

UJIAN TESIS

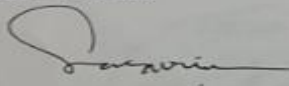
Tesis berjudul:

PENGARUH TRANSPARANSI REKRUTMEN, SISTEM MERIT, DAN KEPEMIMPINAN ETIS
TERHADAP KINERJA APARATUR DENGAN PERSEPSI Keadilan PROSEDURAL SEBAGAI
VARIABEL MODERASI (STUDI PADA KEMENTERIAN DAN LEMBAGA PEMERINTAH DI TIMOR-
LESTE)

Telah diuji pada tanggal: 15 Juli 2026

Tim Penguji:

Ketua



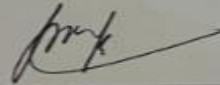
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Anggota



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**PENGARUH TRANSPARANSI REKRUTMEN, SISTEM MERIT, DAN KEPEMIMPINAN ETIS
TERHADAP KINERJA APARATUR DENGAN PERSEPSI Keadilan PROSEDURAL
SEBAGAI VARIABEL MODERASI (STUDI PADA KEMENTERIAN DAN LEMBAGA
PEMERINTAH DI TIMOR-LESTE)**

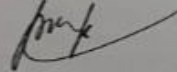
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telah dipresentasikan di depan Tim Penguji pada tanggal: 15 Juli 2026 dan dinyatakan telah memenuhi syarat diterima sebagai salah satu persyaratan untuk mencapai gelar Magister Manajemen (M.M.) di bidang Manajemen

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**PENGARUH TRANSPARANSI REKRUTMEN, SISTEM MERIT, DAN KEPEMIMPINAN ETIS
TERHADAP KINERJA APARATUR DENGAN PERSEPSI KEADILAN PROSEDURAL SEBAGAI
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diajukan untuk diuji pada tanggal 15 Juli 2026, adalah hasil karya saya.

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PLAGIASI MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI

THE EFFECT OF RECRUITMENT TRANSPARENCY, MERIT SYSTEM, AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON CIVIL SERVANT PERFORMANCE, WITH PERCEIVED PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AS A MODERATING VARIABLE (A STUDY OF GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES IN TIMOR-LESTE)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effects of recruitment transparency, merit system, and ethical leadership on civil servant performance and to investigate the moderating role of perceived procedural justice in government ministries and agencies in Timor-Leste. The study was motivated by the continuing challenges of strengthening transparent, merit-based, and ethical human resource management in the Timor-Leste public sector. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data were collected from 315 civil servants and contract employees with a minimum of one year of tenure using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability based on outer loadings, average variance extracted, composite reliability, and heterotrait-monotrait ratios. The structural model showed adequate explanatory and predictive capability, with an R^2 of 0.564 and Q^2 of 0.400. The results indicate that recruitment transparency has a positive and significant effect on civil servant performance ($\beta = 0.289$; $p < 0.001$), as does the merit system ($\beta = 0.222$; $p < 0.001$) and ethical leadership ($\beta = 0.238$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, perceived procedural justice significantly strengthens the effects of recruitment transparency ($\beta = 0.246$; $p < 0.001$), the merit system ($\beta = 0.149$; $p = 0.001$), and ethical leadership ($\beta = 0.100$; $p = 0.020$) on civil servant performance. These findings indicate that improving civil servant performance requires not only transparent recruitment, merit-based human resource management, and ethical leadership, but also organizational procedures that are perceived as fair. The study contributes to public-sector human resource management literature by demonstrating the contingent role of perceived procedural justice in strengthening the effectiveness of these practices in the context of Timor-Leste.

Keywords: recruitment transparency; merit system; ethical leadership; civil servant performance; perceived procedural justice; Timor-Leste.

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucratic reform is a critical effort in improving the quality of public governance. One indicator of its success is civil servant performance, given that civil servants play a strategic role in delivering public services and implementing government policy. In Timor-Leste, strengthening bureaucratic capacity continues to face a range of challenges, including limited human resources, low institutional capacity, and the still-suboptimal application of professionalism and fairness principles in civil service management (Oqui et al., 2025; Soares, 2013).

These conditions point to the importance of transparent, merit-based human resource management, supported by ethical leadership, in improving civil servant performance (Abdul, 2025; Armstrong, 2022). Transparent recruitment enables organizations to obtain competent employees, thereby improving civil servant performance (Aldhuhoori et al., 2022). Beyond ensuring objectivity and professionalism, recruitment transparency also strengthens public trust in government institutions (Maman et al., 2025). However, recruitment practices in the public sector continue to face challenges such as insufficient transparency and the potential for nepotism (Sari & Ayuningtyas, 2025).

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Conceptually, recruitment transparency enables organizations to obtain competent employees through an objective selection process, while also strengthening trust in the organization and minimizing nepotism (Meyersahling & Schuster, 2021). The merit system complements this practice by placing competence, qualifications, and performance at the center of every personnel decision, in order to build a professional and principled bureaucracy (Mau et al., 2020). The implementation of a merit system further contributes to improving the quality of civil servants and organizational performance (Anniza, 2023).

Another factor that contributes to improving civil servant performance is ethical leadership. Leaders who demonstrate integrity, honesty, and a commitment to ethical values can serve as role models for their subordinates, thereby encouraging positive work behavior and improving employee performance (Bandura, 1977). This relationship is expected to be stronger when civil servants perceive that organizational procedures are applied fairly. Drawing on *Organizational Justice Theory*, perceived procedural justice increases employee trust, motivation, and commitment, thereby strengthening the effect of human resource management practices on civil servant performance (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1987).

In the context of Timor-Leste, civil service management continues to face challenges in implementing recruitment transparency, objectivity, and a merit system. One case that has drawn public attention is the recruitment process for members of the Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste, which raised allegations of favoritism and nepotism, cast doubt on the objectivity of the selection process, and prompted an investigation by the human rights and justice ombudsman (PDHJ, 2026). This phenomenon indicates that professionalism and objectivity in civil service management still need to be strengthened, consistent with Hooi's (2017) findings on the need to improve human resource management systems in Timor-Leste. In addition, the influence of social relationships and intense job competition also pose challenges to the implementation of a merit system in the public sector (Cruz, 2022).

Although prior studies have examined the effects of recruitment transparency, merit system, and ethical leadership on civil servant performance, most have focused on direct effects and tested these three variables separately. Moreover, research on the role of perceived procedural justice as a moderating variable remains limited, particularly in the public sector of developing countries such as Timor-Leste. Building on this gap, the present study aims to analyze the effects of recruitment transparency, merit system, and ethical leadership on civil servant performance, and to examine the moderating role of perceived procedural justice within government ministries and agencies in Timor-Leste. This study is expected to make a theoretical contribution by extending the understanding of the relationship between human resource management practices and civil servant performance, as well as a practical contribution by providing input for government ministries and agencies in Timor-Leste to strengthen transparent, merit-based, and ethical civil service management.

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THEORETICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

This study is grounded in *Organizational Justice Theory* (Greenberg, 1987), which explains that employees' perceptions of organizational fairness shape their attitudes and behavior in the workplace. Within the context of human resource management, employees evaluate not only the outcomes they receive but also whether organizational procedures are implemented fairly, consistently, and without bias (Colquitt, 2001). Perceived procedural justice is important because it influences the level of trust, commitment, and employees' willingness to contribute more to the organization (Rubin & Weinberg, 2016). Accordingly, this study positions perceived procedural justice as the mechanism that explains how human resource management practices influence civil servant performance.

This explanation is further reinforced by *Social Exchange Theory* (Blau, 1964), which holds that the relationship between an organization and its employees is built on the principle of reciprocity. When an organization implements transparent, fair, and competence-based practices, employees respond positively through increased trust, commitment, and performance (Cropanzano et al., 2005). This perspective provides the theoretical basis for explaining the effects of recruitment transparency and the merit system on civil servant performance.

Meanwhile, the influence of ethical leadership is explained through *Social Learning Theory* (Bandura, 1977). This theory holds that individuals learn behavior by observing figures they regard as credible. Within organizations, leaders function as role models, such that values like integrity, honesty, and responsibility demonstrated by leaders are internalized by employees and reflected in their work behavior (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Together, these three theories form a complementary conceptual framework. *Organizational Justice Theory* provides the primary foundation for explaining the role of perceived procedural justice as a condition that affects the effectiveness of organizational practices, while *Social Exchange Theory* and *Social Learning Theory* explain the mechanisms through which recruitment transparency, merit system, and ethical leadership influence civil servant performance. The integration of these three perspectives provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for explaining the relationships among the variables examined in this study.

Recruitment Transparency

Recruitment transparency is a human resource management practice that emphasizes openness of information at every stage of the selection process, including requirements, procedures, assessment criteria, and the announcement of results. This openness is intended to ensure that the recruitment process is objective and accountable, and that it provides equal opportunity to all qualified applicants (Attahiru, 2022).

In the public sector, recruitment transparency is a key element in achieving good governance. A transparent recruitment process strengthens organizational accountability while reducing the risk of favoritism, nepotism, and irregularities in personnel decision-making (Kirya, 2020). Transparency is therefore regarded as a prerequisite for building a professional, credible, and competence-based civil service system (Azzahra et al., 2024). Measures of recruitment transparency typically include the openness of vacancy information, clarity of requirements, transparency

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of the selection procedure, clarity of assessment criteria, and announcement of selection results (Maria et al., 2017). These indicators reflect the extent to which an organization implements an open and accountable recruitment process.

Merit System

The merit system is a human resource management principle that places competence, qualifications, and performance at the center of every personnel decision, including recruitment, promotion, placement, and employee development (Woodard, 2005). Its implementation is intended to ensure that personnel management is carried out objectively, professionally, and on the basis of individual ability.

In the public sector, the merit system plays an important role in building a professional bureaucracy while reducing favoritism, nepotism, and political intervention in personnel decision-making (Malik & Prasajo, 2023). It is therefore regarded as one of the foundations of bureaucratic reform, as it promotes fair, accountable, and competence-oriented civil service management (Akpoyibo, 2026). The merit system is generally implemented through competence-based recruitment, performance-based promotion, objective career development, and rewards based on work achievement (Oliveira et al., 2024). These practices reflect the extent to which an organization applies merit principles in public-sector human resource management.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is understood as a leadership approach that places moral values at the center of decision-making, the exercise of authority, and interaction with organizational members. Brown and Treviño (2006) assert that ethical leadership is reflected not only in a leader's own conduct, but also in the leader's ability to build and enforce ethical standards within the organization through communication, exemplary conduct, and decision-making.

Ethical leadership plays an important role in building organizational governance with integrity. Consistency between a leader's espoused values and actions strengthens trust, accountability, and adherence to organizational norms, allowing ethical values to become internalized in day-to-day work practices (Charoensap et al., 2018). Ethical leadership thus serves as the foundation for creating an organizational environment that upholds integrity and consistently applies ethical standards.

Civil Servant Performance

Civil servant performance is increasingly regarded as a key measure of public-sector organizational effectiveness in achieving government objectives and delivering services to the public. Recent literature treats performance as a multidimensional construct that reflects not only the attainment of work outcomes, but also the quality of task execution, work behavior, and civil servants' ability to respond to the organization's evolving demands (Cui et al., 2025; Munirrah et al., 2025).

In the public-sector context, civil servant performance represents individual employees' contribution to organizational effectiveness through the professional, accountable, and public-service-oriented performance of their duties (Lukianova, 2025; Jumady & Lilla, 2021). Prior studies have therefore generally operationalized civil servant

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performance through the dimensions of work effectiveness, productivity, service quality, timeliness, and accountability, which together capture civil servants' performance achievements within public organizations (Ahmadi et al., 2023).

Perceived Procedural Justice

Perceived procedural justice reflects an individual's judgment of the quality of the process an organization uses to arrive at and implement a decision. Unlike justice oriented toward decision outcomes, procedural justice emphasizes that the legitimacy of a decision is determined by the quality of the underlying procedure (Colquitt, 2001).

Within organizations, this perception develops when decision-making procedures are applied consistently, objectively, transparently, and without bias, and when every individual is given an equal opportunity to voice their views in the process (Colquitt et al., 2023). Perceived procedural justice therefore represents an individual's belief that organizational decisions are produced through a fair and accountable process.

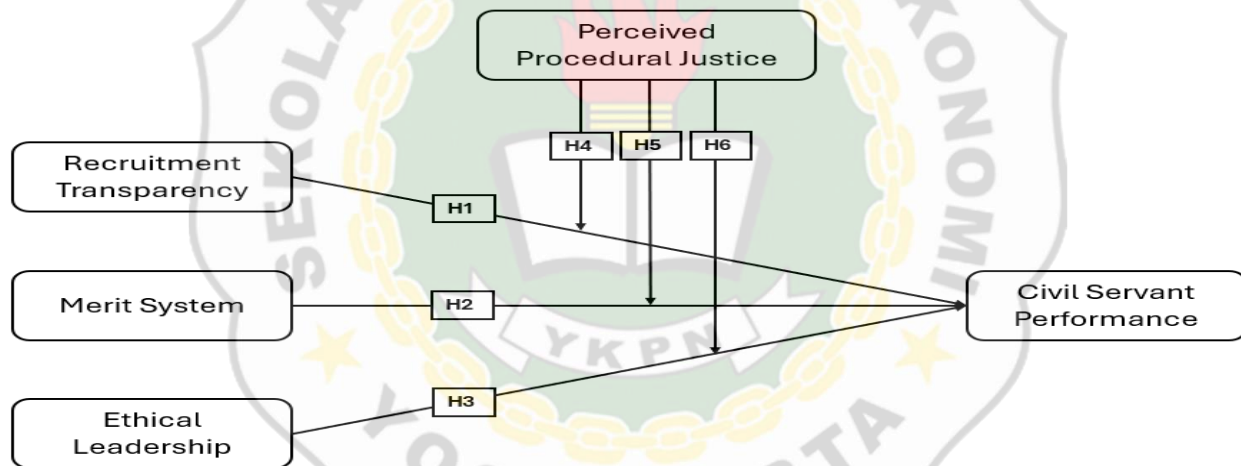


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The Effect of Recruitment Transparency on Civil Servant Performance

Organizational Justice Theory holds that transparency in the recruitment process strengthens perceived procedural justice through the openness of information and objectivity in decision-making (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1987). This perception fosters a positive reciprocal relationship between the organization and its employees, as described by *Social Exchange Theory*, thereby increasing employee commitment and contribution to the organization (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2005). Empirical findings indicate that recruitment transparency contributes to improving both the quality of the selection process and civil servant performance through objective, competence-based mechanisms (Marango, 2024; Minarni, 2025). Based on this reasoning, the study proposes the following hypothesis.

H1: Recruitment transparency has a positive effect on civil servant performance.

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The Effect of the Merit System on Civil Servant Performance

Social Exchange Theory holds that employees tend to respond positively when an organization implements fair, competence-based personnel practices (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2005). Consistent with this perspective, prior studies show that implementing a merit system improves civil servant performance, as personnel decisions are based on competence and performance rather than non-merit considerations (Brewer et al., 2021; Silitonga, 2025).

H2: The merit system has a positive effect on civil servant performance.

The Effect of Ethical Leadership on Civil Servant Performance

Social Learning Theory holds that employees tend to adopt work behaviors by observing their leader as a role model (Bandura, 1977). Consistent with this perspective, research shows that ethical leadership contributes to improved civil servant performance by shaping work behavior that is aligned with organizational values and goals (Avwerhonyo & Sokoh, 2023; Mseti et al., 2023).

H3: Ethical leadership has a positive effect on civil servant performance.

The Moderating Role of Perceived Procedural Justice in the Effect of Recruitment Transparency on Civil Servant Performance

Organizational Justice Theory holds that the effectiveness of organizational practices depends on the extent to which employees perceive the applied procedures as fair (Greenberg, 1987; Colquitt, 2001). Consistent with this perspective, research shows that perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of recruitment transparency on employee attitudes and performance, because transparency is more effective when the selection process is perceived to be fair (Adamovic, 2023; Hermanto, 2022).

H4: Perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of recruitment transparency on civil servant performance.

The Moderating Role of Perceived Procedural Justice in the Effect of the Merit System on Civil Servant Performance

Organizational Justice Theory holds that the effectiveness of human resource management practices depends on the extent to which employees perceive organizational procedures as fair (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1987). Consistent with this perspective, research shows that perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of the merit system on employee attitudes and performance, because competence-based personnel decisions are more effective when they are perceived as objective, consistent, and free of bias.

H5: Perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of the merit system on civil servant performance.

The Moderating Role of Perceived Procedural Justice in the Effect of Ethical Leadership on Civil Servant Performance

The effect of ethical leadership on civil servant performance does not always operate with the same degree of effectiveness, but is instead shaped by employees' perceptions of the fairness of organizational procedures.

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Organizational Justice Theory explains that procedural justice determines how organizational policies and processes are evaluated by employees, thereby influencing the effectiveness of leadership practices in improving performance (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1987). This explanation complements Social Learning Theory, which holds that ethical leadership shapes work behavior through the leader's exemplary conduct (Bandura, 1977). Accordingly, the effect of ethical leadership on performance is expected to be stronger when organizational procedures are perceived as fair. Empirical findings further support this relationship, showing that perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of ethical leadership on employee performance (Guo et al., 2023; Taamneh et al., 2024).

H6: Perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of ethical leadership on civil servant performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design, conducted among civil servants and contract employees in ministries and government agencies in Timor-Leste. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with a minimum of one year of tenure as the selection criterion, yielding 315 respondents who met the study's requirements.

The research instrument adopted measurement scales validated in prior studies, which were then translated into Indonesian and Tetun and refined through a pilot test prior to data collection. All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale. Before analysis, data screening included testing for social desirability bias and checking response consistency to ensure the quality of the data used in the study (Reynolds, 1978; Schnapp, 2017; Schroeders et al., 2022). Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The measurement model was evaluated through tests of construct validity and reliability, while the structural model was analyzed using SRMR, R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 , and bootstrapping to test the study's hypotheses.

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RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1. Respondent Profile (N = 315)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	186	59.0
	Female	129	41.0
Age	< 20 years	37	11.2
	21–30 years	112	35.6
	31–40 years	86	27.3
	41–50 years	64	20.3
	51–65 years	16	5.1
Education	Secondary education	11	3.5
	Bachelor's degree	269	85.4
	Master's degree	33	10.5
	Doctoral degree	2	0.6
Tenure	< 1 year	4	1.3
	1–2 years	129	41.0
	3–5 years	114	36.2
	6–10 years	61	19.4
	> 10 years	7	2.2

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the 315 respondents who participated in this study. The majority of respondents were male (59.0%), aged 21–30 years (35.6%), held a bachelor's degree (85.4%), and had 1–2 years of tenure (41.0%). This composition indicates that the sample was dominated by civil servants of productive age with a relatively high level of education and early- to mid-career work experience. These characteristics are considered adequate for assessing recruitment transparency, the merit system, ethical leadership, perceived procedural justice, and civil servant performance in government ministries and agencies in Timor-Leste.

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation Results

Construct	Outer Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	HTMT
Recruitment transparency	0.874–0.905	0.792	0.958	Met
Merit system	0.862–0.897	0.772	0.953	Met
Ethical leadership	0.869–0.892	0.776	0.960	Met
Civil servant performance	0.856–0.881	0.747	0.936	Met

The outer loadings of all indicators ranged from 0.856 to 0.905, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.747 to 0.792, indicating that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators (Fornell, 1981). Composite reliability values ranged from 0.936 to 0.960, indicating that all constructs have adequate internal consistency (Hair Jr. et al., 2021).

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Discriminant validity was also established, as all HTMT values fell below the recommended threshold of 0.90. Overall, these results confirm that the measurement model meets the recommended validity and reliability criteria, providing an adequate basis for evaluating the structural model.

Table 3. Structural Model Evaluation Results

Indicator	Value
SRMR	0.037
R ²	0.564
Adjusted R ²	0.554
Q ²	0.400

Predictor	f ²
Recruitment transparency	0.132
Merit system	0.085
Ethical leadership	0.084
Moderation X1×Z	0.081
Moderation X2×Z	0.040
Moderation X3×Z	0.015

An SRMR value of 0.037 indicates that the model meets the good-fit criterion, as it falls below the recommended threshold of 0.08. The R² value of 0.564 (adjusted R² = 0.554) indicates that the model explains 56.4% of the variance in civil servant performance, reflecting a moderate level of explanatory power (Chin, 1998). A Q² value of 0.400 indicates that the model has good predictive relevance for the endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2017).

Based on effect size (f²) values, recruitment transparency made the largest relative contribution to civil servant performance (f² = 0.132), followed by the merit system (f² = 0.085) and ethical leadership (f² = 0.084). Meanwhile, the moderating effects of perceived procedural justice on the relationships involving recruitment transparency (f² = 0.081), the merit system (f² = 0.040), and ethical leadership (f² = 0.015) fell into the small-effect category, based on the classification of Gosling et al. (2025). Overall, these results confirm that the model has an adequate level of fit, explanatory power, and predictive capability for testing the relationships among the variables examined in this study.

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Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t	p	Decision
H1	Recruitment transparency $\rightarrow$ Civil servant performance	0.289	5.854	<0.001	Supported
H2	Merit system $\rightarrow$ Civil servant performance	0.222	4.854	<0.001	Supported
H3	Ethical leadership $\rightarrow$ Civil servant performance	0.238	4.849	<0.001	Supported
H4	Recruitment transparency $\times$ Perceived procedural justice $\rightarrow$ Civil servant performance	0.246	5.219	<0.001	Supported
H5	Merit system $\times$ Perceived procedural justice $\rightarrow$ Civil servant performance	0.149	3.279	0.001	Supported
H6	Ethical leadership $\times$ Perceived procedural justice $\rightarrow$ Civil servant performance	0.100	2.214	0.020	Supported

The bootstrapping results show that all proposed hypotheses received empirical support, as indicated by positive path coefficients and significance levels that met the testing criteria. Recruitment transparency had a positive effect on civil servant performance ($\beta = 0.289$; $t = 5.854$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. The merit system also had a positive effect on civil servant performance ($\beta = 0.222$; $t = 4.854$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Ethical leadership likewise showed a positive and significant effect on civil servant performance ($\beta = 0.238$; $t = 4.849$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H3.

The moderating effect of perceived procedural justice was also significant across all three relationships tested. Perceived procedural justice strengthened the effect of recruitment transparency on civil servant performance ($\beta = 0.246$; $t = 5.219$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. It also strengthened the effect of the merit system on civil servant performance ($\beta = 0.149$; $t = 3.279$; $p = 0.001$), supporting H5. A moderating effect was likewise found in the relationship between ethical leadership and civil servant performance ($\beta = 0.100$; $t = 2.214$; $p = 0.020$), supporting H6.

Discussion of Hypothesis Testing Results

The results show that recruitment transparency has a positive and significant effect on civil servant performance. Attahiru (2022) argues that openness in the recruitment process strengthens the accountability of human resource management through the application of fair procedures free from irregular practices. Marango (2024) further shows that a transparent, competence-based selection mechanism improves organizational effectiveness by placing civil servants in positions that match job requirements. These findings indicate that the quality of the recruitment process is a strategic factor in building civil servant capacity while improving the performance of public-sector organizations.

The results show that the merit system has a positive and significant effect on civil servant performance. Brewer et al. (2021) report that implementing a merit system improves the quality of governance and bureaucratic performance by placing employees according to competence and professionalism. Hasim (2025) adds to these findings by showing that a merit-based system strengthens motivation, work quality, and the effectiveness of public organizations. Overall, these results indicate that implementing a merit system improves civil servant performance through competence-based, performance-oriented human resource management.

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The results confirm that ethical leadership is an important determinant of improved civil servant performance. This finding is consistent with Avwerhonyo and Sokoh (2023), who show that ethical leadership has a positive effect on employee performance by strengthening trust, fairness, and the quality of the working relationship between leaders and subordinates. This is further supported by Edevbie and Mcwilliams (2023), who show that leadership improves employee productivity, effectiveness, and work quality. Overall, these results indicate that leadership behavior grounded in ethical values creates a work environment that supports the optimal achievement of civil servant performance.

The results show that perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of recruitment transparency on civil servant performance. Adamovic (2023) explains that procedural justice functions as a mechanism that determines the strength of the effect of management practices on performance. This view is supported by Hermanto (2022), who shows that procedures perceived as fair enhance the effectiveness of management practices. These findings indicate that the impact of recruitment transparency on civil servant performance becomes stronger when the recruitment process is perceived to be fair.

The results show that perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of the merit system on civil servant performance. Rubin and Weinberg (2016) explain that procedural justice enhances the effectiveness of human resource management practices within organizations. This finding is extended by Moon et al. (2024), who show that objective and consistent implementation of a merit system fosters perceptions of fairness that promote positive work attitudes and improved performance. These results indicate that the effectiveness of the merit system depends on the extent to which organizational procedures are perceived as fair by civil servants.

The results show that perceived procedural justice strengthens the effect of ethical leadership on civil servant performance. Guo et al. (2023) show that procedural justice functions as a mechanism that strengthens the relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance. This is supported by Taamneh et al. (2024), who report that the effectiveness of ethical leadership in improving performance depends on the level of procedural justice perceived by employees. These results indicate that ethical leadership has a greater impact on performance when organizational procedures are perceived as fair.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of this study show that recruitment transparency, the merit system, and ethical leadership have a positive effect on civil servant performance in government ministries and agencies in Timor-Leste, and that this effect becomes stronger when supported by perceived procedural justice.

These findings suggest that the Government of Timor-Leste needs to strengthen the implementation of human resource management policies grounded in transparency, merit, ethics, and procedural justice across all personnel processes. Implementing such policies is expected to enhance civil servant professionalism, ensure that employees are placed according to their competencies, strengthen bureaucratic accountability and integrity, and promote decision-making that is more objective and free from discriminatory practices. The resulting benefits would be reflected not

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only in improved individual performance among civil servants, but also in greater organizational effectiveness, higher-quality public services, and increased public trust in government ministries and agencies in Timor-Leste.



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