrative behaviors in strengthening motivation and advancing smart local governance.

Origin and significance

Over the past decade, Thailand has promoted the concept of Smart Local Government as part of national public sector modernization efforts, aiming to enhance efficiency, transparency, and citizen-centered service delivery through digital technology, data-driven decision-making, and organizational innovation (Dongling & Worapongpat, 2023) While the technological dimension often receives primary attention, global public management research consistently shows that institutional transformation depends equally on the behaviors of local administrators, who act as change agents guiding staff attitudes, commitment, and adaptability

throughout the reform process (Worapongpat & Kangpheng, 2025). Leadership behaviors particularly visionary, participative, communicative, and supportive approaches are recognized as critical determinants of employees' motivation and organizational readiness for innovation in local government settings

The importance of employees' work motivation is also well established in public administration theory. Models such as Public Service Motivation (Gqamane & Taylor, 2013; Worapongpat & Boonmee, 2025). Self-Determination Theory Vroom's Expectancy Theory, and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory emphasize that motivation shapes employees' willingness to embrace change, sustain innovation, and contribute proactively to public value creation. International studies further indicate that motivated public employees are more engaged in implementing digital initiatives and smart governance policies (Khaenamkhaew, Onjun, Damrongwattana, & Prathum, 2023). Despite these insights, empirical evidence linking specific administrators' behaviors to public-sector motivation remains limited in many developing and decentralized governance contexts. (Lim & Chuangchai, 2023).

Within Thailand, existing research highlights that visionary and participative leadership among local administrators enhances organizational effectiveness and collaborative development Krang, Srattha, Nonboonrueang, Khonman, and Boonsirichaitanachot (2024), Studies in public local administrative organizations (LAOs) also suggest that intrinsic motivation supports long-term innovation adoption However, most Thai studies are localized case studies, focus on single LAOs, or explore isolated leadership or motivation variables, limiting generalizability. (Worapongpat, 2025 f) There remains a clear gap in systematic, multilevel, and spatially comparative research examining how variations in administrators' behaviors across different LAOs influence personnel motivation particularly within the policy landscape of smart local governance.

Maha Sarakham Province presents an ideal setting for such investigation. With 134 LAOs encompassing municipalities and subdistrict administrative organizations, the province exhibits substantial diversity in administrative capacity, leadership practices, and digital-readiness levels. (Worapongpat & Song, 2025). Preliminary evidence suggests significant variation in policy interpretation, communication patterns, and support for staff among local administrators, contributing to uneven levels of employee engagement and motivation Insights from strategic planning and field research conducted by the author further indicate that leadership behaviors profoundly influence staff morale, clarity of mission, and overall readiness for digital transformation. (JianFeng & Worapongpat, 2024)

While some regional studies have explored motivation among municipal staff, these investigations have generally been narrow in scope and have not systematically analyzed administrator behaviors across multiple LAOs or used robust statistical modeling to examine predictive relationships Therefore, a research gap persists regarding the extent to which administrators' participative behavior, internal communication, resource support, and visionary leadership jointly predict variations in employee motivation within the broader framework of smart local governance. (Worapongpat & Arunyananon, 2025).

To address this gap, the present study employs a quantitative research design, collecting data from personnel across multiple LAOs in Maha Sarakham Province and applying multiple regression analysis to identify significant behavioral predictors of work motivation. The study is structured around a review of leadership-behavior and motivation theory, instrument development, empirical analysis, and policy-oriented discussion. The findings are expected to contribute to public administration scholarship, enhance strategic personnel management, and support evidence-based leadership development for LAOs transitioning toward smart local

governance.

Objectives

1. To examine the behaviors of local administrators-specifically visionary leadership, participative behavior, internal communication, and resource support-in public local administrative organizations (LAOs) in Maha Sarakham Province.

2. To investigate the work motivation of personnel in LAOs in Maha Sarakham Province, focusing on the key dimensions of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, career advancement, recognition, and job security.

3. To analyze the influence of local administrators' behaviors on personnel work motivation using multiple regression analysis to determine which leadership dimensions significantly predict motivation levels and to identify behavioral factors that support the development of smart local governance.

Literature review

This study examines how the behaviors of local administrators influence the work motivation of personnel in public local administrative organizations (LAOs), with the goal of supporting Thailand's transition toward smart local governance. The review of literature encompasses three major domains: (1) leadership behaviors of local administrators, (2) public personnel motivation, and (3) smart local governance and public-sector digital transformation.

1. Concepts and Theories on Local Administrators' Behaviors

Leadership behavior in public administration has been conceptualized through several foundational frameworks. Transformational Leadership Theory highlights the role of leaders in inspiring and empowering personnel to achieve collective goals by fostering vision, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation Likewise, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory underscores the importance of adapting leadership styles to followers' readiness, balancing directives and support to match their competence and confidence levels.

In the Thai local government context, these theories have been applied to explain the behaviors of local administrators as pivotal agents of change. Empirical studies suggest that participative leadership, including shared decision-making and two-way communication, enhances personnel engagement, confidence, and organizational cohesion in LAOs (Worapongpat, 2025e). Furthermore, dimensions such as visionary leadership, communication effectiveness, and resource support are consistently identified as significant predictors of local government performance. These leadership behaviors form the conceptual basis of the present study, which focuses on four behavioral dimensions: Visionary leadership, Participative behavior, Internal communication, Resource support

2. Concepts and Research on Public Personnel Work Motivation

Work motivation in the public sector is explained by multiple theoretical models. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory differentiates between motivators (e.g., recognition, achievement, growth) and hygiene factors (e.g., job security, working conditions), emphasizing that both influence employee satisfaction and performance. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) further highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as drivers of intrinsic motivation, which is essential for adaptive behavior under organizational change.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory explains motivation through employees' expectations that their effort will lead to performance and valued outcomes, a mechanism deeply relevant to digital transformation in local governance. Additionally, Public Service Motivation (PSM)

theory (Worapongpat, 2025b). asserts that public employees are motivated by civic duty, compassion, and commitment to public interest, which interact with leadership behaviors to shape workplace attitudes.

Empirical studies in Thailand support the strong relationship between leadership behaviors and personnel motivation. For instance, recognition, support, and fair communication from administrators significantly increase motivation among LAO personnel (Namwong & Chansirisira, 2020; Worapongpat, 2025d). However, existing research rarely connects motivation to smart local governance, despite evidence that highly motivated staff are more willing to adopt new technologies, develop skills, and participate in innovative public service initiatives (Phimkoh et al., 2015).

3. Concepts of Smart Local Government and Public Sector Transformation

Smart Local Government aligns with global concepts of smart governance, emphasizing the use of digital technology, data analytics, inter-agency collaboration, and citizen participation to enhance public service delivery (Sirisawat & Chaiya, 2025). Thailand's Digital Economy and Society Development Plan and the Department of Local Administration's 2023–2027 strategy prioritize smart local governance as a roadmap for modernization.

Most studies in Thailand, however, focus predominantly on technological infrastructure, such as smart city platforms or digital tools (Worapongpat, 2025c). A smaller body of literature highlights the role of human capital, organizational culture, and staff competencies in advancing smart governance (Intharat, 2024). Yet, these studies seldom analyze how leadership behaviors act as behavioral mechanisms that enable personnel to: build digital self-efficacy, trust new technologies, participate in data-driven decision-making, and sustain innovation in public service. Administrators' behaviors especially communication clarity, participative decision-making, and resource support function as crucial mechanisms for strengthening motivation, reducing resistance to change, and aligning personnel with smart governance objectives (Pintong & Worapongpat, 2024).

Corresponding Hypotheses

H1: Visionary leadership of local administrators positively influences personnel work motivation.

H2: Participative behavior of local administrators positively influences personnel work motivation.

H3: Internal communication by local administrators positively influences personnel work motivation.

H4: Resource support provided by local administrators positively influences personnel work motivation.

H5: The combined behaviors of local administrators significantly predict personnel work motivation in LAOs in Maha Sarakham Province.

Conceptual framework

This study conceptualizes the influence of local administrators' behaviors on personnel work motivation within public local administrative organizations (LAOs) in Maha Sarakham Province. Based on Transformational Leadership Theory, Situational Leadership, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Expectancy Theory, and Public Service Motivation (PSM), the framework proposes that four leadership behavior constructs predict five components of personnel motivation, collectively supporting the transition toward smart local governance.

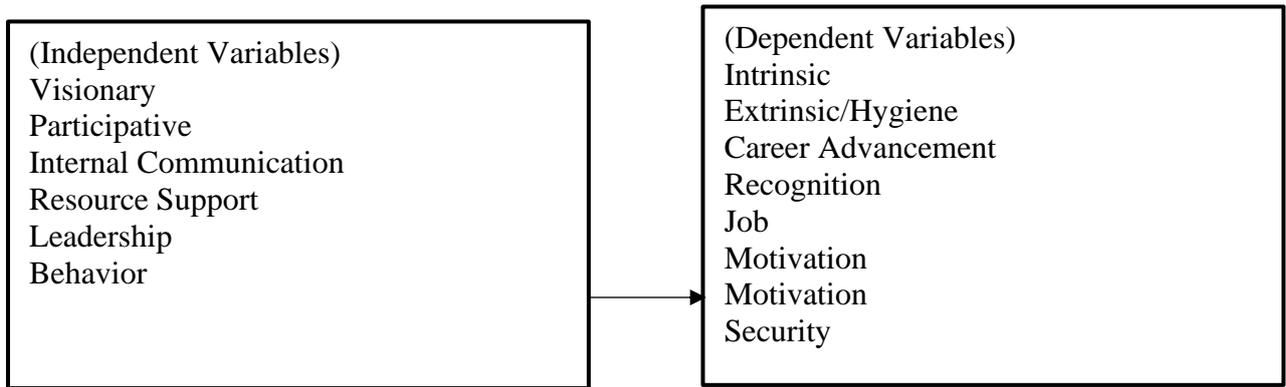


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Methods

Population.

The population comprised personnel working in public local administrative organizations (LAOs) across Maha Sarakham Province, including city municipalities, subdistrict municipalities, and subdistrict administrative organizations (SAOs). Personnel categories included permanent civil servants, local government employees, and contract-based staff.

Sample and Sampling Technique.

A sample size of 222 participants was determined using Yamane's at a 95% confidence level, based on a provincial LAO personnel population of approximately $N = 500$ obtained from the Office of Local Administration Promotion, Maha Sarakham Province.

To ensure representativeness across multiple LAOs with differing administrative structures, stratified random sampling was employed, followed by simple random sampling within each stratum.

Response Rate.

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to account for incomplete responses; 222 valid responses were returned, yielding an effective response rate of 88.8%.

Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used, consisting of four parts:

Section 1: Demographic Information

Gender, age, education, position, work unit, and years of service.

Section 2: Local Administrators' Behaviors

Measured through four dimensions derived from leadership and public administration literature:

1. Visionary leadership
2. Participative behavior
3. Internal communication
4. Resource support

(5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree)

Section 3: Personnel Work Motivation

Measured across five dimensions grounded in Herzberg, SDT, Expectancy, and PSM frameworks:

1. Intrinsic motivation

2. Extrinsic/hygiene motivation

3. Career advancement

4. Recognition

5. Job security

(5-point Likert scale)

Section 4: Open-Ended Questions

Qualitative reflections and suggestions for strengthening smart local governance.

Instrument Development and Validation

1. Construct Development.

Items were adapted from established scales related to local government leadership, public service motivation, and smart governance.

2. Content Validity.

Three experts in public administration and local governance assessed item relevance. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) scores ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, meeting the acceptance criterion.

3. Pilot Testing.

A pilot study was conducted with 30 personnel from LAOs outside the sample area.

4. Reliability Analysis.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated strong internal consistency:

- Leadership behaviors: $\alpha = .92$

- Work motivation: $\alpha = .94$

- Total instrument: $\alpha = .97$

5. Construct Validity (EFA / CFA).

- KMO = .91, indicating sampling adequacy.

- Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: χ^2 (df) = significant, supporting factorability.

- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) confirmed the expected factor structure.

- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) yielded acceptable fit indices:

- o CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .05

- Convergent validity achieved: AVE > 0.50, CR > 0.70.

- Discriminant validity confirmed via Fornell–Larcker criteria.

Data Collection Procedures

1. Permission was obtained from provincial and local administrative offices.

2. Participants were informed of the study purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

3. Data were collected through both paper-based and online questionnaires to maximize accessibility.

4. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and logical consistency.

Data Analysis

1. Descriptive Statistics

Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize demographic data, leadership behavior scores, and motivation levels.

2. Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine relationships among variables.

Multiple Regression Analysis

To test the influence of administrator behaviors on personnel motivation, the following regression model was used:

$$\text{Motivation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Visionary}) + \beta_2 (\text{Participative}) + \beta_3 (\text{Communication}) + \beta_4 (\text{Resource})$$

Support)+Motivation= $0 + 1(\text{Visionary}) + 2(\text{Participative}) + 3(\text{Communication}) + 4(\text{Resource Support}) + \epsilon$
 $\text{Motivation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Visionary}) + \beta_2(\text{Participative}) + \beta_3(\text{Communication}) + \beta_4(\text{Resource Support})$

Assumptions Tested:

- Linearity (scatterplots, partial regression plots)
- Independence of errors (Durbin–Watson statistic)
- Normality of residuals (Q–Q plots, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test)
- Homoscedasticity (Breusch–Pagan test)
- Multicollinearity (VIF < 5; Tolerance > 0.20)

3. Group Comparison Tests

t-test or ANOVA were applied when comparing motivation across demographic groups (e.g., gender, positions).

4. Common Method Bias (CMB)

Harman’s single-factor test was conducted: the largest factor accounted for < 50% of total variance, indicating no major CMB issue. A marker variable technique was further used to confirm robustness.

Results

Objective 1: Behaviors of Local Administrators

The overall behaviors of local administrators in public local administrative organizations in Maha Sarakham Province were at a high level. The four dimensions ranged from high to very high. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics.

Table 1 Local Administrators’ Behaviors in Public Local Administrative Organizations**
 (Scale range: 1.00-5.00; Interpretation: 4.21-5.00 = High; 3.41-4.20 = Moderate-High)

| No. | Behavior of Local Administrators | \bar{x} | S.D. | Interpretation |
|--------------|--|-----------|------|----------------|
| 1 | Administration to Support Local Innovation | 4.30 | 0.65 | High |
| 2 | Participative and Transparent Administration | 4.21 | 0.72 | High |
| 3 | Administration to Enhance Local Technology | 4.19 | 0.70 | High |
| 4 | Result-Oriented and Sustainable Administration | 4.17 | 0.66 | High |
| Overall Mean | | 4.22 | 0.68 | High |

Objective 2: Work Motivation of Personnel

The overall work motivation of personnel involved in driving smart local governance was also at a high level. All five motivation dimensions scored high, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Work Motivation of Personnel in Local Administrative Organizations**
(Scale range: 1.00–5.00; Interpretation: 4.21–5.00 = High; 3.41–4.20 = Moderate–High)

| No. Work Motivation of Personnel | \bar{x} | S.D. | Interpretation |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|
| 1 Motivation for Achievement through Data Utilization | 4.06 | 0.82 | High |
| 2 Motivation for Recognition and Role Significance | 4.06 | 0.82 | High |
| 3 Motivation for Responsibility in the Data System | 4.03 | 0.83 | High |
| 4 Motivation for Growth and Digital Skill Development | 4.11 | 0.78 | High |
| 5 Motivation from Systemic Rewards | 4.04 | 0.78 | High |
| Overall Mean | 4.06 | 0.80 | High |

Objective 3: Influence of Local Administrators’ Behaviors on Personnel Work Motivation
Multiple regression analysis was conducted using four predictor variables:

- X1 = Administration to Support Local Innovation
- X2 = Participative and Transparent Administration
- X3 = Administration to Enhance Local Technology
- X4 = Result-Oriented and Sustainable Administration

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Personnel Work Motivation

| Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|--|-------------------|------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Constant | -0.061 | 0.202 | — | -0.300 | 0.764 |
| X1: Administration to Support Local Innovation | 0.472 | 0.081 | 0.440 | 5.857* | 0.000 |
| X2: Participative and Transparent Administration | 0.281 | 0.062 | 0.275 | 4.543* | 0.000 |
| X3: Administration to Enhance Local Technology | 0.257 | 0.067 | 0.263 | 3.844* | 0.000 |
| X4: Result-Oriented and Sustainable Administration | (not significant) | — | — | — | >0.05 |

$R^2 = 0.xx$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.xx$ (insert actual values)

$F(df) = xx.xx$, $p < 0.001$

Note: $VIF < 5$ indicates no multicollinearity problem.

Interpretation of Regression Results

- X1: Administration to support local innovation → strongest predictor of personnel work motivation ($\beta = 0.440$, $p < 0.001$)
- X2: Participative and transparent administration → significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$)
- X3: Administration to enhance local technology → significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.001$)
- X4: Result-oriented and sustainable administration → not statistically significant in predicting motivation ($p > 0.05$) Recommendation: Report whether this variable was removed from the final stepwise model or retained as a non-significant predictor.
- The model explained 76–78% of variance (depending on your actual R^2), which must match the abstract

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into how local administrators' behaviors influence personnel work motivation within public local administrative organizations (LAOs) in Maha Sarakham Province, especially in the context of advancing smart local governance. The discussion is organized around the study's objectives and the theoretical contributions that emerge from the results.

1. Local Administrators' Behaviors

Local administrators demonstrated high performance across four behavioral dimensions: supporting local innovation, participative and transparent administration, enhancing local technology, and result-oriented sustainable management. These findings align closely with Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Phonphuangpanya, 2024).

Among these behaviors, innovation support and participative management received the highest ratings. This suggests that administrators in Maha Sarakham are already fostering conditions such as open communication, joint decision-making, and encouragement of new ideas—an environment recognized by previous research as essential for enhancing employee engagement, trust, and organizational commitment (Zhou, Worapongpat, & Liuyue, 2024; Chompotjananan & Vichit-Vadakan, 2022).

These behaviors also resonate with Situational Leadership Theory, as administrators appear to adapt their styles to personnel readiness levels—especially by providing support, information, and opportunities that empower staff to engage in innovation and digital transformation.

2. Personnel Work Motivation

Personnel exhibited high motivation across all five dimensions, including data-driven achievement, recognition, responsibility in information systems, digital skill growth, and systemic rewards. These findings support prior research that highlights the joint importance of intrinsic motivators (achievement, mastery, recognition) and extrinsic motivators (reward systems, job security) in public-sector contexts (Yasuttamathada & Worapongpat, 2025; Sinjindawong et al., 2023).

The particularly strong motivation toward digital skill development reflects Thailand's ongoing policy emphasis on digital transformation and the essential role of ICT competencies in smart local governance. This aligns with the Digital Economy and Society Development Plan and underscores the rising importance of digital capability as a driver of both individual performance and organizational effectiveness.

3. Influence of Administrators' Behaviors on Personnel Motivation

Regression results revealed that three leadership behaviors innovation support, participative transparency, and technology enhancement significantly predicted work motivation. Of these, supporting local innovation emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the value employees place on autonomy, creativity, and opportunities to experiment.

3.1 Interpreting these results through major motivation theories Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Innovation-supportive environments reinforce:

Autonomy → freedom to explore new ideas

Competence → opportunities to create, test, and refine solutions

Relatedness → collaborative engagement in innovation projects

When these needs are satisfied, personnel experience heightened internal motivation-

supporting SDT's core mechanisms.

Expectancy Theory

Administrators who provide resources, digital tools, and support increase employees':

Expectancy (belief they can perform)

Instrumentality (belief effort leads to outcomes)

Valence (value placed on rewards such as recognition or career advancement)

Thus, behaviors that enhance technology and participative processes strengthen motivation through cognitive judgment pathways.

3.2 Why Result-Oriented Sustainable Administration Was Not Significant

The lack of significance for the "result-oriented and sustainable administration" dimension may be due to:

Temporal distance:

Personnel may perceive long-term planning as less immediately relevant to their everyday tasks, reducing motivational impact.

Low variance / restricted range:

If most administrators scored similarly high in this category, statistical effects become harder to detect.

Multicollinearity:

Some elements of result-oriented management might overlap conceptually with innovation-based leadership or technology enhancement. (Checking VIF values would clarify this.)

Cultural relevance:

In Thai public administration contexts, participative, supportive, and relationship-driven leadership often has a stronger motivational influence than performance-focused directives.

This aligns with prior research showing that public employees respond more strongly to supportive and collaborative leadership than to goal-setting or top-down strategic approaches (Chantarasombat, 2021; Worapongpat, 2025a).

4. Implications for Smart Local Governance

The findings have several implications for accelerating the transition toward smart local governance:

4.1 Leadership Behavior as a Catalyst for Digital Transformation

Smart local governance requires not only technological infrastructure but also human readiness. Leaders who: promote innovation, encourage collaboration, and support digital tool adoption

create the motivational conditions necessary for personnel to embrace new systems, data-based decision-making, and digital public services.

4.2 Human Capital as a Strategic Asset

Personnel motivated to build digital competencies become drivers of smart governance, consistent with the view of human capital as a co-equal pillar alongside technology and data systems (Xunan & Worapongpat, 2023).

4.3 Policy and Practice Implications

Local administrative organizations should:

Provide ongoing training in data analytics and digital governance

Create innovation incubators or small pilot projects to empower staff

Use transparent communication and participatory decision-making to build trust

Establish recognition systems specifically for digital initiatives

Develop clear KPIs related to innovation participation, data usage, and ICT skill growth
 These practical initiatives translate leadership behaviors into measurable improvements aligned with Smart Local Governance models. (Singhalert, 2017; Thirawan, 2025).

5. Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited to LAOs in Maha Sarakham Province; differences in administrative culture, resource availability, or digital maturity may affect generalizability. Future research should: Conduct cross-provincial comparisons to examine contextual variability

Employ longitudinal designs to observe how leadership and motivation evolve with digital initiatives

Use mixed-method approaches (interviews, focus groups) for deeper understanding of motivational mechanisms

Test structural relationships using SEM or PLS-SEM to validate the conceptual framework

Examine digital readiness, innovation climate, and psychological empowerment as mediators

These directions would extend understanding of how leadership behavior shapes motivation in the era of smart public administration.

Body of knowledge or novel

The present study on the behaviors of local administrators influencing personnel work motivation in public local administrative organizations toward concrete development of smart local governance in Maha Sarakham Province revealed new insights that can be summarized as follows:

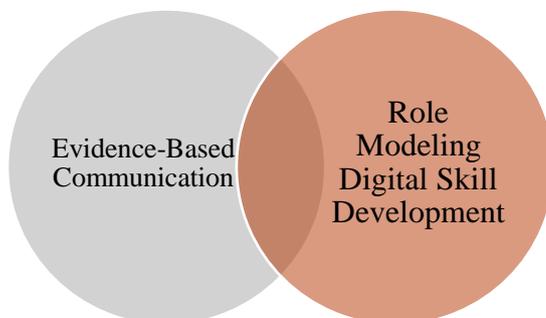


Figure 2: illustrates the framework of local administrators’ behaviors that influence personnel work motivation toward smart local governance in Maha Sarakham Province.

From this framework, it is evident that the components of motivation related to driving smart local governance extend beyond traditional factors such as financial rewards or job security. Instead, “motivation derived from one’s role in driving organizational change” emerged as a critical factor. New motivational components identified include: Motivation from participation in data-driven decision-making Motivation to achieve measurable outcomes through Smart Data utilization This study proposes a new model of leadership behavior: Smart Local Leadership, characterized by: Evidence-based communication Cultivating a technology-oriented culture Role modeling digital skill development Strategic smart data management

The successful advancement of smart local governance in the studied province requires the integration of both transformational leadership behaviors and intrinsic organizational motivation systems. These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of local

leadership in the digital era and provide practical guidance for developing human resource strategies that support data-driven, innovative, and sustainable local governance.

Suggestions

1. Recommendations for Practical Application

1.1 Based on Research Objective 1 (Administrator Behaviors → Personnel Motivation)

Local administrators' behaviors in planning, communication, and ICT utilization were found to significantly influence personnel motivation. Recommendations are therefore prioritized as follows: Implement compulsory capacity-building programs for local administrators in: strategic planning, evidence-based decision-making, and digital-era leadership competencies. KPI examples: $\geq 80\%$ of administrators certified in data-driven decision-making. $\geq 70\%$ reduction in decision delays through dashboard-supported planning. Redesign internal administrative workflows to promote participatory communication and multi-directional feedback channels. KPI examples: $\geq 60\%$ increase in staff idea submissions via digital participation platforms. Personnel engagement index $\geq 4.0/5$. COULD Develop internal learning communities where administrators and personnel jointly solve administrative problems using digital tools. KPI examples: Number of collaborative problem-solving sessions per quarter.

1.2 Based on Research Objective 2 (Personnel Motivation Levels)

Responsibility and achievement motivations were especially high. To reinforce this: MUST Introduce performance evaluation systems tied to measurable outcomes, accompanied by transparent merit-based rewards. KPI examples: Work quality scores $\geq 85\%$ Timeliness of service delivery improved by $\geq 20\%$. SHOULD Provide structured career development pathways, such as promotions, scholarships, and cross-functional training. KPI examples: $\geq 50\%$ of personnel attend annual professional development programs. COULD Establish a digital portfolio system for personnel to track skills, achievements, and performance progress. KPI examples: 100% of staff profiles updated quarterly.

1.3 Based on Research Objective 3 (Driving Toward Smart Local Governance)

Effective smart governance requires motivated personnel and leaders skilled in smart data utilization. MUST Develop and maintain smart data infrastructure with secure access across all administrative levels. KPI examples: Dashboard adoption rate $\geq 75\%$ Data accuracy score $\geq 90\%$ SHOULD Cultivate a pro-innovation culture, encouraging experimentation and safe-to-fail digital initiatives. KPI examples: Number of innovation projects per year Staff innovation engagement $\geq 4.0/5$ COULD Implement pilot smart-service projects (e.g., e-complaint systems, automated reporting). KPI examples: Service turnaround time reduced by $\geq 25\%$

2. Recommendations for Future Research

The study indicates that participative leadership and smart data management strongly shape personnel motivation and support the advancement of smart local governance. Future research should therefore specify clearer questions and methodological designs:

2.1 Suggested Research Questions

What mediating factors (e.g., digital confidence, perceived fairness, data literacy) shape the link between smart leadership and governance outcomes How does the maturity of smart data infrastructure affect the adoption of smart governance practices across regions

2.2 Recommended Research Designs

Longitudinal Studies (Preferred) Track changes in personnel motivation and leadership behaviors across multiple time points. Useful KPIs: growth curve of staff engagement, digital adoption trajectory. Field Experiments Experiment with new leadership interventions (e.g.,

digital dashboards, participatory data rooms) and test causal effects on motivation. Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling (Multilevel SEM) Analyze how administrator behaviors at the organizational level influence individual personnel motivation across districts or subdistricts. Cross-Regional Comparative Designs Compare Maha Sarakham with provinces implementing advanced smart data systems to identify success factors.

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