

LEVEL UP: AN INDONESIAN BEST PRACTICE FOR BUILDING PUBLIC SERVANTS' PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT: Despite being encircled by many poverty regencies, some areas can escape the vicious circle. Their government agency's quality as the accelerators comes up as one fundamental driver. Thus, this study explores this issue by investigating the effect of competence and compensation on work motivation and employee performance in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. 196 public servants respond to the statistical data analysis of the variance-based structural equation model (SEM). The results confirm that competence and compensation must be adequately considered to improve employee performance. Public agencies failing to accommodate these two meridians may suffer significant drawbacks in public and economic returns.

Keywords: Competence; Compensation; Motivation; Performance; Public Servants

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INTRODUCTION

The expansions of knowledge have taught that one best formula may not apply to all parties, as prompted by the contingency theory (Raymond & Bergeron, 2008). The uniqueness and the geographical diversity may yield different results. Indonesia, as a developing nation, shares many similar stories where, geographically, neighbouring areas can be poor and rich at the same time. The case of South Sulawesi province in Indonesia exhibits the same pictures. The Wajo regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, possesses a better performance in economic terms (6,95% poverty rate), comparable to its northward counterparts of the Luwu regency (12,52% poverty rate) (antaranews.com, 2022). The same terrains and resources reveal a stark performance. One possible reason is the management approach in public service management. Therefore, this study will present the best practice of public administration in Wajo regency, Indonesia, by considering public employee motivation and performance.

Human resources are crucial in any organization (Vandenabeele, 2009). Public employees' competence directly affects the organization's overall performance; the higher the employee competence, the better the organizational performance (Madhavan & Grover, 1998). On the other hand, lower employee competence leads to decreased organizational performance. Organizations must have capable employees to manage operations efficiently to ensure effective management, leading to improved employee performance (Khdour, 2021; Spector, 1986). Commission cannot be isolated from the processes and outcomes involved, as performance refers to the quality and quantity of work employees produce in fulfilling their assigned duties and responsibilities (Mohammad et al., 2018).

The human resource strategy also focuses on competencies in technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills. Managing employee competencies encompasses input-based, transformational, and output competencies (Lee-Ross & Pryce, 2005; Suriyanti, 2020). Competence's impact on performance can be seen in its practical implications for human resource planning. This is evident because knowledge and skill competencies are more tangible and visible among employee characteristics (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). As part of performance control, government agencies should retain high-quality and motivated employees by implementing strategies or systems that balance expected contributions with rewards and recognition (Panagiotis et al., 2014).

Initial observations at local government offices in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, reveal contrasting findings. The regency is the border-toborder with the sub-optimal district with a high poverty rate. However, Wajo successfully emerges as a regional area with rich outcomes. While inadequate employee performance at work is still present, effective and efficient human resource management plays a prominent role. However, delayed compensation may reflect their performance (Rana & Malik, 2017). This study investigates the present phenomenon by focusing on how competence and compensation shape motivation and job performance. Previous studies have partially examined the relationship between competence, compensation, work motivation, and job satisfaction (Robbins et al., 2016). The originality of this study lies in the comprehensive examination of competence, reward, work motivation, employee performance, and human resource modelling in the locality of best-practice government. Surrounded by naturally rich but high-poverty neighbours, this area of investigation can provide additional knowledge information in light of contingency theory.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Motivational Factors of Public Human Resources

The importance of individual and situational factors in influencing employee motivation and performance has to be comprehended, as one good policy does not necessarily mean its effectiveness in other contexts (Langton et al., 2016; Lee-Kelley, 2006; Spector, 1986). Public managers can consider how individual expectations (such as the belief that effort will lead to performance) and situational factors (such as the specific context in which employees operate) interact. These conversations have marked the intersection of the expectancy theory (Lunenburg, 2011) and the contingency theory (Qian et al., 2011).

The expectancy theory is the seminal work of Victor Vroom in the 1960s. This model of motivation suggests that individuals are motivated based on their perceptions of the relationship between effort, performance, and outcomes (Stošić, 2015). The Contingency Theory, on the other hand, does not have a single original proponent or founder. It emerged as a prominent perspective in organizational theory and management in the 1960s and 1970s, with contributions from several scholars (Powell, 1992). Notable scholars associated with the Contingency Theory include Joan Woodward, Fred Fiedler, and Tom Burns. The Contingency Theory emphasizes that the most effective management approach depends on a particular situation's unique circumstances or contingencies. In the case of the area with better public administration and low poverty, it is possible that situational factors, such as the availability of resources, and supportive effective leadership, efficient governance structures, organizational culture, create an environment that fosters better public administration and poverty alleviation efforts. In contrast, the neighbouring area may face challenges such as a lack of resources, ineffective leadership, and weak governance structures, which hinder their actions in public administration and poverty alleviation (Bryer, 2009).

In areas with better public administration and low poverty, individuals may have a positive perception that their efforts will lead to favourable outcomes, such as improved public services, effective poverty alleviation programs, and better quality of life for the citizens (Bae et al., 2012). This positive expectation further fuels their motivation to perform well and achieve results. The individuals may perceive the outcomes of their efforts, such as effective governance, reduced poverty rates, and improved social welfare, as highly desirable and rewarding (Wiewiora et al., 2016). This perception of attractive results enhances their motivation to work diligently and contribute to the success of public administration and poverty alleviation efforts.

Organizations can motivate employees by meeting their needs, which can be challenging as what motivates one person may not motivate another. Motivational factors can be classified into internal (personal) and external (company) factors. Internal factors (unique characteristics) refer to the individual's needs, desires, and expectations. External factors (company characteristics) include work conditions, environment, salary, organizational policies, and relationships such as promotions, responsibilities, and awards. Improving performance is hard to achieve without proper management, where effective management can facilitate corporate efforts to enhance performance. Employee performance is the outcome of an employee's work, which is evaluated in terms of the quality and quantity of results achieved while fulfilling their assigned duties and responsibilities.

Achieving the goal of optimal performance within an organization may be challenging if its employees are not motivated to perform their assigned tasks (Springs, 2021). A company desires employees who possess abilities, skills, and the drive to work hard and deliver the best results. Abilities alone are not enough if an employee lacks the motivation to work. The goal of the compensation system within the organization is to attract and retain the necessary human resources to reach its goals (Ehrhart et al., 2011; Wirtz et al., 2011). A company's development depends on its employees' activities; therefore, having competent employees is insufficient. Effective leadership, motivation, and proper compensation must also be in place to keep employees engaged and enthusiastic about their work in the organization to perform optimally (Van Der Voordt, 2003).

Competency

Competence has defined as the combination of skills, abilities, and authority (Ilomäki et al., 2016). Etymology-wise, competence refers to a leader or staff member's expertise or superiority, achieved through their knowledge, skills, and behaviours (Madhavan & Grover, 1998). Competence is a person's capability to perform a task or job that requires specific skills, knowledge, and work attitude (Leung et al., 2014). In other words, competence encompasses the skills and expertise that demonstrate professionalism in a particular field and make it the defining characteristic of that field (Gendron et al., 2006). Competence encompasses skills, knowledge, creativity, and a positive attitude towards a job reflected in performance (Hitt & Ireland, 1985; Leung et al., 2014; Suriyanti, 2020). Competence can be categorized into two types: soft competency, which involves the ability to process work procedures and work relationships with others regarding technical or professional job abilities, and hypothesis development.

- H1. Competence positively affects motivation in one of the government offices of Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province.
- H3. Competence positively affects performance in one of the government offices of Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province.

Compensation

Compensation refers to what a company offers in exchange for improved employee performance (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Other defines compensation as the rewards an employee receives for their work. This can come as money or nonmonetary benefits (Rana & Malik, 2017). Monetary compensation, such as wages, may fluctuate in value and motivate employees to perform well (Panagiotis et al., 2014). When employees perceive that their compensation is fair and aligned with their performance, they are more likely to be motivated to exert effort and strive for higher levels of job performance (Khan & Rasheed, 2015; Prendergast & Topel, 1996; Rana & Malik, 2017; Yahya & Goh, 2002). This is consistent with theories such as Expectancy Theory and Equity Theory, which suggest that employees are motivated when they perceive a link between their performance and the rewards they receive and when they perceive that their incentives are fair compared to their efforts, leading to the hypothesis construction.

- H2. Compensation positively affects motivation in one of the government offices of Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province.
- H4. Compensation positively affects performance in one of the government offices of Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province.

Motivation

Motivation is crucial for the success and sustainability of an organization. Motivation comes from providing guidance, resources, and rewards that ignite employees' interest in their work. Motivation is also the eliciting, sustaining, and guiding behaviour through specific actions. Motives, such as needs and desires, drive employees to act. Motivation is a factor that directs and encourages a person's behaviour or willingness to participate in an activity, shown through solid effort. Motivation as a process where individuals aim to achieve goals, consisting of intensity, direction, and persistence. In conclusion, motivation is an incentive that ignites an individual's internal or external desire to perform well and reach goals within an organization (Dehghani, 2020; Foss & Lindenberg, 2013; Lee-Kelley, 2006). A hypothesis is proposed that adequate motivation can drive organizational growth and success as employees work diligently within their respective areas of expertise.

H5. Motivation positively affects performance in one of the government offices of Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province.

Adapting their strategies and policies to the unique needs and challenges of the area may result in better outcomes. The availability of resources, effective leadership, efficient governance structures, and supportive organizational culture create an environment that fosters better public administration and poverty alleviation efforts. In contrast, the neighbouring area may face challenges such as a lack of resources, ineffective leadership, and weak governance structure; thus, this study proposes the research conceptualization as in Figure 1.

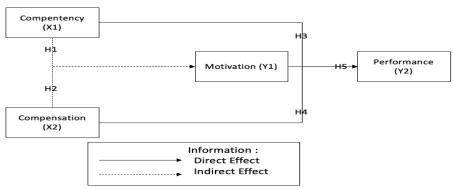


Figure 1. Conceptual Theory

METHODS

Data collection used a survey method distributed in one of the government offices in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province. This study employs a quantitative approach, using probability sampling to select a sample of 196 employees from one of the government offices in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi Province (see Table 1). Both primary data collected from questionnaire results and secondary data from office documentation are used as data sources. Data analysis and processing are done through path analysis.

Table 2. Respondents' Demographics			
Variable	Measurement	Ν	%
Gender	Man	115	58,67
	Woman	81	41,33
	< 20 Age	-	-
	21-30 Age	14	7,14
Age	31-40 Age	111	56,63
	41-50 Age	65	33,16
	> 51 Age	6	3,06
	Senior High School	33	16,83
Education Level	Diploma's	10	5,10
	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	139	70,92
	Professional	3	1,53
	Magister (S2)	11	5,61
Source: Researcher Investigation 2022			

Source: Researcher Investigation, 2022

Furthermore, we use the SEM-PLS analysis approach to test the research hypothesis by direct and indirect relationships in the data analysis section. Before this step, this study observes the distribution of respondents' answers to determine the standard deviation value, the average value distribution of respondents' responses, and the loading factor bigger than 0.60. The data must also present the validity and reliability criteria of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE with the cut of value 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Furthermore, should the data is feasible, the model goodness of fits for variance-based SEM are

Jurnal Minds: Manajemen, Ide dan Inspirasi June, Vol. 10 No.1, 2023: 119-132

also inferred by their standardized root mean square residual and the average fit index (SRMR lower than 0.80, NFI more significant than 0.90), as well as the d_ULS and d_G with original value criteria (saturated model bigger than estimated model). The final stage of research testing is hypothesis testing using the constant bootstrapping method with chi-square (n = 255). The data collection method used a questionnaire distributed to all research samples (see Table 2 for the employed scales). The number of questions consisted of eighteen, with a Likert scale distribution of answers (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree).

Table 2. Variables / Item Measurement			
Variable	Code	Item / Construct	Major Reference
Competency (X1)	 KO1 KO2 KO3 KO4 KO5 	 Self Concept Personal Character Knowledge Skill Attitude 	(Sherman et al., 2007)
Compensation (X2)	 KP1 KP2 KP3 KP4 KP5 	SalaryWagesIncentiveAllowanceAssurance	(Freund & Baltes, 1999)
Motivation (Y1)	M1M2M3M4	 Life Necessities Hope Praise Work Performance 	(Broedling, 1977)
Performance (Z)	• K1 • K2 • K3 • K4	 Quantity of Work Work Quality Working Time Cooperation 	(Williamson & Fitz-Gibbon, 1990)

Table 2. Variables / Item Measurement

RESULTS

This study presents the statistical tests for the establishment of pathanalysis construction. This outer model measurement displays several wellknown criteria for statistical analysis in the PLS-SEM. The validity and reliability tests must ensure the data has sufficient loading factors, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and the average variance extractor (AVE). Table 1 summarises convergent validity tests by their loading factors and the AVE scores. This test will open the path for the statistical analysis in the subsequent presentations.

Table 3. Convergent Validity Tests				
Variables	Codes	Outer Loading	AVE	
Competency (X1)	KO1	0.813		
	KO2	0.700		
	KO3	0.812	0.559	
	KO4	0.751		
	KO5	0.747		
	KP1	0.862		
	KP2	0.838		
Compensation (X2)	KP3	0.749	0.598	
	KP4	0.763		
	KP5	0.744		
Motivation (Y1)	M1	0.729		
	M2	0.751	0.619	
	M3	0.780	0.019	
	M4	0.796		
Performance (Y2)	K1	0.728		
	K2	0.762	0 552	
	K3	0.753	0.552	
	K4	0.817		

Source: Adapted Smartpls 3 data, 2022

Table 3 shows that the external model or correlation between the construct and the variable has a value higher than 0.70 loading factor (Sarstedt et al., 2019), indicating that competence, compensation, motivation, and performance meet the validity criteria. The AVE scores are also higher than the 0.5 cut-off value. These findings mean that the model construction is valid for further analysis. Table 4 presents the internal-consistency-reliability tests by its composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha.

Table 4. Composite Reliability dan Cronbach alpha			
Constructs	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's' Alpha	
Competency (X1)	0.863	0.805	
Compensation (X2)	0.833	0.745	
Motivation (Y1)	0.809	0.788	
Performance (Y2)	0.830	0.728	
Source: A depted Smortple 2, 2022			

Source: Adapted Smartpls 3, 2022

The composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values for competence, compensation, motivation and performance are well above 0.70, indicating that all measurement instruments for these variables are reliable. The motivation variable has an R-Square value of 0.364, or 36.40%, meaning that 36.40% of the motivational variable can be attributed to the competency and compensation variables. In comparison, the remaining 63.60% can be explained by other variables outside this study's scope. Similarly, the performance variable has an R-Square value of 0.548, or 54.80%, suggesting that the competence, compensation, and motivation variables can account for 54.80% of the performance variable. The remaining 45.20% can be attributed to other variables not considered in this research. This study then processes the final data by employing the bootstrap analysis as evident in the PLS-SEM customaries with the graphical presentation in Figure 2 and the summary of hypothesis testing in Table 6.

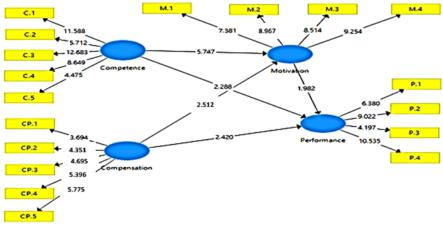


Figure 2. Smartpls 3 Output for Significance Tests

Paths	Effect size	<i>t</i> -values	<i>p</i> -values
Competency → Motivation	0.622	5.747	0.000
Compensation \rightarrow Motivation	0.374	2.512	0.013
Competency \rightarrow Performance	0.307	2.288	0.023
Compensation → Performance	0.450	2.420	0.016
Motivation → Performance	0.237	1.982	0.048

Table 6. The Summary of Statistical Relationships

Source: Adapted Smartpls 3 Output

DISCUSSION

The study found that competence significantly impacts motivation among employees in the local government offices of Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in a positive direction. This supports the hypothesis that good individual competence can increase work motivation. This conclusion aligns with previous research that showed a positive and meaningful relationship between competency and motivation (Dellaportas et al., 2012; Ilomäki et al., 2016). Organizations can promote motivation among public service employees by providing opportunities for skill development, training, and recognition of their competence and creating an environment that fosters a sense of mastery, autonomy, and achievement in their roles (Rodríguez et al., 2021).

This study suggests that compensation significantly correlates with motivation, indicating a positive and meaningful relationship between reward and motivation. The results suggest that financial and non-financial rewards play a significant role in boosting the progress of a company and providing employees

with bonuses for their hard work, which can increase their motivation and overall company productivity (Mehran & Mollineaux, 2012; Perry & Zenner, 2001). This study aligns with previous research, demonstrating that compensation positively and significantly impacts employee motivation (Rana & Malik, 2017). compensation plays a significant role in motivating public service employees by providing incentives, ensuring equity and fairness, supporting financial security, contributing to job satisfaction, and facilitating attracting and retaining talented employees. Organizations must carefully design and manage compensation systems to align with public service employee motivation and performance goals (Khan & Rasheed, 2015; Yahya & Goh, 2002).

The study shows that competence has a significant impact on performance. The hypothesis that competence influences performance at the office is therefore accepted. This study supports the findings, resulting in high average scores for intellectual, emotional and social competencies (Rabe et al., 2012; Spector, 1986). The timeliness of completing work received a higher score than the work quality. The competence and performance of public employees are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Competence drives performance. Performance reflects competence. Competence enhances motivation, performance feedback supports competence development, and competence and performance are linked to professional growth in public service. Public organizations must recognize and nurture the relationship between competence and performance to foster a competent and high-performing workforce (Rodríguez et al., 2021; Suriyanti, 2020).

The study found that compensation has a positive impact on performance. It is believed that providing compensation can drive a company's growth and improve employee performance, as bonuses for hard work can increase employee motivation and boost company productivity. This study confirms the findings, which indicate a positive and significant relationship between compensation and performance. Overall, compensation and performance are connected in that fair and performance-based compensation practices can serve as motivators for employees to perform well, attract and retain talent, and contribute to overall organizational success. However, it is important for public organizations to consider a holistic approach, taking into account other factors that impact employee motivation and performance, to create a comprehensive and effective compensation and performance management system.

The study found that motivation has a meaningful impact on performance in data analysis. The authors' hypothesis is supported as there is a positive correlation between motivation and performance at the office. This demonstrates the significance of reason in an organization, as a decrease in employee motivation could result from inadequate attention from the organization, and thus, effective strategies should be implemented to maintain employee motivation and foster positive work (Dehghani, 2020; Deinert et al., 2015; "Impact of Job Stress on Employee Performance," 2017; Suciu et al., 2013). Public organizations in developing regions can leverage various strategies to connect motivation and performance. These may include providing competitive compensation and benefits, recognizing and rewarding employee efforts, offering professional growth and development opportunities, fostering a positive work environment, and involving employees in decision-making processes. In an enabling environment that encourages employee motivation and supports performance improvement, public organizations can enhance their capacity to effectively address the needs of their communities and deliver quality public services.

FURTHER STUDY

Based on the study findings and discussion, it can be inferred that higher competence leads to improved motivation and performance in the local government office of Wajo, Indonesia. Higher compensation also motivates employees to work harder. Improved employee competence leads to better performance and contributes to better work processes. The agency needs to maintain adequate compensation to enhance team member performance as it, directly and indirectly, boosts employee motivation and results in improved performance. Proper motivation, in turn, results in better performance outcomes. It is suggested that future research should consider other variables besides those studied, as the findings indicate that there are still other factors to be considered.

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