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## The Influence of Competence on Employee Performance Through Motivation and Job Satisfaction at Sekolah Luar Biasa Negeri 11 Jakarta

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**Abstract:** Enhancing employee performance is a vital component in the context of special education, especially within Special Needs Schools (SLB), where human resource management often presents significant challenges. This research investigates the impact of competence on employee performance by incorporating the mediating effects of motivation and job satisfaction, along with the moderating influence of the work environment, with a focus on SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta. A quantitative research design was adopted, utilizing the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique for data analysis. The findings reveal that competence does not directly affect employee performance; however, it exerts a significant indirect effect through job satisfaction. Motivation did not prove to be a significant mediator, while the work environment was shown to moderate the relationship between competence and performance—albeit negatively. The study provides theoretical contributions to the development of a multidimensional model of performance and offers practical insights for improving human resource strategies in special education settings.

**Keywords:** Competence, Employee Performance, Job Satisfaction, Work Environment, Work Motivation.

### INTRODUCTION

Human Resources (HR) are a strategic asset that determines the success of an organization, including in the special education sector. Optimal employee performance is a key factor in delivering quality educational services for students, particularly Children with Special Needs (CSN) in Special Needs Schools (SLB). In this context, improving employee performance does not only depend on technical abilities but is also determined by competence, motivation, job satisfaction, and a supportive work environment (Mathis & Jackson, 2017; Robbins & Judge, 2019).

Special education plays a vital role in ensuring the rights of CSN to obtain equal and quality education. SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta, as one of the inclusive education institutions, faces various structural and personal challenges, such as limited human resources, inadequate

facilities, mismatches between teacher placement and areas of expertise, as well as employees' limited work experience. These realities affect the effectiveness of task execution and have a direct impact on the quality of educational services (Smith et al., 2023).

While competence is often regarded as a primary factor influencing performance, several studies indicate that competence alone is not sufficient. Motivation and job satisfaction have proven to play important roles in bridging that relationship. Employees with high competence but low motivation do not necessarily demonstrate optimal performance (Herzberg, 1959; Deci et al., 2020). Furthermore, the work environment has also been shown to significantly influence the strength or weakness of competence's impact on performance (Zacharias et al., 2021). Unfortunately, most previous studies have focused more on the direct relationship between these variables without thoroughly examining the mediating roles (motivation and job satisfaction) and moderating role (work environment) (Putri & Hamdan, 2021; Wardani, 2020; Husaini & Saiful, 2022).

Based on this background, this study aims to fill the theoretical gap by investigating the effect of competence on employee performance through the mediating roles of motivation and job satisfaction, as well as the moderating effect of the work environment. The main focus is placed on the context of inclusive education at SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta, thus offering more applicable contributions in the field of special education, which has rarely been explored in depth (Wahyu Hidayat et al., 2023; Burnalis et al., 2024).

This research aims to explore several essential questions: (1) To what extent does competence affect employee performance through the role of work motivation at SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta? (2) Can job satisfaction act as a mediating factor between competence and employee performance? (3) Does the work environment serve as a moderating variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance? These questions are intended to gain insight into both internal and external factors that influence employee performance within the context of special education institutions.

Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations for SLB administrators, especially in developing more focused and effective HR development policies. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on employee performance management by employing a multidimensional approach that incorporates mediating and moderating variables, particularly within the context of inclusive education.

## **Theoretical Base**

Competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enables an individual to perform tasks effectively and efficiently (Spencer L.M & Spencer, S.M, 1993). In the context of educational organizations, particularly Special Needs Schools (SLB), teacher competence is crucial as it relates to the ability to handle the characteristics of students with special needs, apply appropriate teaching strategies, and communicate effectively with parents (Florian et al., 2016). Previous studies have shown that high competence among educators contributes positively to the learning achievements of students with special needs (Marisana & Herawati, 2023). Therefore, competence is hypothesized to have a significant influence on employee performance.

Motivation serves as a crucial psychological factor mediating the link between competence and performance. As outlined by Herzberg (1959), work motivation is composed of two elements: intrinsic motivators, such as achievement and recognition, and extrinsic hygiene factors, including salary and working conditions. Even highly competent employees may fall short of delivering optimal performance if motivation is lacking. Deci et al. (2020) highlight that intrinsic motivation tends to yield more sustainable improvements in performance compared to extrinsic motivation. Within the context of Special Needs Schools (SLB), motivation can function as an intermediary in the relationship between competence and

employee performance, a view supported by the findings of Putri & Hamdan (2021) and Supriyono (2017).

Job satisfaction refers to a positive emotional response that emerges from an individual's evaluation of their job (Robbins & Judge, 2020). It occurs when there is congruence between what employees expect and what they actually experience in their roles (Locke, 1976). Within the realm of special education, job satisfaction holds a crucial position due to its strong association with employee commitment, productivity, and the motivation to consistently improve educational services for students with special needs. Research by Husaini & Saiful (2022) indicates that job satisfaction may serve as a mediating factor between competence and teacher performance. Consequently, job satisfaction has the capacity to strengthen or support the influence of competence on various work-related outcomes.

Work environment encompasses the physical, social, and psychological factors that influence employee comfort and productivity. A supportive environment creates safe working conditions, fosters collaboration, and provides adequate support from superiors and necessary facilities (Zacharias et al., 2021). In many cases, a poor work environment can hinder the positive impact of competence and motivation on performance. Wardani (2020) highlights that the work environment can support productivity, even when competence and motivation are already present. Hence, the work environment serves as a moderating variable that either strengthens or weakens the relationships among the main variables.

Several previous studies have examined the relationships among competence, motivation, and employee performance, but most have focused only on direct relationships without involving mediating or moderating variables (Zulviliansih, 2019; Mulyadi et al., 2024). Others remain conceptual in nature and are not grounded in field-based empirical data (Wahyu Hidayat et al., 2023). In contrast, this study offers a more comprehensive approach by integrating motivation and job satisfaction as mediating variables and the work environment as a moderating variable within the context of SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, aiming to explain the causal relationships among competence, motivation, job satisfaction, work environment, and employee performance at SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta. The entire population—consisting of 64 teachers and administrative staff—was used as the sample through a census technique. The research site was selected purposively, as SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta is an inclusive educational institution that faces challenges in human resource management and the quality of educational services (Smith et al., 2023).

The data collection tool utilized in this study was a questionnaire constructed based on established theoretical frameworks, including Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959) for motivation, Locke's theory of job satisfaction (1976), and the performance model proposed by Mathis and Jackson (2006). Each construct was measured using a 5-point Likert scale and translated into statement items that were both valid and reliable. The study's independent variable is competence, while motivation and job satisfaction function as mediating variables. The work environment is positioned as a moderating variable, and employee performance serves as the dependent variable (Spencer, 2019; Robbins & Judge, 2020; Zacharias et al., 2021).

This study employed the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique to analyze the structural model and explore the relationships among variables. The outer model was assessed to ensure construct validity and reliability by analyzing loading factors, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and composite reliability. Concurrently, the inner model was utilized to evaluate both direct and indirect hypotheses—such as mediation and moderation effects—through path analysis and bootstrapping procedures. This analytical

approach enables the simultaneous examination of complex theoretical models with a high level of statistical accuracy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis began with evaluating the measurement model (outer model) to confirm that each indicator reliably and accurately reflected its corresponding construct. The results indicated that all indicators had loading factor values above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50, meeting the standards for convergent validity. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for each construct surpassed the 0.70 threshold, confirming the reliability of the instrument used to measure the study variables (Hair J.F. et al., 2022).

The structural model (inner model) assessment demonstrated strong associations among the variables. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for employee performance was 0.818, signifying that 81.8% of the variance in employee performance could be explained by competence, motivation, job satisfaction, and the work environment. Likewise, the  $R^2$  values for work motivation and job satisfaction were 0.724 and 0.592, respectively, indicating that the independent variables made significant contributions to these mediators. Additionally, the presence of positive  $Q^2$  values confirmed the model's strong predictive capability for the endogenous constructs.

To assess the direct relationships among variables, hypothesis testing was conducted. The results showed that competence had a significant positive effect on both work motivation ( $t = 11.305$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and job satisfaction ( $t = 8.888$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). However, competence did not exert a significant direct influence on employee performance ( $t = 0.389$ ;  $p = 0.697$ ), suggesting that competence alone is insufficient to drive performance without the presence of psychological mediating factors.

In terms of mediating variables, the findings indicated that work motivation did not have a significant influence on employee performance ( $t = 1.125$ ;  $p = 0.261$ ), whereas job satisfaction had a significant positive effect ( $t = 1.976$ ;  $p = 0.048$ ). This implies that, within the context of SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta, job satisfaction serves as a more impactful psychological factor in enhancing performance compared to motivation alone. The mediation analysis further revealed differing results: motivation did not significantly mediate the link between competence and performance ( $t = 1.100$ ;  $p = 0.271$ ). This outcome stands in contrast to earlier studies by Astuti et al. (2023), Mulyanti et al. (2024), and Husaini and Saiful (2022), which emphasized the important mediating function of motivation in similar contexts.

Nevertheless, job satisfaction was found to be a significant mediating variable ( $t = 2.049$ ;  $p = 0.041$ ), reinforcing Locke's (1976) theory that job satisfaction positively influences performance due to the alignment between employees' expectations and the realities of their work. This finding is also consistent with the results of Setyorini and Suhairi (2022), who emphasized the critical role of job satisfaction in shaping teacher performance, although their study placed greater emphasis on transformational leadership as the moderating factor. Therefore, the second hypothesis in this study is not only supported by empirical evidence from prior research but also strengthens the theoretical framework suggesting that job satisfaction serves as a crucial mediating pathway linking competence to employee performance outcomes.

Furthermore, the analysis of indirect effects (mediation) revealed that job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between competence and employee performance ( $t = 2.049$ ;  $p = 0.041$ ), whereas work motivation did not exhibit a significant mediating role ( $p = 0.271$ ). These results are consistent with the views of Locke (1976) and Robbins & Judge (2020), who argue that employees with higher job satisfaction are more likely to perform effectively, as their expectations are better aligned with the actual conditions of their work environment.

The work environment as a moderating variable also yielded significant results. It was found that the work environment had a direct significant effect on employee performance ( $t = 4.242$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and significantly moderated the relationship between competence and performance ( $t = 2.106$ ;  $p = 0.035$ ). However, the negative direction of the moderation coefficient ( $-0.091$ ) indicates that in an unsupportive work environment, the effect of competence on performance tends to decrease. This suggests that high competence will not be effective unless it is supported by a conducive work environment (Zacharias et al., 2021).

The results of this study contrast with those reported by Setyorini and Suhairi (2022), who found that transformational leadership served as a moderating variable with a positive impact on the relationship between motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Despite this contrast, both studies emphasize the value of including moderating variables to enhance the understanding of how core constructs interact within organizational settings. In contrast, the studies by Mulyanti et al. (2024) and Husaini and Saiful (2022) did not integrate any moderating variables into their conceptual models, thereby narrowing the contextual perspective—particularly in relation to how the work environment contributes to shaping performance outcomes.

Overall, the results of this study reinforce the importance of a multidimensional approach in understanding employee performance, particularly in inclusive education settings. Competence, job satisfaction, and work environment were shown to play significant roles in enhancing performance, while work motivation, though important, did not exhibit a strong effect in this context. Therefore, strengthening institutional policies that focus on improving job satisfaction and enhancing the work environment is a key strategy for improving employee performance at SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta.

## CONCLUSION

The study's findings indicate that competence has a notable effect on both motivation and job satisfaction, yet it does not directly impact employee performance. Instead, competence influences performance indirectly through the mediating role of job satisfaction, while motivation does not prove to be a significant mediating factor. Additionally, the work environment acts as a moderating variable that intensifies the link between competence and performance, though the nature of this moderating effect is negatively oriented. These results highlight the crucial role of a supportive work environment in maximizing employee competence. This aligns with the theoretical perspectives of Herzberg (1959), Locke (1976), and Zacharias et al. (2021), who stress the importance of psychological and contextual elements in driving performance. Therefore, efforts to enhance employee performance should not focus solely on competence development but also on fostering job satisfaction and cultivating a more favorable work environment.

Practically, the implications of these findings encourage SLB management, particularly SLB Negeri 11 Jakarta, to focus not only on technical training but also on the well-being and workplace comfort of their staff. Job satisfaction has been proven to be a key factor mediating the relationship between competence and performance; therefore, policies should consider emotional needs, recognition, and role clarity for employees. This study also acknowledges several limitations, including the research location being limited to a single school, the quantitative approach, which does not deeply explore contextual data, and the absence of other relevant variables such as leadership and organizational culture. Future research is thus recommended to expand the research scope and adopt a mixed-method approach to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee performance dynamics in special education settings.

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