

The Mediation Role of Motivation In The Influence Of Competency On Employee Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the role of competence in improving employee performance through motivation. The population is ASN employees of the X City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) Secretariat. The sampling technique used saturated sampling technique, namely all members of the population. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires. This study uses a descriptive and verification approach with a survey method. Data processing was carried out using SPSS. After hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that competence and motivation partially have a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Likewise, competence and motivation simultaneously have a significant influence on performance. Mediation analysis used Process Macro Hayes analysis. The results of the hypothesis test state that motivation is proven to significantly mediate the influence of competence on performance. These results can be interpreted as high motivation can increase the influence of competence on employee performance.

Keyword Performance, Servant Leadership, Work Discipline

Introduction

Performance holds a role as a fundamental determinant that critically shapes the trajectory of an organization's success or failure in realizing its previously established strategic vision and mission (Mangkunegara, 2017: 67). In the landscape of the modern business ecosystem, marked by increasingly intense competitive pressure, every organizational entity is compelled to continuously escalate operational effectiveness and efficiency through schemes that optimize the contribution of every individual within it (Zainal & Sagala, 2017). This phenomenon confirms that human resources are not merely a supporting instrument, but the primary driving force in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Conceptually, performance should not be viewed narrowly merely as the output or end result of a work process cycle. Rather, performance is a comprehensive manifestation of real work behavior that is integrated with and aligned to the organization's long-term strategic goals (Colquitt & LePine, 2011). It is precisely this synchronization between individual actions and corporate targets that creates added value for stakeholders. When work behavior no longer intersects with the organization's roadmap, collective effectiveness will experience significant degradation. Furthermore, the urgency of

performance is closely tied to organizational resilience amid uncertainty. Without a measurable, accountable, and high-quality performance system, an organization will lose its compass and competitiveness amid a fluctuating global market full of distractions (McShane & Glinow, 2018). Systematic performance measurement enables organizational leaders to detect inefficiencies early and make well-targeted policy corrections. Therefore, strengthening performance management must become a top priority to ensure that every unit of energy expended by organizational members is maximally converted into tangible achievement. Superior performance ultimately becomes both the last line of defense and the foundation for expansion as organizations face the unpredictable dynamics of a changing era. Etymologically, performance is defined as the quality and quantity of work results achieved by an employee in carrying out the duties assigned in accordance with the responsibilities given to them (Mangkunegara, 2017: 67). According to Moehariono, performance is a depiction of the level of achievement in implementing a program of activities or policies in realizing the organization's targets, goals, vision, and mission (Moehariono, 2018: 95). The emphasis on measurable outcomes is crucial because performance functions as an instrument for evaluating the effectiveness of an organization's use of resources (Afandi, 2018: 83). Several factors are predicted to improve performance, among them competence and motivation. Competence is a fundamental element and a key pillar that every employee must internalize to ensure that job functions can be carried out professionally and accountably (Lyle M. Spencer, 1993: 9). Substantively, the definition of competence refers to a set of underlying characteristics inherent in a person, characteristics that have a strong causal relationship with criteria for effective performance and highly satisfactory achievement in a given field of work (Moehariono, 2018: 5). Without mastery of relevant competence, an individual faces structural barriers in meeting organizational expectations, which can disrupt collective operational effectiveness. Dimensionally, competence is a multidimensional construct that encompasses knowledge, skill, and attitude, which are cohesively manifested in daily work behavior (Wibowo, 2017: 271). The integration of these three dimensions ensures that an employee possesses not only intellectual intelligence but also technical dexterity and emotional maturity. Employees equipped with a high level of competence tend to display strong self-efficacy, making it easier for them to navigate and complete a variety of complex tasks with a very minimal margin of error (Sutrisno, 2016: 203). This ability to reduce errors is a crucial asset for an organization in maintaining output quality and resource efficiency. In its operationalization, each dimension of competence plays a complementary role: knowledge provides a strong theoretical foundation as a basis for decision-making, skill provides the practical capacity to execute tasks technically, while attitude serves as a moral and ethical control that ensures knowledge and skill are used

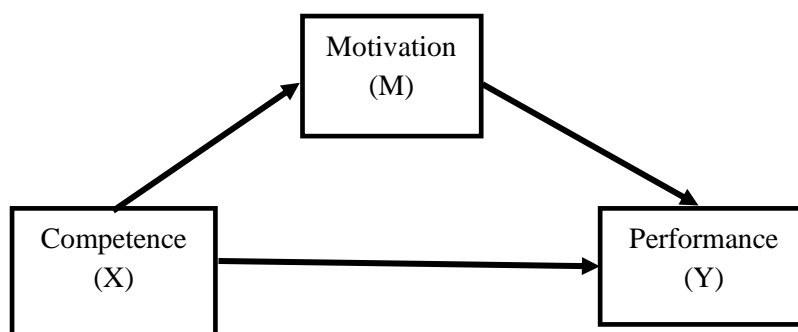
responsibly and in line with organizational norms (Afandi, 2018: 94). Without the right attitude, knowledge and skill can be misused or not optimally utilized.

Therefore, from the perspective of modern strategic management, competence development programs carried out systematically through ongoing training and development are not merely an operational cost burden, but rather an imperative form of long-term investment. This strategic step is vital for building and maintaining an organization's competitive advantage amid ever-changing market dynamics (Kaswan, 2017: 210). By having a competent workforce, an organization has greater resilience in facing global challenges and is able to consistently maintain superior performance standards. Ultimately, competence is the human capital that determines the long-term sustainability of an organization. Several studies show that competence is predicted to improve performance, including research conducted by: {(Waskito & Rahayu, 2024); (Jalil & Kristiawati, 2024) (Sutianingsih, 2024) (Ochoa Pacheco & Coello-Montecel, 2023) (Rahayu, 2022)}. Beyond the aspect of competence, motivation plays a crucial role as a fundamental psychological variable that functions to provide energetic drive, directional orientation, and a consistent level of persistence in a person's behavior in the effort to realize established goals (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 127). Specifically, work motivation can be conceptualized as a dynamic internal condition capable of moving and directing an employee to devote all of their abilities toward achieving the organization's strategic targets (Mangkunegara, 2017: 93). Motivation acts as the engine that converts individual potential into real, productive action. The dynamic between ability and willingness shows that the presence of motivation is often the decisive factor in individual effectiveness. Even someone with a very high level of technical competence, if in a state of low motivation, is certain to be unable to provide maximum contribution or peak performance for their organization. Conversely, a positive phenomenon is often found in which strong motivation and high determination can drive an employee to keep learning independently, thereby allowing them to close gaps or shortcomings in their competence through hard work and persistence (Hasibuan, 2018). In the discourse of human resource management, various classical and contemporary theories have mapped out the sources that drive human behavior. From Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which emphasizes the fulfillment of basic needs up to self-actualization, to Herzberg's two-factor theory, all of these comprehensively explain that the integration of internal (psychological) need fulfillment with external factors, such as compensation systems and the physical environment, greatly influences employees' work enthusiasm and drive (Sedarmayanti, 2017: 233). These factors work simultaneously in shaping employee commitment to their tasks. Furthermore, the classification of motivation shows that intrinsic

motivation—which stems from inner satisfaction, a sense of achievement, and love for the work itself—is often found to be far more stable and to have a significant long-term impact on loyalty and consistency of performance (Wibowo, 2017: 322). Employees with strong intrinsic motivation tend not to be easily shaken by external challenges. Therefore, organizations bear a strategic responsibility to create a fair reward system and to build a conducive work climate. This step is vital for stimulating and sustaining employee motivation over the long term, so as to create a productive and innovative work ecosystem in the long run (Kaswan, 2017: 245). Thus, the management of motivation is a managerial investment just as important as the development of technical skills. Several studies stating that motivation has a positive and significant influence on performance include: {(Leki et al., 2024); (Tone, 2018); (Silva & Costa, 2022); (Zahari et al., 2024); (Kurniawanto et al., 2025); (Arsad et al., 2024)}. The synergy between technical capability and psychological drive is the key to creating superior operational standards within every institution. The combination of adequate competence and high motivation will consistently produce peak performance, an optimal condition that organizations urgently need in order to maintain resilience and adaptability amid the increasingly dynamic fluctuations of a changing era (Moehariono, 2018: 120). Without the combination of these two elements, organizations tend to stagnate and fail to respond nimbly to market challenges or public needs. Conceptually, the relationship between these two variables can be understood by separating their respective contributory functions to the individual. Competence essentially provides an individual's basic capacity to work, encompassing the mastery of knowledge and technical skills. Motivation, on the other hand, acts as a catalyst that provides the willingness, desire, and strong drive for an individual to truly work optimally (willingness to work) (Sutrisno, 2013). Therefore, competence without motivation will only produce idle potential, while motivation without competence will only produce enthusiasm without efficient direction. In practice, an imbalance between these two aspects is often a determining factor as well as a primary cause of systemic inefficiency, whether in government bureaucracy or in the private sector. For example, a highly competent employee who has lost motivation tends to work below their capability, which ultimately harms collective productivity. Conversely, a highly motivated but less competent employee can trigger resource waste due to the many technical errors made. (Sedarmayanti, 2017).

Empirically, various management literature and research indicate that organizations with a strategic focus on human resource development based on the integration of competence and motivation consistently record significantly higher productivity levels compared to conventionally managed organizations (Wibowo, 2015). This advantage arises from a

comprehensive, humane approach to talent management. This phenomenon occurs because employees feel intellectually valued through competence development programs that enrich their knowledge, while also feeling emotionally valued through the provision of appropriate motivation schemes that are relevant to their psychological needs {(Afandi, 2018: 105)}. In the long-term perspective, this sustained synergy between competence development and motivation reinforcement will form a high-performance culture that is deeply rooted within the organization. Such a culture becomes an intangible asset of great value precisely because it is unique, organic, and very difficult for competitors to imitate (Rivai & Sagala, 2013: 560). When an organization succeeds in uniting intellectual capability with a burning work spirit, it has built a robust foundation of competitive advantage. This success not only affects the achievement of short-term targets but also secures the organization's continuity within a global ecosystem full of uncertainty, in which quality human capital becomes the primary differentiator between organizations that merely survive and organizations that truly lead



Based on the research model and analysis above, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H₁: competence has a positive and significant effect on the work environment

H₂: motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance

H₃: competence and motivation together have a positive and significant effect on performance.

H₄: motivation mediates the effect of competence on performance.

Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive and verificative research design. The descriptive approach aims to obtain a picture of the variables of competence, motivation, and employee performance within the organizational setting. Meanwhile, the verificative approach is used to test the truth of hypotheses concerning the causal relationships and influence between variables through field data collection using a survey method. The population in this study consists of all Civil Servants (ASN) at the Secretariat of the Regional People's Representative

Council (DPRD) of City X. The sampling technique applied was saturated sampling (census), in which all members of the population served as research respondents. This technique was chosen to ensure accurate data representation given the relatively manageable population size (Sugiyono, 2019). Primary data were collected by distributing structured questionnaires to respondents. The questionnaire was designed using a specific measurement scale to gauge respondents' perceptions of the indicators of competence, work motivation, and employee performance achievement. In addition to primary data, this study is also supported by documentary study to strengthen the organization's background and profile. This study involves three main variables: the independent variable (competence), the dependent variable (performance), and the mediating variable (motivation). Data processing and analysis were carried out using computerized methods with SPSS software. The data analysis steps included validity and reliability testing to ensure that the measurement instrument (questionnaire) was suitable for use. Descriptive analysis was used to interpret the mean values obtained for each variable. Verificative analysis involved hypothesis testing both partially (t-test) and simultaneously (F-test) to determine the significance of the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. For the mediation analysis testing the role of motivation as an intervening variable, this study used the Process Macro Hayes analysis (Hayes, 2022). This technique was applied to calculate the indirect effect of competence on performance through motivation, in order to determine the extent to which this mediating function was significantly confirmed.

Result

Validity and Reliability Test Results

Validity Test Results

Variable	Score	Criterion	Description
Competence	0.654–0.833	>0.3	Valid
Motivation	0.567–0.767	>0.3	Valid
Performance	0.559–0.770	>0.3	Valid

Source: data processing (2026)

Based on the data presented in Table 4.1, an evaluation of the validity level of the research instrument was carried out for the three main variables: Competence, Motivation, and Performance. This validity test aims to ensure that each statement item in the questionnaire is able to accurately and precisely measure what it is intended to measure for the respondents. The results of the analysis show that all research variables have met the established feasibility standards. For the Competence variable, each statement item reflects a strong fit with the competence concept being tested. Likewise, for the Motivation variable, the instrument used was shown to be able to capture respondents' psychological drive with good consistency.

Finally, the Performance variable also showed similar results, in which all of its measurement indicators were found capable of objectively describing respondents' work achievement. The determination of validity status is based on a comparison between the correlation score obtained for each item and the predetermined minimum threshold criterion. Because all scores obtained consistently exceeded that criterion, it was concluded that all statement items in this instrument are valid. Thus, this questionnaire is of very good quality and can be trusted for use in the next stage of data collection in order to obtain empirical and accountable research results.

Table Reliability Test Table

Variable	Score	Criterion	Description
Competence	0.928	>0.6	Reliable
Motivation	0.909	>0.6	Reliable
Performance	0.911	>0.6	Reliable

Source: data processing (2026)

Based on the data presented in Table 4.2, a reliability test was conducted on the research instrument covering the three main variables: Competence, Motivation, and Performance. This reliability test is a crucial step in determining the extent to which the measurement tool used—in this case the questionnaire—has a reliable level of consistency and stability when used repeatedly at different times or with different respondents who share similar characteristics. The results of the analysis show that the Competence variable has a very high level of reliability. This indicates that the statement items designed to measure competence are able to produce consistent, stable results. The same is true for the Motivation variable, where the instrument was found to have very good reliability, ensuring that respondents' perceptions of motivation can be measured stably without meaningful fluctuation in the measurement tool. The same condition was also found for the Performance variable, with the performance measurement instrument showing a very solid level of consistency. The similarity of results across all three variables leads to the conclusion that the entire set of questions in this study meets strict reliability standards. The determination of reliability status is based on the fact that the score obtained for each variable exceeded the established minimum criterion, so the instrument is deemed suitable for collecting research data. Overall, it can be stated that this research questionnaire is highly reliable. This instrument has a high degree of accuracy and precision in capturing information. Thus, the data collected can be trusted for further analysis, since the measurement tool is able to maintain consistency of results even when tested repeatedly.

Partial Test Results

Table Partial Test Table

Variable	Coeff	SE	t	p
Competence	0.0445	0.0597	0.7459	0.4575
Motivation	0.8671	0.0620	13.9945	0.0000

Source: data processing (2026)

Dependent variable: Performance

Table 3 shows that the effect of competence on performance has a coefficient value of 0.0445 and a p-value of 0.4575, which is greater than 0.05. This means that although competence has a positive effect on performance, the effect is not significant. Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) cannot be confirmed. Meanwhile, the test results for the effect of motivation on performance produced a coefficient value of 0.8671 and a p-value of 0.0000 (< 0.05). This means that motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance, so the second hypothesis (H2) is confirmed.

Simultaneous Test Results
Table Simultaneous Test

	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
Constant	2.5381	271.4571	2.0000	98.0000	0.0000

Source: data processing (2026)

Dependent variable: performance

The simultaneous test results presented in Table 4 show that the competence and motivation variables together have a significant effect on performance, with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). Thus, the third hypothesis (H3) can be confirmed.

Total Effect, Direct Effect, and Indirect Effect
Table Total Effect

Effect	SE	t	p
0.6961	0.0644	10.8135	0.0000

Source: data processing (2026)

Table Direct Effect

Effect	SE	t	p
0.0445	0.0597	0.7459	0.4575

Source: primary data processing (2026)

Table Indirect Effect

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
0.6516	0.1220	0.3867	0.8676

Source: primary data processing (2026)

Table 5 shows that the total effect of competence on performance through motivation is 0.6961. This value consists of a direct effect of 0.0445 and an indirect effect of 0.6516, meaning that the indirect effect coefficient is larger than the direct effect. Table 7 confirms the fourth hypothesis (H4), that motivation mediates the effect of competence on performance. This is supported by the fact that the indirect effect is larger than the direct effect, as well as by the confidence interval, with a BootLLCI of 0.3867 and a BootULCI of 0.8676, which does not

include zero. Thus, it can be concluded that the effect of competence on performance through motivation is confirmed.

The test results show that competence, on its own, has a positive direction of relationship with performance. This indicates that improvements in knowledge, skill, and work attitude tend to be followed by improved work results. Statistically, however, this effect was found to be not significant. This phenomenon indicates that, within the organizational context studied, possessing high competence alone is not yet sufficient to guarantee a real, direct improvement in performance. This can occur when competent individuals lack the drive or the right environment to actualize their abilities. Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is a direct effect of competence on performance cannot be confirmed in this study.

Unlike competence, work motivation was found to play a very crucial and significant role in influencing performance. This result proves that strong internal and external drive within an individual is directly proportional to their performance achievement. Individuals with high motivation tend to be more persistent, focused, and results-oriented, enabling them to make a greater contribution to the organization. The significance of this effect confirms that motivation is the primary engine that converts potential into real action in the form of superior performance.

Although competence alone did not have a significant effect, testing the two variables together (simultaneously) showed different results. When competence and motivation are combined, together they have a significant impact on improving performance. This finding sends an important message to management that efforts to improve performance cannot be carried out in a partial manner. Organizations not only need to recruit people who are experts in their field, but must also accompany this with strategies to keep their work morale high. The combination of ability and willingness is the key to achieving work effectiveness.

The most interesting finding of this study is the confirmed role of motivation as a mediating variable between competence and performance. The analysis shows that competence actually has a very large impact on performance, but that impact is channeled more through an indirect path—namely, through the strengthening of motivation first. This means that individuals who feel competent will have greater self-confidence, which in turn triggers strong achievement motivation. It is this built-up motivation that ultimately drives them to achieve optimal performance. The fact that the indirect effect was found to be more dominant than the direct effect indicates that motivation functions as an essential bridge or connector. Without motivation, an individual's competence appears to remain "dormant" and fails to have a maximal impact on performance. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that competence affects performance through motivation as an intermediary is convincingly confirmed.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research discussion, it can be concluded that work motivation is the primary key in determining the success of individual performance, with mental drive and work enthusiasm proven to have a far stronger impact than the mastery of competence on its own. Although competence remains an important foundation for an employee, the possession of technical skill and knowledge will not make a real contribution to work outcomes if it is not accompanied by high motivation. This is reinforced by the finding that motivation acts as a bridge that channels competence-based potential into real action, so that an individual's competence only produces optimal performance once they feel motivated to apply it. Therefore, the synergy between technical ability and emotional drive together becomes the determining factor for an organization's collective success. As a recommendation, organizational management should not focus solely on technical skills development programs or competence training, but should also begin to prioritize strategies for strengthening employees' psychological aspects through appropriate reward systems, the creation of a supportive work environment, and the provision of recognition that can ignite work enthusiasm. Organizational leaders need to recognize that investing in motivation is the most effective way to activate competence that has so far remained underutilized. In addition, future researchers are encouraged to explore other factors that may influence the effectiveness of competence on performance, such as work facility support or leadership style, in order to complement a more comprehensive human resource development model for driving organizational productivity in the future.

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