

Job Satisfaction Mediates Competence and Placement on the Performance of Civil Servants in North Konawe Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the factors that affect the performance of Civil Servants (PNS) in North Konawe Regency, with a focus on competence, job satisfaction, and job placement. The method used was quantitative research with an explanatory research approach, which involved 189 civil servants as respondents. The data was obtained through a Likert weighted questionnaire, and the analysis was carried out using covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) with the help of IBM SPSS AMOS 21 software. The results of the study show that competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants, with a path coefficient of 0.619. In addition, work placement also had a significant effect on performance with a path coefficient of 0.413. Job satisfaction was found to have a positive effect on performance, with a track coefficient of 0.370. However, competence did not show a significant influence on job satisfaction (0.045), and performance did not affect job satisfaction (0.285). Job placement plays an important role in improving job satisfaction and performance, where job satisfaction mediates the relationship between job placement and performance. The results of this study indicate that increasing competencies and job placement in accordance with employees' skills can improve their performance. In addition, creating a supportive work environment is also an important factor in increasing employee satisfaction and performance. These findings provide important insights for human resource management in government agencies to formulate more effective policies in improving the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency.

1. Introduction

A public sector organization is an entity whose activities are related to the provision of public goods and services in order to meet public needs and rights [1]. According to Mahsun, the public sector can be understood as everything related to the public interest and the provision of goods and services to the public that is paid through taxes or other state revenues regulated by law [2]. The rapid development of public sector organizations caused by this organization has an effect on the economy such as especially tax payments and affects the people who receive services [3].

According to Law No. 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, public service provider organizations, hereinafter referred to as Organizing Organizations, are public service provider work units located within state administration institutions, corporations, independent institutions formed based on laws for public service activities, and other legal entities formed solely for public service activities [4]. Furthermore, public service implementers who are hereinafter referred to as implementers are officials, employees, officers, and everyone who works in the organizing organization who is in charge of carrying out actions or a series of public service actions [5].

Public sector performance measurement is a system that aims to assist public managers in assessing the achievement of a strategy through financial and non-financial measurement tools. The performance measurement system can be used as organizational control because performance measurement is strengthened by establishing a reward and punishment system. According to Government Regulation No. 12 of 2019 concerning Regional Financial Management, performance is the output/outcome of programs/activities that will or have been achieved in connection with the use of the budget with measurable quantity and quality. Schiff & Lewin stated that the budget that has been prepared has a role as a planning and as a performance criterion, that is, the budget is used as a control system to measure managerial performance [6].

Measurement of local government financial performance can be used as a guideline for local

governments to manage regional finances in the future, as a tool for the community to monitor the policies that have been selected for the implementation of the regional budget. With the implementation of equitable and continuous competency development, it is hoped that it can improve the performance of employees and organizations so that the quality of public services is more excellent [7].

Several phenomena obtained in the field where there is still a gap between the competencies possessed by civil servants and the needs of the organization; The distribution of competent civil servants is not evenly distributed across all government agencies; Budget limitations can hinder efforts to develop civil servant competencies; Excessive workload can cause stress and burnout, which can reduce job satisfaction for civil servants. Working based on their competencies will certainly make it easier for employees to carry out their duties.

Hutapea & Thoha revealed that there are three main components of competency formation, namely the knowledge possessed by employees, abilities and individual behavior. Knowledge is information that employees have to carry out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the field they are engaged in. This knowledge for employees also determines the success or failure of the implementation of the tasks assigned to them, employees who have sufficient knowledge, will work easily and smoothly [8].

Competence is an individual's basic characteristics that affect the way of thinking and acting, and persist in a person. It encompasses a blend of personal abilities, knowledge, skills, social, and spiritual. Employee competence, as part of intellectual capital, can be seen through three aspects: intellectual, emotional, and social. Competency measurement is carried out by considering the level of knowledge, skills, and education [9].

Previous research has shown that competence has a positive and significant influence on employee performance, although there are also findings that show a negative or insignificant influence. Job placements that match employees' skills and skills can improve their motivation and performance. If an employee is placed in a position that suits their abilities and skills, then they will be more enthusiastic in working and trying to make maximum contributions to the achievement of organizational goals [10].

According to applicable regulations, the placement of civil servants (PNS) is regulated based on Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (ASN). Job placement must be adjusted to the qualifications, competencies, and performance required by the position. After the appropriate job placement, a performance assessment can be carried out. Performance is the result of the employee's work in a certain period, which is the basis for evaluation and development of the organization. Good performance is the key to achieving organizational goals, even though it is influenced by various factors such as employee motivation and work ethic [11].

2. Objectives

This study aims to evaluate various factors that affect the performance of Civil Servants (PNS) in North Konawe Regency, with the main focus on competence, job satisfaction, and job placement. Specifically, this study examines the direct influence of competence, job satisfaction, and job placement on civil servant performance and the relationship between these variables. In addition, this study also analyzes the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between competence and performance, as well as between job placement and performance. The results of the study are expected to provide in-depth insight into the factors that can improve the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, as well as provide a basis for strategic decision-making in human resource management.

2. Methodology

This study is explanatory research with a quantitative approach that aims to examine the relationship between variables, including competency (X1), job placement (X2), job satisfaction (Z), and employee

performance (Y). Primary data was obtained through a Likert weighted questionnaire on a scale of 1-5, while secondary data was in the form of an overview of the research location in North Konawe Regency. This study involved a population of 189 civil servants, consisting of echelons III/a and III/b, with census techniques or saturated samples. The analysis method uses covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) through IBM SPSS AMOS 21 software to evaluate the direct and indirect relationship between variables, with job satisfaction as a mediator. The research aims to provide empirical insights related to the influence of competence and job placement on civil servant performance through a job satisfaction mechanism [12].

Literature Review

Employee Competencies (X1)

Employee competence is a fundamental characteristic that affects the effectiveness of an individual's work in an organization. This competency involves various aspects that include motives, namely intrinsic motivation that encourages employees to continue to develop and contribute consistently. In this context, employees who have high motivation tend to have a desire to achieve better targets and take the initiative in their self-development [13].

In addition, competence includes traits, namely physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations or information encountered. This trait reflects the employee's emotional stability and ability to adapt to challenges in the workplace. Self-concept is another important element, which refers to the attitude and values that employees adhere to in completing tasks responsibly. This reflects the level of commitment of employees to the tasks given [14].

Competence also includes aspects of knowledge, namely the ability to understand information that is relevant to the employee's duties and responsibilities. This knowledge includes both technical and strategic aspects that support the effectiveness of the work. Meanwhile, skills are practical abilities to carry out tasks and responsibilities efficiently. The combination of knowledge and skills helps employees achieve optimal work results [15].

In the overall competency framework, the integration of motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, and skills is the main foundation for employees to work productively and adaptively. These competencies not only support the achievement of individual targets but also contribute to the overall success of the organization [16].

Work Placement (X2)

Job placement is the process of allocating employees to certain positions based on their qualifications and competencies. One of the main indicators of job placement is education, which ensures the suitability between the employee's educational background and the position held. Appropriate placement will increase work effectiveness, because employees can apply the knowledge they have acquired optimally [17].

The next aspect is knowledge, which is the understanding and information that employees have about the tasks to be carried out. This knowledge is the foundation for employees to carry out their duties effectively, in accordance with the demands of the given position. Job skills are also an important indicator, where the practical skills of employees must be aligned with the needs of the job to ensure smooth operations [18].

In addition, work experience is a significant factor in the placement process. Previous experience provides practical insights that can be applied to new positions, so employees are better prepared to face job challenges. Placements that pay attention to work experience will produce more competent and confident employees [19].

A good job placement process will create alignment between the needs of the organization and the potential of the individual. The right placement not only increases productivity but also affects job

satisfaction and overall employee performance [20].

Job Satisfaction (Z)

Job satisfaction refers to the level of positive feelings of employees towards various aspects of their work. One of the key elements is promotion, which includes opportunities for advancement based on individual contributions and achievements. Employees who feel recognized tend to be more motivated to do a better job [21].

Another indicator is the relationship with the boss. Good interaction between superiors and employees creates a supportive and collaborative work environment. In addition, the allowance aspect also affects job satisfaction. Various forms of benefits, both financial and non-financial, give employees a sense of appreciation for their contributions [22].

Non-material rewards such as verbal appreciation or formal rewards also affect employee satisfaction levels. This reward creates respect and self-worth among employees. Relationships with colleagues are also an important factor, where positive interactions support effective teamwork and a harmonious work atmosphere [23].

Overall, job satisfaction encompasses a variety of interrelated dimensions. Employees who are satisfied with their work tend to show better performance, high loyalty, and a positive contribution to the achievement of organizational goals [21].

Employee Performance (Y)

Employee performance refers to the work results achieved in accordance with the standards or targets that have been set. One of the main indicators is quantity, which is the number of outputs produced in a period of time. This quantity reflects the productivity of employees in completing the tasks given [24].

In addition, the quality of the work is an important aspect that shows the extent to which the output meets the expected quality standards. This quality reflects the employee's expertise and attention to detail in their work. Time is also an indicator of performance, where the ability to complete tasks according to deadlines reflects work efficiency [25].

Another aspect is service orientation, which emphasizes the ability of employees to provide the best service to the community, superiors, or colleagues. A proactive and friendly attitude in serving the needs of various parties shows the professionalism of employees. Commitment to organizational goals is also an important indicator, reflecting the dedication of employees to prioritizing the interests of the service above personal interests [26].

Employee performance is influenced by a variety of factors, including work initiative and leadership skills. Employees who have initiative tend to contribute with new ideas to improve work effectiveness. Meanwhile, leadership skills help create an inspiring and conducive work environment for the achievement of shared goals [27].

3. Result and Discussion

a. Location and Region Characteristics

North Konawe Regency, which is located in the southern part of the Equator with a land area of 510,176 hectares and sea waters of about 11,960 km², consists of 13 sub-districts, 159 villages, and 11 sub-districts, with Wiwirano District as the largest area and Motui District as the smallest. In the 2021-2026 RPJMD, this area carries the vision of "North Konawe is More Prosperous and Competitive" with a development focus on improving the quality of human resources, infrastructure development, economic growth, good governance, environmental conservation, and strengthening local cultural values.

b. Characteristics Responden

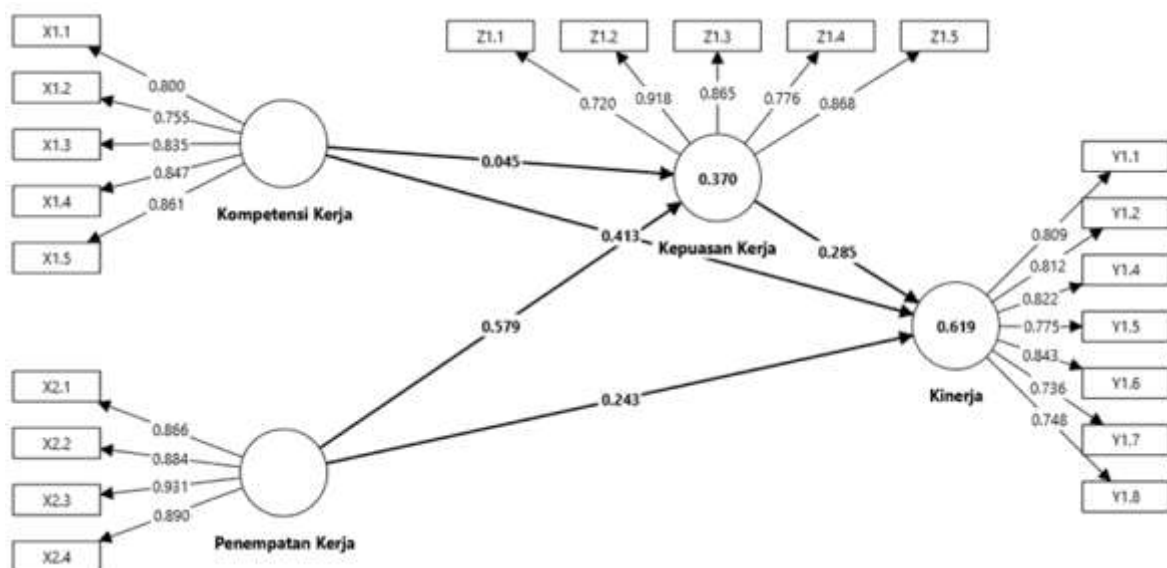
The characteristics of the respondents in this study include various demographic aspects that are

important to provide a more in-depth picture of the respondent's profile. These aspects include gender, age, education level, and length of work.

It	Characteristic	Category	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Man	63,49
		Woman	36,51
		<i>Sum</i>	<i>100</i>
2	Age	40-49 years old	51,85
		50 years	39,09
		30-39 years old	10,05
		<i>Sum</i>	<i>100</i>
3	Education	Bachelor (S1)	52,54
		Postgraduate (S2 & S3)	48,39
		<i>Sum</i>	<i>100</i>
4	Length of Work	10-15 years	47,34
		16-20 years	32,44
		21 years	20,21
		<i>Sum</i>	<i>100</i>

SmartPLS algorithm output

The following are the results of the SmartPLS algorithm, which shows a structural model that describes the relationship between variables in research on Job Competence, Job Placement, Job Satisfaction, and Performance. This model uses Partial Least Squares (PLS) to analyze the direct and indirect influence.



1) Competence Affects the Performance of Civil Servants

The first hypothesis states that competence has an influence on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. Based on the analysis, this hypothesis is accepted with a significant path coefficient of 0.619. This shows that the competencies possessed by employees have a positive and significant influence on their performance. This means that the better the competence possessed by an

employee, the higher the quality of his performance. Competence in this context includes skills, knowledge, and abilities in carrying out the tasks given.

2) Competence Affects the Performance of Civil Servants

The second hypothesis, which is theoretically identical to the first hypothesis, is also accepted with a significant path coefficient of 0.619. These results confirm that competence has a strong direct impact on the performance of civil servants. This indicates that an increase in employee competence will directly improve their work results. Therefore, competency development and training is the key to improving employee performance in government agencies.

3) Job Satisfaction Affects the Performance of Civil Servants

The third hypothesis tests whether job satisfaction can affect the performance of civil servants. The results of the analysis showed a significant path coefficient of 0.370, which means that this hypothesis was accepted. Job satisfaction has a positive effect on employee performance, meaning that the more satisfied employees are with their working conditions and environment, the better the performance they show. This shows the importance of creating a supportive and adequate work environment to improve employee performance.

4) Competence Has No Effect on Job Satisfaction

The fourth hypothesis states that competence has an effect on employee job satisfaction. However, the results of the analysis showed a path coefficient of 0.045 which was insignificant, which means that this hypothesis was rejected. Competence does not show a direct influence on the level of job satisfaction of civil servants. Although competence is related to performance, it is not enough to affect job satisfaction, which is influenced by other factors such as working conditions, rewards, and interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

5) Job Placement Affects Job Satisfaction

The fifth hypothesis tests whether job placement affects job satisfaction for civil servants. The results of the analysis showed that job placement had a significant effect on job satisfaction with a track coefficient of 0.413. This means that the placement of employees according to their skills and interests can increase the level of job satisfaction. The right placement not only affects productivity, but also increases employee comfort and happiness at work.

6) Performance Has No Effect on Job Satisfaction

The sixth hypothesis tests the relationship between performance and job satisfaction. The results of the analysis showed a path coefficient of 0.285 which was insignificant, which means that this hypothesis was rejected. Employee performance does not show a direct influence on their job satisfaction. This shows that even though employees have good performance, it does not necessarily increase their job satisfaction. Other factors such as social relationships, welfare, and recognition have more influence on job satisfaction.

7) Job Satisfaction Does Not Mediate Competence to Performance

The seventh hypothesis tests whether job satisfaction acts as a mediator between competence and performance. However, the results of the analysis showed that job satisfaction did not function as a significant mediator with a path coefficient of 0.370. This means that job satisfaction does not mediate the influence of competence on performance. In other words, the influence of competence on performance is more direct, without being affected by the level of employee job satisfaction.

8) Job Satisfaction Mediates Job Placement to Performance

The eighth hypothesis states that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between job placement and employee performance. The results of the analysis support this hypothesis with a significant job satisfaction path coefficient of 0.413. This suggests that job satisfaction plays a significant mediator

between job placement and performance. Good placement increases job satisfaction, which in turn has a positive impact on improving employee performance. Thus, improvements in job placement can improve performance through increased employee job satisfaction.

The Effect of Employee Competence on Employee Performance

Based on the results of research related to the influence of employee competence on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the coefficient value of the path for the influence of employee competence on employee performance was positive, which was 0.413 with a significant level of 0.000 or below 0.05. So, it can be stated that employee competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. This means that the better the work competence possessed by employees, the better the work achievements of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. Therefore, hypothesis 1 which states that employee competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance is accepted.

Employee competencies consist of five main elements: motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills. Motive refers to a consistent internal drive to achieve a goal, such as a need for achievement or responsibility. Traits include personal characteristics that support the performance of tasks, such as discipline and honesty. Self-concept describes an individual's beliefs and values, including confidence and commitment to duty. Knowledge refers to an understanding of technical and procedural information relevant to the job, while skills involve the technical and practical abilities needed to complete the job efficiently. These five elements complement each other and contribute to the ability of employees to carry out their duties effectively [10].

Practically, this study indicates that employees with competencies encompassing the five elements are more capable of handling daily work challenges. For instance, a strong motivation helps employees stay focused and productive, while a positive self-concept enhances their decision-making abilities. Knowledge and skills support task execution with accuracy and efficiency, while certain traits, such as perseverance, strengthen the employee's resilience in facing work pressures [28].

In the context of human resource management, the findings highlight the importance of creating a work environment that supports the development of these five competency elements. Strategic actions like need-based training, providing constructive feedback, and personal development programs can improve employee competencies holistically. For example, technical training can deepen knowledge and skills, while personal development sessions can enhance self-concept and sharpen positive traits. Additionally, organizations should promote motivational development through recognition of achievements and rewards, which not only motivate individuals but also boost collective productivity [29].

McClelland's (1973) competency theory supports this finding by emphasizing that core competencies, such as motivation and interpersonal skills, are key predictors of performance success. Herzberg's motivation theory adds that adequate competencies can improve job satisfaction, which in turn impacts productivity. The person-job fit model complements this view by stating that alignment between employee abilities and job demands is a primary determinant of optimal performance. In the context of civil servants, competencies encompassing all these elements enable employees to perform tasks with high quality, innovate, and adapt to policy changes or work dynamics [30].

This research aligns with previous studies that affirm the significant impact of competence on employee performance. These studies show that employees with high competencies are not only more productive but also more proactive in providing solutions and services. In the public sector, competencies such as empathy and effective communication play a key role in delivering high-quality services to the community.

The Effect of Job Placement on Performance

Based on the results of research related to the influence of job placement on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the value of the path coefficient for the effect of job placement was positive, which was 0.243 with a significance level of 0.001 or below 0.05. So it can be stated that job placement has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. This means that the better the job placement of employees, the better the performance achievements of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. In other words, job placement that is in accordance with employees' competencies, skills, and interests can increase productivity and the quality of their work results. The findings of the study, which show a positive and significant influence between job placement and civil servant performance, confirm that the hypothesis in this study is accepted.

The results of this study indicate that positively, the right job placement can be a catalyst in increasing individual effectiveness in the workplace. Job placements that consider the suitability of education, knowledge, work skills, and work experience have a more real impact on employee performance. Where the suitability of placement and job position allows employees to work more productively, feel more valued and more motivated to achieve organizational goals [31].

The results of this finding are also in line with the concept of competency-based human resource management. The concept of competency-based human resource management (CBHRM) emphasizes the importance of placing individuals in roles that match their core competencies, which include knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to the job [32]. This strategy aims to create synergy between organizational needs and individual potential. By placing employees in areas that match their expertise, organizations not only improve work efficiency but also create an environment that supports self-development. Employees who feel competent tend to have a higher level of confidence in completing their tasks, which in turn increases their sense of responsibility for work results.

However, it should be understood that the implementation of CBHRM requires a critical evaluation of potential challenges that may arise. One of them is the possibility of skill mismatch, where the organization fails to accurately map employee competencies. As highlighted by Sharma & Malodia (2022) that competency mapping through CBHRM can help bridge this gap by matching roles with employee abilities and ensuring continuous renewal through training. Demikian pula, Muzam (2022) discusses the need for critical and emotional skills as a key component in addressing competency gaps in the knowledge-based economy.

From an individual perspective, accurate placement of competencies increases intrinsic motivation and job relevance, increasing job satisfaction and performance (Masud et al., 2022). However, monotony and lack of challenges in roles can lead to burnout, requiring a balanced HR strategy that combines the utilization of existing competencies with growth opportunities, as supported by Jaideep Kaur and Vikas Kumar (2013). To mitigate these issues, organizations must implement dynamic training, job rotation, and competency development programs, which encourage innovation and continuous employee engagement.

The findings show that job placement affects employee performance while supporting findings from previous researchers, such as the Hasrival et al. Study (2024) that job placement in accordance with qualifications can increase job satisfaction, which directly contributes to improving employee performance. Another study by Utami et al. (2023) states that although job placement has a low influence on performance in some contexts, other factors such as training and career development may play an important role. On the other hand, Hartawan and Darma (2022) show that job placement not only has a direct impact on job satisfaction but also significantly improves performance with the mediation effect.

Research by Widiastuti et al. (2022) at PT Pratama Abadi Industri states that career development along with job placement plays an important role in optimizing employee performance. In this context, job placements ensure that employees perform roles that match their competencies, while advanced training expands their capabilities to support organizational goals. A study in CV Trans Berjaya by

Mulyeni et al. (2023) emphasizes that the combination of a good recruitment process and strategic job placement is able to explain 73.1% of the variation in employee performance.

The Effect of Job Satisfaction on Performance

Based on the results of research related to the effect of job satisfaction on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the value of the path coefficient for the effect of job satisfaction on performance was positive, namely 0.285 with a significance level of 0.000 or below 0.05. So, it can be stated that job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. This means that every increase that occurs in employee job satisfaction will have implications for increasing the achievement of employee work results in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. The existence of a positive and significant influence between job satisfaction and employee performance confirms that the hypothesis in this study is accepted.

The results of these findings reinforce the view of Stephen P & Timothy A (2019) that job satisfaction is a significant emotional component in organizational dynamics. Job satisfaction not only describes positive feelings towards the job but also reflects the individual's evaluation of various characteristics of the job, such as duties, responsibilities, relationships with colleagues, and reward and recognition systems. Individuals who are satisfied with their jobs tend to show higher motivation, commitment to the organization, and better productivity. Conversely, dissatisfaction can lead to destructive behaviors, such as repeated complaints, decreased morale, or even the decision to leave the organization.

Analytically, job satisfaction serves as an indicator of broader organizational performance. High levels of job satisfaction are often associated with low employee turnover rates, indicating that individuals feel emotionally and professionally connected to the organization. This has an impact on reducing the cost of recruiting and training new employees, which ultimately improves the efficiency of the organization. In addition, the lack of absenteeism and tardiness indicates that satisfied employees feel more motivated to show up and perform their duties on time, which is a positive signal to a supportive work culture.

The results of this study confirm the opinion of Kreitner & Kinicki (2008) that job satisfaction is an effective or emotional response to various aspects of work. Davis & Newstrom (1985) explains that an employee's set of feelings whether it is pleasant or unpleasant is not good.

The results of this study also support and strengthen the findings of previous research such as in the findings of Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm (2016); Memon et al (2023); Sutrisno et al (2022) that job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. According to Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm (2016), job satisfaction is an important source of employee motivation in encouraging the achievement of employee performance.

The Influence of Employee Competence on Job Satisfaction

Based on the results of research related to the influence of employee competence on job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the value of the path coefficient for the influence of competence on employee satisfaction was positive, namely 0.045 with a significance level of 0.575 or above 0.05. So, it can be stated that employee competence has a positive but not significant effect on job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. This means that the improvement of civil servant competence does not have a meaningful impact on changing employees' positive attitudes towards their work. The existence of a positive and insignificant influence between competence and employee job satisfaction confirms that the hypothesis in this study is rejected.

The results of this study provide practical implications that the abilities, knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by employees to carry out their duties effectively do not directly affect their job satisfaction levels. In this context, employees may feel happiness or satisfaction with the achievements they feel from their work. However, these feelings tend not to directly stem from their ability to carry out their

duties, but can be influenced by external factors such as the work environment (Wendy Ming-Yen TEOH, 2012), interpersonal relationships (Misztal & Butlewski, 2014), the reward system, and the perception of organizational justice (Rahim Zumrah et al., 2022).

The findings of positive and insignificant influences between job competence and employee job satisfaction can be explained using Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs (Burlison & Thoron, 2014); and The Herzberg Two-Factor Theory Ewen et al (1966). According to Maslow, job satisfaction depends on fulfilling a hierarchy of needs, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization. Job competencies, while relevant for increasing productivity, do not necessarily guarantee the fulfillment of higher-level needs such as rewards and recognition, which are often the main drivers of job satisfaction. For example, an employee who is highly competent but feels underappreciated by the organization may remain dissatisfied despite their good performance.

As for Herzberg's two-factor theory, it adds another dimension by distinguishing between motivator factors and hygienic factors. Job competencies tend to be in the motivator's territory, which is related to growth and achievement, but without the support of hygienic factors such as adequate salaries, a comfortable work environment, or good interpersonal relationships, job satisfaction is still difficult to achieve.

Equity theory by Adams & Freedman (1976), also explains why this relationship can be insignificant. Highly competent employees can feel frustrated if they feel that their contributions are not valued proportionally compared to other colleagues. As a result, their competence does not directly increase satisfaction due to the perception of injustice. Vroom's (1964) theory of expectations reinforces this idea, where employees will only be satisfied if their competencies provide results that meet expectations, such as promotions or recognition (Lunenburg, 2011). The mismatch between expectations and results can cause competence to have no significant impact on job satisfaction. Critically, this phenomenon suggests that work competencies must be seen in the context of a broader organization, including work culture, reward systems, and interpersonal relationship management, to have a significant influence on job satisfaction.

The results of these findings also reject several findings that state that there is a positive and significant influence between work competence and job satisfaction (Nurpida., 2023); (Riyanto et al., 2023); (Siddiq et al., 2023); (Firmansyah et al., 2023); (Snow et al., 2023); (Mardiana et al., 2022). However, these findings support some of the previous findings, such as Ramadhina & Frianto (2023); (Istiana et al., 2022); which revealed that competence did not have a significant effect on job satisfaction.

5.5.5 The Effect of Job Placement on Job Satisfaction

Based on the results of research related to the influence of job placement on job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the value of the path coefficient for the influence of competence on employee satisfaction was positive, which was 0.579 with a significance level of 0.000 or below 0.05. So, it can be stated that job placement has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. The results of this study mean that the suitability of job placement of employees has implications for increasing job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. The results of this study also confirm that the hypothesis in this study is accepted.

The positive and significant influence between job placement on job satisfaction indicates that when individuals are placed according to their competencies, interests, and preferences, they tend to feel more satisfied at work. Proper job placement allows employees to make optimal use of their skills and knowledge, thereby increasing a sense of achievement and recognition for their contributions.

The relationship between job placement and job satisfaction is also in line with the concept of Person-Job Fit by Caldwell & O'Reilly (1990) which states that it is important for organizations to pay attention to the compatibility between an individual's personality and the work environment or the compatibility between an individual and a particular job. According to him, the suitability of position placement is

basically one of the needs and desires of employees who often want to be fulfilled in the field of work. As outlined by Tang et al (2021) that the suitability of job placement affects individual work behavior, performance and work outcomes (such as job performance, organizational identification, job satisfaction and intention to leave the organization).

According to Tak (2011) the relationship between suitability in job placement and job satisfaction can be explained using interaction theory. Where behavioral outcomes are a function of the interaction between individuals and the environment. In the context of job placement, a good fit between an individual's abilities, values, or preferences with the demands, culture, or facilities provided by the work environment, can create conditions that support optimal performance and increase job satisfaction. Conversely, mismatches between individuals and their environment can trigger tension, stress, or dissatisfaction that negatively impacts an individual's work outcomes and well-being. Thus, creating harmony between individuals and the work environment not only contributes to the success of the organization but also to the psychological well-being of employees, making it an important aspect of human resource management.

Job placement in accordance with employee competencies has a strong relationship with job satisfaction, as explained by Dhir & Dutta (2020). They argue that to encourage employees to perform at their best, it is very important to assign them to jobs that match their abilities and competencies. When individuals feel that the work they are doing is in line with their skills and abilities, they will be more motivated and feel more confident in completing those tasks.

This fit between the individual and the job results in a higher sense of self-confidence, which is an important factor in job satisfaction. As outlined by Lim et al (2019), this conformity stems from the individual's introspection of the specific requirements of the job. When employees feel able to meet the demands of the job, they feel an increase in self-esteem. The confidence that develops along with the skills and knowledge gained from previous work experience makes them feel more competent and adequate in their jobs (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

Furthermore, when individuals are able to meet the expected performance criteria in their jobs, even if those requirements they do not specify directly, they will internalize the value and importance of that performance. This contributes to an increased sense of self-esteem, which in turn affects their job satisfaction levels. High confidence in their abilities makes employees feel valued and competent, which increases positive feelings towards their work. Saks & Ashforth (1997) emphasized that employees who have high self-confidence tend to feel more satisfied with their work, because they see the job as something they can master and achieve well

The Effect of Performance on Job Satisfaction

Based on the results of research related to performance on job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the value of the path coefficient for the effect of performance on employee job satisfaction was positive, namely 0.616 with a significance level of 0.000 or below 0.05. So, it can be stated that performance has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. The findings of this study mean that improving employee performance has implications for increasing job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. The results of this study also confirm that the hypothesis in this study is accepted.

The positive and significant influence between civil servant performance on job satisfaction shows that optimal work outcomes contribute directly to the level of individual job satisfaction. When employees are able to achieve their work targets well, both in terms of quantity and quality, they feel an achievement that gives them pride and satisfaction with their work. Time efficiency in completing tasks, accompanied by a service orientation that focuses on the needs of the community, also increases feelings of productivity and usefulness, which ultimately affects their level of satisfaction with their work.

Employees' commitment to carrying out their duties wholeheartedly and the initiative to create new

solutions or improve work processes provide a sense of control and mastery over the work, which increases intrinsic satisfaction. In addition, good collaboration with colleagues and support from leaders creates a harmonious work environment, where each individual feels valued and supported. Inspirational leadership aspects, which are able to provide direction and recognition for employees' efforts, also play an important role in creating greater job satisfaction.

The relationship between performance and job satisfaction is basically not much to be studied by a number of researchers, although in some literature it is believed that there is a causal relationship between job satisfaction and performance. As stated in the article by Vlaicu (2015) that the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction has become an important focus in organizational psychology. Theoretically, this relationship can be seen from three main perspectives: performance affects job satisfaction, job satisfaction affects performance, or the two interact with each other.

1. The first model, which states that job satisfaction is the result of performance, is based on the expectancy theory. In this model, individuals who receive rewards for good performance tend to feel more satisfied because their efforts are appreciated. Research by Vroom (1964) and Lawler & Porter (1967) supports this view, stating that performance-based rewards can significantly improve job satisfaction.

2. In contrast, the second model proposes that job satisfaction affects performance, on the basis that individuals who feel satisfied at work are more likely to have higher motivation and commitment to do a good job. This view is often associated with the theory of moral improvement, which argues that a supportive work environment increases productivity (Strauss, 1987). Shore and Martin (1989) reinforce this argument by finding that job satisfaction contributes more to performance than organizational commitment.

3. The third model includes the reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. Schwab and Cummings (1970) suggest that the dynamics between these two concepts can change over time, where good performance can increase satisfaction, which in turn drives even better performance. However, this model requires more in-depth dynamic research to support the mechanism of such interactions

4. Theoretically, the relationship between performance and job satisfaction can be explained through the perspective of expectancy theory from Vroom (1964). According to expectancy theory, employee performance improves when individuals feel that their efforts will result in good performance, which will then be rewarded with desired results such as awards, recognition, or job satisfaction. In other words, when employees have optimal performance, they tend to feel satisfied because their achievements are recognized and appreciated by the organization.

The expectancy theory developed by Victor Vroom (1964) provides an in-depth framework for understanding how performance affects job satisfaction. In this context, the theory of expectations explains that job satisfaction is influenced by the rewards that individuals receive for their performance. There are three main elements in this theory: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, which together form the basis of how performance affects job satisfaction.

1. Hope refers to an individual's belief that the effort they put in will result in a certain performance. In relation to job satisfaction, if individuals feel that their efforts are rewarded with recognition for good performance, they will be more motivated to contribute. When the performance produced is in accordance with the effort spent, individuals tend to feel satisfied because there is a balance between effort and results.

2. Instrumentality is the belief that good performance will result in a certain reward or reward. In an organization, these awards can be in the form of bonuses, promotions, compliments, or recognition from superiors. When individuals see that their performance results are directly associated with the award, they will feel more satisfied. Conversely, if individuals feel that their performance does not affect the awards given, they are likely to feel dissatisfied.

3. Valence refers to an individual's value or preference for an award given. The effect of performance on job satisfaction is greatly influenced by how relevant or valuable the award is to the individual. For example, an employee who values verbal recognition may feel satisfied when receiving praise for their performance, while another employee may value financial incentives more. When the awards received are of high value to the individual, good performance will result in a higher level of satisfaction.

The results of these findings also confirm and strengthen the ideas of Lawler & Porter (1967); Christen et al (2006), that from the combination of constructs on agency theory and organizational psychology, it was found that work performance had a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. The findings also reject previous studies that revealed that the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction is weak.

The Role of Job Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable in the Influence of Work Competence on Performance

Based on the results of research related to the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable of the influence of work competence on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the value of the path coefficient for the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable was positive, which was 0.013 with a significance of 0.558 or greater than 0.05. This means that job satisfaction which refers to the emotional feelings of employees does not have implications in mediating the influence of employee competence on employee performance. Thus, the hypothesis that job satisfaction mediates the influence of work competence on the performance of civil servants is rejected.

The results of this finding are also in line with the findings of research related to the results of the Zhao et al (2010) model test that job satisfaction as a mediating variable has a no mediation effect. Where this no mediation, according to Baron & Kenny (1986) refers to the understanding that the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables is not affected by the existence of mediation variables. In other words, the mediating variable (in this case, job satisfaction) does not make a significant contribution in explaining the relationship between the two main variables.

According to Baron & Kenny (1986), this shows that independent variables have a strong direct effect on dependent variables, so the mediation role becomes irrelevant or undetectable in the model. In the context of Zhao et al. (2010), the effect of no mediation can also be interpreted that the influence of independent variables on dependent variables remains significant either with or without mediation variables. Therefore, job satisfaction may function more as an independent variable or as a mediator in the relationship

The results of these findings indicate that work competencies that are actualized on motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills of work, only have direct implications for performance rather than indirectly through job satisfaction. This is possible because job satisfaction tends to play a role as a result of the work process related to the fulfillment of individual needs for work, not as the main pathway that connects work competence with performance. Work competencies, which include motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills, have a direct influence on how a person completes tasks and achieves work targets. Individuals who have high competence are usually able to show superior performance, regardless of their level of job satisfaction.

In other words, performance is more influenced by the technical ability and work behavior of individuals in meeting the demands of the job, while job satisfaction is more related to the individual's perception of rewards, the work environment, and the balance between efforts and results obtained. This shows that strengthening work competencies needs to be the main focus in efforts to improve performance, although job satisfaction remains important as a supporting factor for long-term performance sustainability.

The results of the study also weaken the previous findings, as described by Siddiq et al. (2023); [52] that job satisfaction mediates the influence of employee competence on employee performance.

However, the results of this study support some previous findings, such as Saputra & Ong (2020) that job satisfaction is not significant in mediating the relationship between competence and performance; Janah et al (2023) that job satisfaction does not have a significant mediating effect between competence and performance, on the contrary, organizational commitment is better able to mediate the relationship; Dzulfikri et al (2024) that job satisfaction has a moderation role, not mediation, which means that the influence of competence on performance does not completely depend on the level of job satisfaction.

The Role of Job Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable in the Influence of Job Placement on Employee Performance

Based on the results of research related to the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable of the influence of job placement on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency, it was found that the value of the path coefficient for the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable was positive, namely 0.165 with a significance of 0.001 or less than 0.05. This means that job satisfaction, which refers to the extent to which individuals are satisfied with aspects of work such as work environment, rewards, relationships between colleagues, and work-life balance, plays an important role as a mediating variable in the relationship between job placement and civil servant performance in North Konawe Regency. Thus, the research hypothesis that job satisfaction mediates the influence of job placement on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency is accepted.

The results of this finding are also in line with the findings of research related to the results of the Zhao et al (2010) model test that job satisfaction as a mediating variable has a partial meditation effect (complementary partial mediation). Where complementary partial mediation, according to Baron & Kenny (1986) refers to the understanding that job satisfaction has a dual role, where the job satisfaction variable acts as an exogenous variable that affects the performance of civil servants directly and on the one hand has a role as a mediating variable that mediates the influence between job placement and employee performance.

The findings show that job satisfaction has a partial mediation effect or complementary partial mediation, meaning that job satisfaction as a mediating variable does not play a role as a pure mediation variable, where job satisfaction can have a direct effect on employee performance or indirectly as a mediating variable that intervenes in the relationship between job placement and employee performance. Baron & Kenny (1986) explained that complementary mediation shows that the job satisfaction variable does not play a 100 percent role as a mediating variable, where some of the influence is caused by job satisfaction as a mediating variable, while some other influences are directly influenced by job satisfaction on employee performance.

Baron & Kenny (1986) asserted that full mediation is the best standard in estimating the effects of a mediation variable. However, in a different opinion, Zhao et al (2010) stated that the concept of direct effect is statistically clear, but often not theoretically clear. However, sometimes there are a priori theoretical reasons to expect a direct effect other than the indirect (mediated) effect theoretically. Zhao et al (2010) also added that the direct effects that occur may not be really "direct" but rather a combination of various mediator effects that are not included in the model analysis.

The mediating role of job satisfaction on job placement on civil servant performance indicates that the mediating role of job satisfaction on the relationship between job placement and civil servant performance indicates that job satisfaction serves as an important pathway that strengthens the positive impact of job placement on performance. When employees feel that job placements match their skills, interests, and needs, they tend to feel more satisfied with their jobs. This satisfaction includes aspects such as awards, relationships between colleagues, and a conducive work environment. Furthermore, this increased job satisfaction encourages employees to show better performance, both in terms of productivity, work quality, and commitment to their tasks.

The role of job satisfaction as a mediator between job placement and civil servant performance is in line with research that emphasizes its important function in improving outcomes in the workplace.

Research shows that job placements tailored to employees' skills, interests, and needs directly drive higher job satisfaction, which in turn significantly improves performance. For example, research in Ghana's hospitality sector found that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between HR practices and job performance, confirming that good job role adjustment improves employee motivation and work outcomes (Musah & Awatey, 2024). Similarly, a study of civil servants in Bali confirmed that job satisfaction mediates the positive effects of job placement on performance, which shows its important role in achieving optimal outcomes for employees (Dwiswara et al., 2023).

Further evidence from the state-owned banking sector suggests that job satisfaction improves performance by mediating factors such as work-life balance and talent management, which confirms its role in maintaining productivity and commitment (Sabrina & Kurniawati, 2024). Another study in Indonesia's ceramic industry found that job training and stress level reduction increased job satisfaction, which mediated its effect on performance (Puspitasari, 2024). These findings collectively highlight that job satisfaction bridges the gap between strategic job placement and performance improvement by fostering a sense of alignment, belonging, and motivation among employees. Therefore, organizations must prioritize job placement practices that reflect employee competencies and aspirations, while creating a supportive work environment to maximize satisfaction and performance.

4. Conclusion

When employees feel that their duties and responsibilities are in accordance with their personal competencies and aspirations, they tend to be more comfortable, motivated and satisfied with their work. Performance has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. This indicates that the good performance of civil servants (PNS) in North Konawe Regency can increase their job satisfaction. When employees successfully complete their tasks effectively, achieve their targets, and get recognition for their work, they tend to feel more satisfied with their work. Job satisfaction does not mediate the influence of competence on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. This indicates that the emotional feelings felt by employees as mediators are not able to mediate the relationship between competence and performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. Job satisfaction mediates the influence of job placement on the performance of civil servants in North Konawe Regency. This indicates that the emotional feelings felt by employees, such as comfort, satisfaction, and motivation due to appropriate job placements, play an important role in improving their performance. When employees are placed in positions that match their competencies, interests, and preferences, it not only increases job satisfaction but also encourages them to perform better and achieve optimal results.

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