



Integrative Model Of The Effect Of Competence And Individual Behavior On Employee Performance Through Work Motivation

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of improving employee performance within government agencies, which is not only influenced by structural factors but also by competence, individual behavior, and work motivation. This study aimed to analyze the effect of competence and personal behavior on employee performance, with work motivation as an intervening variable at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency. This research uses a quantitative approach with descriptive methods. The sample comprised 42 respondents, determined through the saturated sampling technique. Data collection was done through questionnaires and data analysis using the path analysis method with the help of the SmartPLS version 4.0 application. The results showed that competence and individual behavior positively and significantly affected performance, both partially and simultaneously. Work motivation is proven to mediate the relationship significantly. These findings indicate that positive individual competencies and behaviors can optimally improve employee performance if supported by high work motivation. Therefore, good human resource management that emphasizes the development of aspects of competence, behavior, and motivation is an essential strategy for increasing the effectiveness of public organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Human resources (HR) are crucial for an organization's success and sustainability. The scope of HR extends beyond mere planning; it encompasses the active implementation and control of organizational practices and policies. This multifaceted role asserts that the quality of human resources is a primary determinant of organizational performance, as evidenced by

relations with productivity and efficiency outcomes (Sunahwati et al., 2019). In the government's institutional ecosystem, the Research and Development Agency (Balitbang) is a strategic catalyst for innovation and produces research-based policy recommendations. It is a knowledge hub bridging the gap between decision making and valid scientific evidence. The success of Balitbang in formulating innovative policies and solutions is highly dependent on the capacity of its human resources, both in terms of technical competence, work ethic, and orientation towards public services.

In the national context, implementing evidence-based policies, as promoted by Balitbang, facilitates sustainable development. Such policies can be effectively operationalized only when supported by a workforce characterized by competence, integrity, and robust analytical skills (Thohir, 2024). The success of these initiatives is contingent upon a conducive work environment that fosters productivity, which is essential for cultivating a climate that can yield high-quality research and impactful policies relevant to societal needs (Thohir, 2024; Azlina et al., 2020). Thus, investing in the capability and professionalism of human resources is a significant determinant of effective policy execution (Thohir, 2024; Wu et al., 2015)

At the regional level, the Musi Rawas Regency Government exemplifies the pivotal role of local administrations in steering development, primarily through the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD). This strategic document serves as a blueprint for regional apparatus to craft and execute developmental programs systematically. Integral to this process is enhancing human resources and promoting innovation, which are indispensable for the effective and efficient management of these programs (Azlina et al., 2020). Research indicates that successful regional development greatly relies on the preparedness of the governmental apparatus to manage these initiatives competently (Thohir, 2024). Therefore, a significant focus on human resource development at the regional level is imperative to ensure that the articulated plans can be realized effectively (Azlina et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2015)

Improving human resource (HR) capacity and competence is essential for enhancing organizational performance, particularly in public service delivery. Recent studies indicate that sustainable HR development significantly contributes to public institutions' accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness when facing social and economic challenges (Kosasih et al., 2024; Susano et al., 2023). This suggests that HR development strategies should encompass technical training and foster a collaborative, innovative, and results-oriented organizational culture (Septiadi & Ramdani, 2024;

In the era of globalization and technological disruption, a synergistic relationship among government, private sector entities, and educational institutions is increasingly vital to cultivate adaptable human resources that can compete nationally and internationally. As noted by several scholars, effective HR development is a strategic investment that must be managed in a planned, sustainable manner that aligns with real organizational needs (Kosasih et al., 2024; Ravi & Sumathi, 2023). Understanding the pivotal role of human resources in development and policy making necessitates that organizations continuously enhance their human capacity to meet the evolving demands of society (Ahmad et al., 2022; Chaudhary, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance

Employee performance is the result of work achieved in carrying out the duties and responsibilities given by the organization. As explained by Alfian et al., (2020), performance is a product of the quality and quantity of work produced by individuals when carrying out predetermined functions. The performance measurement process is not only limited to achieving results within a certain time but also involves evaluating the quality of work results and conformity with previously set standards.

Furthermore, performance can be defined as the work produced by individuals or groups in the organization by the authority and responsibilities given. It aims to achieve the organization's vision, mission, and goals. In this process, factors such as the level of discipline, commitment to work, and ability to overcome problems become increasingly important (Paimash et al., 2024; Nazirwan & Fadhlán, 2024).

Thus, it can be concluded that employee performance is the result of a work process that can be measured over a specific period, reflects the achievement of tasks assigned by the organization, and includes various aspects related to the responsibilities assumed (Alfian et al., 2020; Paimash et al., 2024). Good performance relies not only on speed but also on the quality of work produced, which in turn affects the achievement of overall organizational goals.

Competence

The competence of public service employees plays a vital role in creating effective and efficient services. These competencies include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform tasks optimally in the context of public services. The ability of employees to adapt to complex situations is also a key concern. Research shows that employees with strong service competencies can contribute significantly to improving the performance of public services, which impacts reducing costs and improving the quality of services to the community (Rofik et al., 2022; Asnoni et al., 2021). Improved employee competence is directly related to their ability to understand and serve the needs of stakeholders, which suggests that good competence in carrying out daily tasks is essential for meeting service users' expectations (Getha-Taylor et al., 2018; Putra, 2021).

More than just technical knowledge, employees' competencies also involve personal elements such as traits, aptitudes, and personalities that can affect their performance at work. Research has shown that such factors play a role in determining an individual's level of competence and, in turn, influence their success in the professional environment (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2023; Nurwahyudin et al., 2024). In the context of public services, employee competencies not only create added value in the execution of tasks but also contribute to the development of employee motivation and satisfaction, which positively impacts the overall performance of public services (Bellé, 2015; Huang et al., 2020). These competencies' psychological and social components are important to consider as they can influence the dynamics of interactions between employees and between employees and the communities they serve (Fahrudin et al., 2023; Nurasniar, 2021).

In order to achieve quality public services, organizations need to support the development of employee competencies through training and adequate resources (Carvalho et al., 2023; Shet et al., 2019). Research indicates that good training helps employees improve technical competencies and the emotional aspects of interacting with the public (Matute et al., 2018). Furthermore, employee motivation, resulting from a supportive work environment and recognition of achievements, can strengthen the bond between competence and performance (Suardika, 2020; Miller & Song, 2023). Thus, managing employee competencies is key in planning and implementing practical and quality public services.

Individual Behavior

Individual behavior in the context of psychology and society can be understood as a set of actions or responses taken by a person in the face of stimuli from the surrounding environment. According to Risambessy, human behavior is a visible and invisible activity resulting from interactions between individuals and the environment and is reflected in their knowledge, attitudes, and actions (Travert et al., 2019). This aligns with the understanding that behavior includes an individual's psychological response to external stimuli, which can be categorized into two primary forms: passive and active. The passive form includes internal responses that are not directly observed, while observable responses characterize the active form.

Furthermore, Gani argues that human behavior is influenced by interactions between individuals and their social environment, where every individual action has consequences for their environment, including others around them (Travert et al., 2019). This suggests that actions taken by individuals, whether directly or indirectly influenced, will impact achievements and social interactions at various levels, ranging from colleagues to organizational structures.

From a broader perspective, individual behavior results from complex interactions between personal and environmental characteristics. All these elements, such as abilities, expectations, needs, and past experiences, shape individual actions within social and organizational settings (Travert et al., 2019). For example, research shows that physical and sedentary behaviors in university students are influenced by various determinants, including individual factors, the social environment, and physical conditions that influence each other (Deliens et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand that an individual's behavior is not static but dynamic and bound to the changing social and environmental context.

Thus, individual behavior is an action performed in response to various stimuli coming from the environment, which not only affects the individual but also significantly impacts the surrounding community and social structure. Further research in this area helps to understand more about such interactions and how factors such as the physical and social environment can contribute to human behavior (Deliens et al., 2015).

Work Motivation

Motivation can be defined as the drive that moves individuals to behave to achieve predetermined goals. In this context, motivation acts as a driving force that not only influences the will of individuals but also encourages them to engage in various productive behavioral processes (Pasaribu et al., 2023). This implies that each individual brings unique self-motives; these differences can stem from personal characteristics and the fit between the individual and the demands of the job at hand (Pasaribu et al., 2023).

Work motivation, in particular, results from a complex interaction between internal and external factors that influence each other (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018). When employees receive appropriate encouragement, they feel more engaged and eager to work together to achieve organizational goals (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018). Working in a supportive environment characterized by clear and challenging work has increased motivation levels and performance. Research has shown that intrinsic motivation is relevant, and external factors such as recognition and incentives influence levels of work engagement (Gagné et al., 2022; Locke & Schattke, 2019).

Success in motivating employees to achieve organizational goals efficiently depends mainly on the organization's ability to meet individual needs (McClean & Collins, 2018). In this regard, individuals' work drive is closely linked to how well they obtain personal achievements that match their aspirations and needs (Bhatnagar et al., 2016). A structured approach based on understanding motivation is necessary, given that high motivation usually results from strategies that consider both physiological and psychological aspects (Opoku-Dakwa, 2021). By understanding how various job characteristics can facilitate individual and collective goals, organizations can create work environments that are productive and enjoyable for all employees (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018); (Broeck & Parker, 2017).

From a broader perspective, motivation is the fundamental driver behind human behavior in the work context. Determining direction, intensity, and persistence in goal achievement is essential for understanding and improving motivation (Wan et al., 2018; Schmitt et al., 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to develop more innovative approaches to motivating employees, taking into account individual preferences and group dynamics in the work environment (Wind et al., 2016).

METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach. In this case, the data collected is in the form of numbers, and the analysis is carried out using statistical methods. The quantitative approach is important because it allows researchers to generalize findings from a representative sample to a broader population (Amelia & Sijabat, 2020). This aligns with the view that initial observation in the field is an important step to identify relevant phenomena related to the topic, as proposed by methodologies in human resource management studies (Fedyk et al., 2021).

After the observation process, the researcher must formulate the problem to be studied, which is linked to existing literature theories. This approach provides the basis for developing a research framework, including exogenous, endogenous, and intervening variables explored in the study (Chen & Zheng, 2022). In this study, the population was also sampled, namely employees at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency, totaling 43 people in the form of employees of the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency, consisting of structural officials, certain functional officials, general functional officials, and non-civil servants, were selected as samples. In this case, purposive sampling as a selection method is very relevant and helpful in maintaining the accuracy of the results generated from this study (Etikan, 2017).

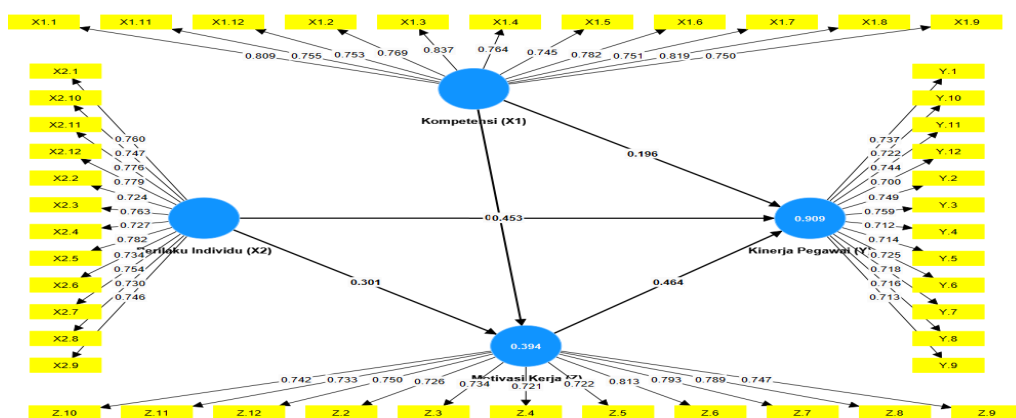
The next stage of data analysis is expected to answer research questions and contribute to more effective human resource management practices in the future (Mohammed & Faisal, 2022). Path analysis was carried out with the Smart PLS approach through the bootstrapping method to calculate the direct and indirect effects of variables (Bisinotto et al., 2017). Path analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between these variables' direct and indirect effects in this study. The direct effect describes the direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables, while the indirect effect occurs through the mediating variable (Umayyah, 2018).

RESULTS

Full Structural Model Testing

The results of testing the full structural model on the effect of competence and individual behavior on employee performance at the Musi Rawas Regency Research and Development Agency with work motivation as an intervening variable look like the picture below;

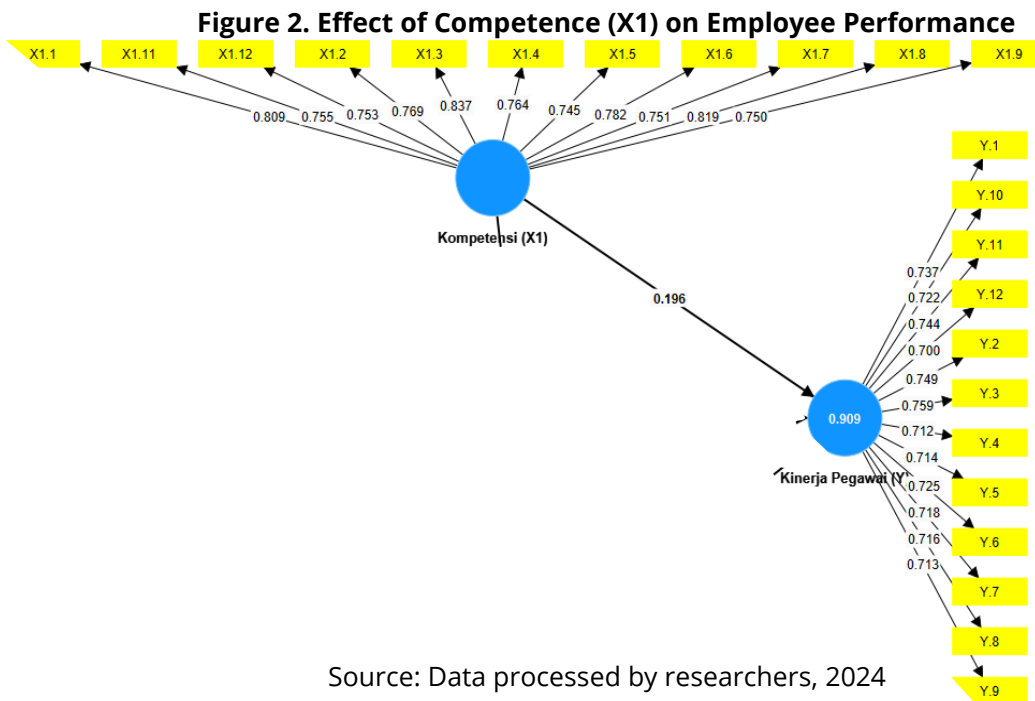
Figure 1. Full Model Of The Effect Of Competence And Individual Behavior On Employee Performance With Work Motivation As An Intervening Variable



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

The figure above reflects a complete model that explores the influence of individual competencies and behaviors on employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency. In this context, the exogenous variables (independent variables), namely individual competencies and behaviors, are measured through several relevant indicators. From the point of view of this model, the endogenous variable, which in this case is employee performance, and the intervening variable, namely work motivation, are also described by relevant indicators. The contribution of motivation to employee performance is also supported by other studies that note that motivation can affect employee performance, which consists of variables such as competence.

Testing the effect of competence on employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

The figure above illustrates the influence of competence on employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency. The analysis results show that the competency variable (X1) is exogenous (independent variable), consisting of 11 statements derived from indicators (manifest variables) with an outer loading value above 0.7, which indicates that this variable is valid. Research shows that increasing employee competence contributes positively to their performance. One of the statements, X1.10, was eliminated during the initial validity and reliability testing because it did not meet the established validity requirements.

Meanwhile, the employee performance variable as an endogenous variable (dependent variable) consists of 12 statements showing an outer loading value above 0.7, so it can be considered valid. Research confirms a significant positive relationship between competence and employee performance; the higher the competence of employees, the better the performance can be achieved. The terms "endogenous variable" and "exogenous variable" are used in a

broader context in the academic literature, indicating the importance of competencies as a factor driving organizational performance outcomes.

The Path Coefficients bootstrapping results of path analysis for the effect of competence on employee performance are as follows:

Table 2. Output Path coefficients of the Effect of Competence on Employee Performance

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Competence (X1) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0.196	0.191	0.056	3.503	0.001

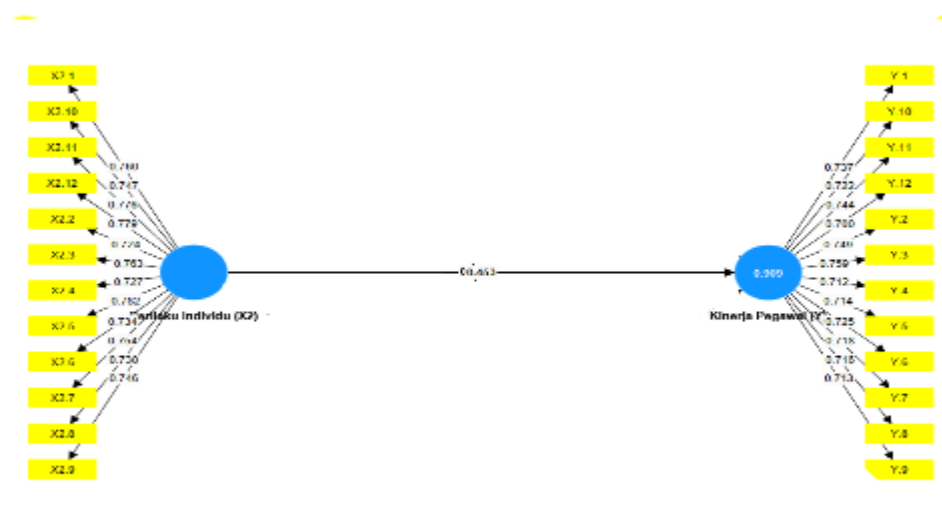
Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

In analyzing the influence between variables, the bootstrapping procedure used through Smart PLS software is essential to understand the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. This test is conducted by examining the T-value and P-value, where the T-value is expected to be greater than 1.96 to reject the null hypothesis (Ho) and accept the alternative hypothesis (Ha), and the P-value is expected to be less than or equal to 0.05 (Noor et al., 2022; Polas et al., 2022). The non-parametric nature of the bootstrapping method allows for more accurate estimates of the confidence intervals and standard errors of the path. This makes bootstrapping the method of choice in analysis at large, especially in structural models such as PLS-SEM.

From the analysis results shown in the Path Coefficients table, it can be seen that the effect of competence on employee performance has a T-value of 3.503, which is greater than 1.96, thus providing strong evidence that competence does affect employee performance. In addition, the P-value of competency is recorded at 0.000, which is far below the 0.05 limit, supporting the argument that the effect between competency variables and employee performance is significant. The coefficient of competency of 0.196 also indicates that every one-unit increase in competency will contribute to an increase in employee performance by 0.196 units.

Testing the Effect of Individual Behavior on Employee Performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency

Figure 3. The Effect of Individual Behavior (X2) on Employee Performance



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

The figure above illustrates the influence of individual behavior on employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency. As an exogenous variable in this study, individual behavior is measured through 12 statements developed from relevant indicators and declared valid, with an outer loading value above 0.7.

Furthermore, employee performance, as an endogenous variable, also consists of 12 statements that show the same validity with an outer loading value above 0.7, so it is proven valid and meets the validity test. The overall analysis shows that individual behavior has a direct impact on employee performance, suggesting a close relationship between behavioral measures and performance outcomes in organizations.

The Path Coefficients bootstrapping results of path analysis for the effect of individual behavior on employee performance are as follows:

Table 3 Output Path coefficients Effect of Individual Behavior on Employee Performance

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Individual Behavior (X2) - > Employee Performance (Y)	0.453	0.466	0.064	7.113	0.000

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

Based on the path coefficient table presented, individual behavior significantly influences employee performance, as can be seen from the recorded T value of 7.113, which far exceeds the 1.96 threshold. This indicates a positive relationship between individual behavior and organizational employee performance.

The obtained P value of 0.000 provides statistical evidence that the effect of individual behavior on employee performance is significant ($P < 0.05$). Previous research supports this finding with evidence focusing on organizational commitment and transformational leadership behaviors, which positively impact employee performance. The recorded standardized coefficient of 0.453 indicates that every one-unit increase in individual behavior is associated with a 0.453-unit increase in employee performance, emphasizing the importance of individual optimism in organizational performance.

The influence of individual competence and behavior on employee performance at the Musi Rawas Regency Research and Development Agency

The results of multiple regression analysis for the influence of competence and individual behavior on employee performance are as follows:

Table 4. Anova Summary Output of the Effect of Competencies and Individual Behavior on Employee Performance

	Sum square	df	Mean square	F	P value
Total	1575.905	41.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Error	391.415	39.000	10.036	0.000	0.000
Regression	1184.490	2.000	592.245	59.010	0.000

Source: Primary data processing, 2024

Based on regression analysis using the Smart PLS method, the F value is 59,010, which exceeds the F table value of 3,232. This shows that individual competence and behavior significantly influence employee performance. In other words, the regression model applied in

this study showed that the two variables, optimism, do not contribute significantly to explaining variations in employee performance. This finding aligns with the theory that self-competence and individual behavior in the workplace are optimistic determinants that affect the productivity and effectiveness of employee performance in organizations.

In line with previous regression analysis research, time influence factors such as work motivation and competence were also found to impact employee performance positively. In this context, the analysis results show that an increase in worker competence will be directly proportional to an increase in performance.

Table 5. Output R Square Effect of Competence and Individual Behavior on Employee Performance

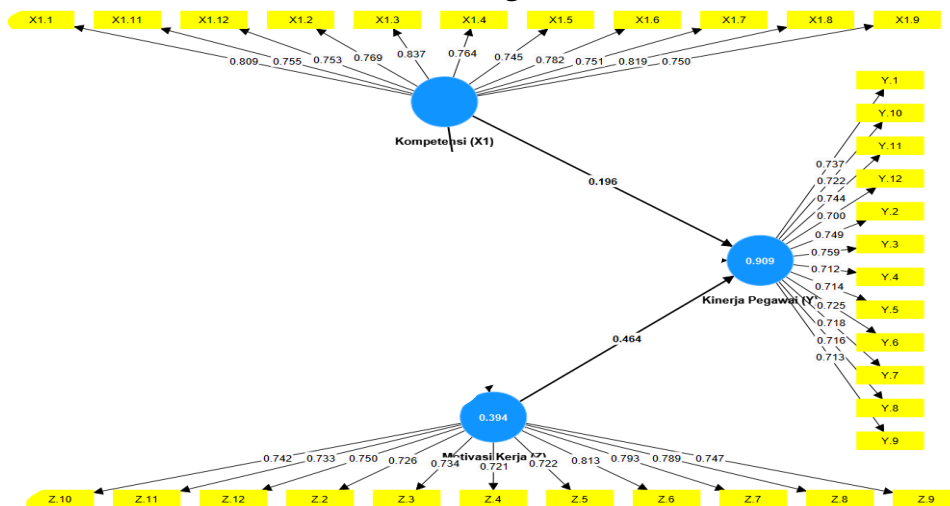
	Performance (Y)
R-square	0.752
Adjusted R-square	0.739
Durbin-Watson test	1.604

Source: Primary data processing, 2024

Based on the table above, the results of regression calculations conducted using SmartPLS show that competence and individual behavior significantly influence work readiness, reaching a value of 73.9%. This research aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of competencies in improving individual work outcomes, where employee readiness significantly affects job performance. In addition, individual behavioral dynamics in the work environment also play a crucial role, with many studies showing that personality traits, such as the level of perseverance and optimism, are positively related to their readiness to face job challenges.

Testing the Effect of Competence on Employee Performance at the Musi Rawas Regency Research and Development Agency with Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable

Figure 4. The effect of competence on employee performance with work motivation as an intervening variable



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

Figure 4 shows the effect of competence on employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency, with work motivation as the intervening variable. In this analysis, three types of variables are identified: exogenous variables, namely competence

(X1); endogenous variables, namely employee performance (Y); and intervening variables, namely work motivation (Z). Each variable is developed from several statement items derived from indicators that form their respective latent variables. This is in line with research showing that the existence of motivation as an intervening variable can strengthen the relationship between competence and employee performance.

In this context, the outer loading value of each variable is greater than 0.7, which indicates that all variables have passed the validity test. This validity is important because it ensures that the measuring instrument can be trusted to describe the intended construct (Chasanah et al., 2023). Previous research also shows that intervening variables, such as work motivation, play a significant role in improving employee performance through various psychological and social mechanisms involved, including in the context of job satisfaction and discipline. Thus, increasing employee competence not only has a direct impact on performance but also increased motivation can be triggered by various external and internal factors.

The results of the *specific indirect effect* of the influence of competence on employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency with Work Motivation as an intervening variable are as follows.

Table 6. Output *specific indirect effect* The Effect of Competence on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as an intervening variable

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Competence (X1) -> Work Motivation (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0.182	0.168	0.081	2.247	0.027

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

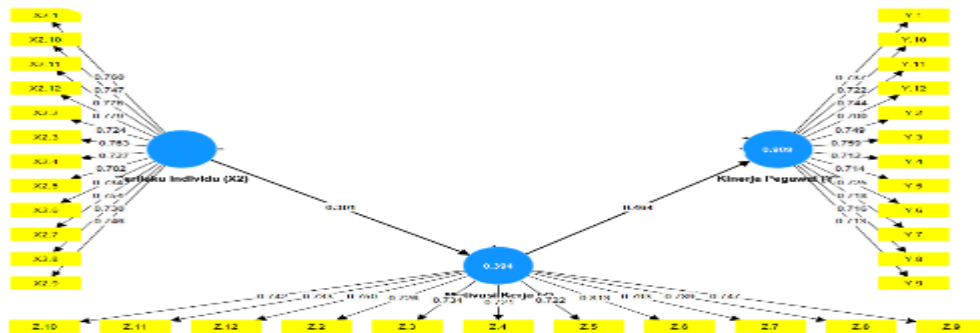
Based on the table regarding the indirect effect of competence on employee performance through work motivation as an intervening variable, it can be analyzed that the T-statistic value obtained is 2.247, which exceeds the 1.96 significant threshold. This indicates a significant effect of competence on employee performance, where work motivation is a mediator in the relationship. In addition, the P-value of 0.027 also indicates that the effect is significant because it is smaller than 0.05. In other words, work motivation is proven to have a strong indirect effect on the relationship between competence and employee performance.

Furthermore, the resulting coefficient for the competency variable is 0.182. This means that every time there is a one-unit increase in competence, there will be an increase in predicted employee performance of 0.182 units through work motivation as an intervening variable. Previous research also supports these findings, noting that increased competence goes hand in hand with better employee performance.

From various studies, it has been proven that employees with high competence tend to have superior performance because they are better able to utilize their potential effectively to complete tasks and achieve organizational goals.

Testing the effect of individual behavior on employee performance at the Musi Rawas Regency Research and Development Agency with work motivation as an intervening variable

Figure 5. Effect of Individual Behavior on Employee Performance through Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

The figure above shows the complex relationship between employees behavior and performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency, where work motivation is an intervening variable. In this analysis, it can be seen that individual behavior (X2) as an exogenous variable has a significant impact on employee performance (Y), which is an endogenous variable, with work motivation (Z) acting as a bridge between the two variables. Previous research notes that work motivation can have a positive effect on improving employee performance, and if this motivation is well managed, employee work results are expected to increase significantly. Further analysis shows that work motivation, an intervening variable, strengthens the relationship between individual behavior and employee performance. In other words, the positive behavior of employees not only affects their performance directly but increases their motivation. This is supported by research results showing that each variable studied, including individual behavior, has an outer loading value greater than 0.7, indicating that all variables have met the validity criteria.

The results of the specific indirect effect of the influence of individual behavior on employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency with Work Motivation as an intervening variable are as follows:

Table 7. Output Specific Indirect Effect Effect Of Individual Behavior On Employee Performance With Work Motivation As An Intervening Variable

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Individual Behavior (X2) -> Work Motivation (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0.14	0.156	0.063	2.207	0.03

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

Based on the table showing specific indirect effects, the effect of individual behavior on employee performance through work motivation as an intervening variable has a T-statistic value of 2.207, greater than 1.96. This shows a significant influence between individual behavior on employee performance and work motivation as a mediator. In addition, the p-value of 0.03, which is smaller than 0.05, also confirms this significant effect. These factors indicate that work motivation plays a role in improving individual performance and optimizing the positive impact

of individual behavior on employee performance in organizations. The competency coefficient value of 0.14 indicates that with an increase in individual behavior, it is estimated that there will be an increase in employee performance by 0.14 units through work motivation. The study reinforces that work motivation contributes significantly to bridging the relationship between individual behavior and performance.

DISCUSSION

The Effect Of Competence On Employee Performance At The Research And Development Agency Of Musi Rawas Regency

Based on the test results utilizing Smart PLS, the research data indicates a significance value 0.000 for employee competence, accompanied by a coefficient of 0.196. This observation signifies a positive and statistically significant influence of employee competence on performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency. Such findings align with various studies that assert that an increase in employee competence correlates positively with enhanced performance levels. Nurhayati et al. affirm that competence is a mediating variable that influences employee performance, reinforcing the importance of competence in achieving superior organizational outcomes (Nurhayati et al., 2024). Similarly, research by Wijayanti and Sari underscores the necessity of competent employees, suggesting that ongoing competency development is vital for meeting organizational demands effectively (Wijayanti & Sari, 2023). Furthermore, studies indicate that heightened competence is associated with improved job performance, particularly in younger employees with strong educational backgrounds, which can enhance their productivity and contributions to performance objectives (Juniarti et al., 2021).

The path analysis method emphasizes the unidirectional relationship between competence and employee performance, indicating that enhanced competence improves performance outcomes. This notion is supported by studies demonstrating that a higher employee competency level is correlated with greater performance (Adhika et al., 2022; ZUNIZAR et al., 2023). Mulyani and Nurhadian elaborate that practical training leading to improved competence is crucial for optimal employee performance and motivation (Mulyani & Nurhadian, 2023). Moreover, competency consistently appears as a significant predictor of performance across various contexts, reflected in findings that assert the positive impact of employee competency on organizational effectiveness (Syaifullah et al., 2022; Sabuhari et al., 2020). Therefore, an increase in employee competence not only fosters individual employee performance but also contributes significantly to the organization's overall performance.

Effect of Individual Behavior (X2) on Employee Performance (Y)

The results of the bootstrap test emphasize that individual behavior at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency holds a significant value of 0.000 and a coefficient of 0.453, indicating a positive influence on employee performance. This suggests that as individual behavior improves, employee performance also increases, establishing a robust positive relationship between the two variables (Xia et al., 2024). The findings align with existing literature, indicating that physical and non-physical work environments significantly enhance employee performance by fostering positive individual behaviors (Kumala, 2023). Such insights highlight the necessity of cultivating a supportive work environment, critical for sustaining employee motivation and engagement, ultimately leading to improved organizational effectiveness (Kurtessis et al., 2015).

This research also underscores the significance of devising strategies for developing individual behavior within organizations, particularly through structured training and skill enhancement initiatives. Organizations that successfully implement policies nurturing positive behaviors and enhance training programs will likely witness employee performance

improvements. Studies have shown that effective management practices can elevate employee engagement and foster an environment conducive to performance excellence (Othman & Mahmood, 2019; Jiang et al., 2022). Organizations can enhance operational success and employee satisfaction by investing in human resource management practices that emphasize positive individual behaviors (Kim & Kuo, 2015).

Effect of Competence (X1) and Individual Behavior (X2) on Employee Performance (Y)

The regression analysis conducted using Smart PLS yields an F value of 59.010, notably exceeding the F table value 3.232. This substantial disparity underscores the complementary roles of competence and individual behavior in significantly impacting employee performance. Personal characteristics and competencies are pivotal to enhancing employee performance outcomes across various occupational sectors. This aligns with findings in research showing the correlation between individual characteristics and overall performance outcomes in different contexts (Ilhami et al., 2020). Moreover, the coefficients obtained reveal a competence coefficient of 0.428 and an individual behavior coefficient of 0.542, indicating a combined influence of approximately 73.9% on employee performance. The substantial explanatory power of these variables highlights their significance in the work environment.

The Effect of Competence (X1) on Employee Performance (Y) through Work Motivation (Z) as an Intervening Variable

Based on the results of bootstrapping testing of research data using the specific value of the indirect sample to analyze the effect of competence on employee performance through work motivation as an intervening variable, it was found that the coefficient of the effect of competence was 0.182, with a p-value of 0.027, which showed that the value was smaller than 0.05. This indicates that competence positively and significantly affects employee performance, with work motivation functioning as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between competence and employee performance. This indicates that competence positively and significantly influences employee performance, with work motivation functioning as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between competence and employee performance. This research shows that work motivation can encourage employees to perform better based on their competencies (Taki et al., 2023).

Effect Of Individual Behavior (X2) On Employee Performance With Work Motivation As An Intervening Variable

Based on the results of bootstrapping model testing of research data, the analysis of the effect of individual behavior on employee performance through work motivation shows that the indirect effect coefficient obtained a value of 0.140, which indicates a positive relationship. The p-value of 0.03, smaller than 0.05, confirms that this effect is significant (Kartono et al., 2023). This finding is in line with previous research showing that work motivation serves as a strong intervening variable in the relationship between individual behavior and employee performance, where work motivation can increase the effectiveness of employee performance when influenced by individual behavior (Kelana & Pogo, 2022; Khalili, 2017).

Furthermore, other researchers have shown that individuals who are encouraged by positive behaviors, such as transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors, can contribute significantly to their performance (Hidayah & Rodhiah, 2024; Khalili, 2017). This reinforces the understanding that individuals who have high work motivation tend to perform better, indicating the importance of appropriate interventions in facilitating the development of work motivation for performance improvement (Jumady, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that employee performance at the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency is significantly influenced by several primary factors, namely competence, individual behavior, and work motivation. This finding confirms that efforts to improve employee performance cannot be separated from strengthening internal aspects that are personal and professional.

Competence is proven to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance. The higher the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities employees possess, the greater their contribution to the effectiveness of task execution. The results of the questionnaire show that knowledge of the field of work is an important component in shaping competencies that encourage overall improved work performance. In addition, individual behavior also shows a significant influence on employee performance. Employees who are proactive, open to learning, and responsible for their tasks create a more conducive and collaborative work environment. This attitude not only strengthens relationships between employees but also builds a collective work spirit that positively impacts achieving organizational performance.

Simultaneously, the combination of competence and individual behavior contributes significantly to employee performance. This indicates that achieving optimal performance requires not only technical ability but also positive and professional individual character. Therefore, the synergy between work skills and personal integrity is an important foundation in shaping employees who are superior and adaptive to organizational dynamics. Furthermore, work motivation was found to act as an intervening variable that strengthens the relationship between competence and individual behavior on employee performance. Increased competence and good individual behavior encourage the growth of intrinsic motivation, which in turn affects the level of productivity and dedication of employees in carrying out their duties. Employees who feel competent and have a positive work attitude generally have higher motivation to achieve performance targets while showing loyalty to the organization. Thus, the results of this study confirm the importance of a holistic approach to human resource management. Competency development, positive work attitudes, and strengthening work motivation should be strategic priorities to improve employee performance, especially in public institutions based on innovation and services, such as the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency.

LIMITATION

This research makes an important contribution to understanding the influence of competence and individual behavior on employee performance, with work motivation as an intervening variable. However, some limitations need to be recognized. First, this research was conducted in one government agency, the Research and Development Agency of Musi Rawas Regency, so the findings cannot be widely generalized to other institutions or regions with different organizational characteristics and work cultures. Second, the approach used in this research is quantitative with a closed questionnaire instrument, which tends to limit the exploration of behavioral and motivational dynamics in more depth. Qualitative aspects such as perceptions, personal values, and institutional work culture were not comprehensively explored. Third, the relatively limited number of respondents, although by the saturated sampling technique, remains a limitation in obtaining a wider variety of data. Fourth, other variables potentially affecting employee performance, such as leadership, organizational climate, or external factors, were not analyzed within the scope of this study. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the object and methodological approach and consider other factors to obtain a better understanding.

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