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The Effect of Talent Management Implementation on Public Service Quality with Competence and Discipline as Intervening Variables in Regional Apparatus Organizations in Cilegon City

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Abstract: This study seeks to examine the impact of talent management practices on public service quality, with employee competence and discipline serving as intervening variables within Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) in Cilegon City. The research is motivated by the fluctuating trend of the Public Satisfaction Index (IKM) in Cilegon over the past five years. A quantitative explanatory method is applied using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The study population consists of 1,477 Civil Servants (ASN) across 23 OPDs, with the sample size determined using the Slovin formula. The findings reveal that talent management significantly influences competence and discipline, which subsequently enhance public service quality. Competence and discipline are confirmed to mediate the relationship between talent management and service quality. This research contributes to advancing bureaucratic reform and strengthening professionalism in public sector human resources.

Keyword: Talent Management, Competence, Discipline, Public Service, SEM-PLS.

INTRODUCTION

Talent management and the quality of public services have become central issues in Indonesia's bureaucratic reform agenda. In recent years, the national government has placed emphasis not only on adherence to procedures but also on achieving tangible improvements in citizen satisfaction and organizational outcomes. The Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenPANRB) continues to stress the significance of applying the merit system, enhancing human resource capabilities, and adopting innovative strategies to advance service quality and strengthen accountability (KemenPANRB, 2024).

At the regional level, Cilegon City—recognized as one of Indonesia's industrial centers—encounters distinct challenges in providing efficient public services. Data from the Community Satisfaction Index (IKM) for the period 2020–2024 shows that Cilegon's performance has been inconsistent, fluctuating between the “good” and “very good” categories,

yet still falling behind neighboring cities such as Tangerang and South Tangerang. These fluctuations highlight disparities in performance among regional apparatus organizations (OPD), indicating uneven service delivery and the need for stronger managerial practices.

Human resources are essential in ensuring that government services align with the expectations of citizens. Within this context, talent management is acknowledged as a strategic tool for linking employee competence, discipline, and overall organizational performance. An effective talent management system focuses on proper job placement, career development, succession planning, and ongoing training, all of which are intended to strengthen competence and foster discipline among employees. These elements, in turn, have a direct influence on the capacity of civil servants (ASN) to deliver services that are responsive, transparent, and accountable to the public.

A number of empirical studies underscore the critical role of human resource factors in influencing public service outcomes. Gentari et al. (2023) demonstrated that organizational culture, job satisfaction, and employee engagement have a significant impact on performance. Pahrudin and Jalaludin (2022) found that effective talent management improves logistics service performance in the pharmaceutical industry. Similarly, Hutahuruk et al. (2022) identified discipline as a key driver of productivity, while Ghafar et al. (2024) showed that competence and training are fundamental to organizational success. Nonetheless, much of the current literature addresses these variables separately, with relatively few integrated empirical models that examine their combined influence on public service quality.

Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the impact of talent management on public service quality, with competence and discipline serving as mediating variables, within the framework of regional apparatus organizations (OPD) in Cilegon City. The distinct contribution of this research lies in its effort to integrate these variables into a unified model through SEM-PLS analysis, offering both theoretical contributions and practical implications for advancing bureaucratic reform.

This article explores how Talent Management, Competence, and Discipline influence the quality of public services within regional apparatus organizations. Drawing from the research context, the study aims to develop a set of hypotheses that can be empirically tested. Specifically, it proposes that Talent Management has a direct effect on both Competence and Discipline, while Competence and Discipline themselves are expected to enhance Public Service Quality. Furthermore, the model suggests that Competence and Discipline serve as mediating variables, bridging the relationship between Talent Management and Public Service Quality.

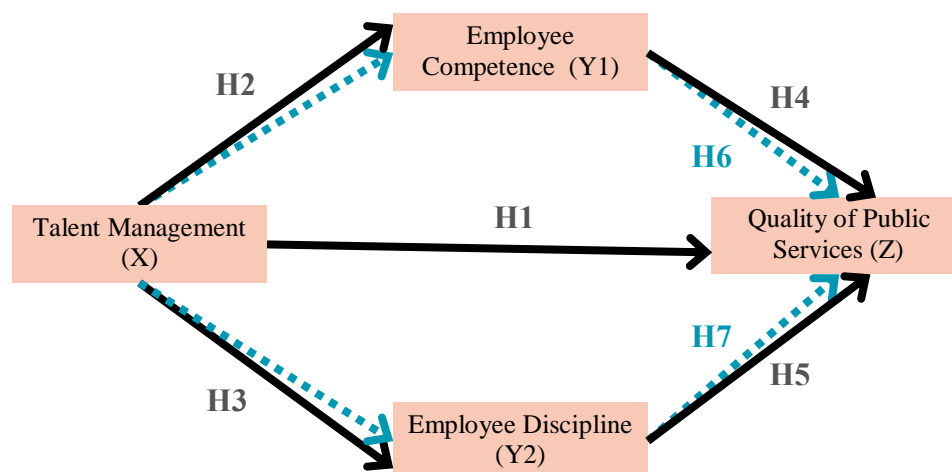


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the causal relationships among variables through hypothesis testing and inferential statistical methods. The research population included all 1,477 civil servants (ASN) employed in 23 Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) responsible for delivering public services in Cilegon City. Given the size and heterogeneity of the population, a probability sampling technique was utilized. Based on Slovin’s formula with a 6% margin of error, a sample of 310 respondents was drawn, representing different OPDs.

Data collection was carried out using a closed-ended questionnaire designed with a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The items were constructed to represent established theoretical dimensions of talent management, competence, discipline, and public service quality. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected officials such as department heads and section heads to enrich the analysis with qualitative perspectives and ensure triangulation of the findings.

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling). Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement model was evaluated for construct validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability. To confirm the robustness of the research instrument, diagnostic procedures such as outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR) were employed.

To evaluate the direct effects of the independent variables, path coefficient analysis was conducted using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, with results reported through t-statistics and p-values. Model fit and predictive capability were assessed using the coefficient of determination (R²), while predictive relevance was examined through the Q² statistic. The mediating roles of competence and discipline were tested via indirect effect analysis, also employing bootstrapping with a 95% confidence interval, enabling a robust estimation of mediation effects based on empirical sampling distributions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristic

A careful review of respondent characteristics is essential, as these factors may influence how individuals evaluate the constructs under study. Demographic variables such as age, gender, job rank, and years of service affect how civil servants perceive talent management, competence, discipline, and service quality. These perceptions are often shaped by personal experiences and positional roles within the organizational hierarchy. Thus, the respondent profile serves not only as background information but also as an analytical lens for interpreting their evaluations of organizational practices.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	198	63.9
	Female	112	36.1
Age	Under 25 years old	25	8.1
	25–34 years old	102	32.9
	35–44 years old	91	29.4
	45–54 years old	62	20.0
	55 years and older	30	9.6
Job Position	Head of Division / Secretary (Echelon III)	18	5.8
	Section / Subdivision Head (Echelon IV)	46	14.8
	Functional / Staff (Non-Echelon)	176	56.8
	Contract Staff (Non-ASN)	70	22.6
Years of Service	Less than 1 year	20	6.5
	1–3 years	45	14.5
	4–6 years	65	21.0

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	More than 6 years	180	58.0

Source: Questionnaire data processed by the author (2025).

Most respondents were male (63.9%) and fell within the 25–44 age range (62.3%). Over half (56.8%) occupied non-structural staff roles, while 22.6% were employed on a contract basis. Furthermore, 58% had more than six years of service, indicating a relatively stable workforce composition. This level of tenure reflects adequate exposure to organizational dynamics, thereby strengthening the credibility of their views on talent management, competence, discipline, and public service quality.

Validity and Reliability Test

Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement model was evaluated for validity and reliability. Convergent validity was established through outer loadings (above 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (above 0.50). Reliability was confirmed by Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s Alpha, both of which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70.

Table 2. Convergent Validity (Outer Loadings and AVE)

Construct	Indicators	Outer Loading	AVE	Conclusion
Talent Management (X)	X1.1–X1.5	0.721–0.864	0.597	Valid
Competence (Y1)	Y1.1–Y1.4	0.736–0.853	0.588	Valid
Discipline (Y2)	Y2.1–Y2.4	0.701–0.845	0.562	Valid
Service Quality (Z)	Z1.1–Z1.5	0.742–0.861	0.611	Valid

Source: SmartPLS output processed by the author (2025)

Table 3. Reliability Test (CR and Cronbach’s Alpha)

Construct	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach’s Alpha	Conclusion
Talent Management (X)	0.889	0.841	Reliable
Competence (Y1)	0.872	0.823	Reliable
Discipline (Y2)	0.854	0.802	Reliable
Service Quality (Z)	0.901	0.862	Reliable

Source: SmartPLS output processed by the author (2025)

The findings demonstrate that all constructs meet the criteria for convergent validity and reliability. This confirms that the indicators consistently reflect their respective latent variables and that the measurement model is sufficiently robust for subsequent analysis.

Multicollinearity Test

To ensure the constructs function independently, collinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The model can be regarded as free from multicollinearity when VIF values are below 5.

Tabel 4. Collinearity Assessment (VIF)

Dependent Variable	Predictor	VIF	Conclusion
Competence (Y1)	Talent Management (X)	2.143	No multicollinearity
Discipline (Y2)	Talent Management (X)	2.007	No multicollinearity
Service Quality (Z)	Competence (Y1)	1.874	No multicollinearity
Service Quality (Z)	Discipline (Y2)	1.692	No multicollinearity

Source: SmartPLS output processed by the author (2025)

The results confirm that multicollinearity is not present. All predictors show VIF values below the accepted threshold, ensuring that their effects can be interpreted reliably.

Hypothesis Testing

The proposed relationships were examined through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The statistical significance of each path is summarized in the table below:

Table 5. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

Path (Hypothesis)	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Conclusion
H1: Talent Management \rightarrow Competence	0.482	7.612	0.000	Supported
H2: Talent Management \rightarrow Discipline	0.395	6.213	0.000	Supported
H3: Competence \rightarrow Service Quality	0.427	5.824	0.000	Supported
H4: Discipline \rightarrow Service Quality	0.311	4.935	0.000	Supported
H5a: Talent Management \rightarrow Service Quality (Direct)	0.219	3.572	0.000	Supported
H5b: Talent Management \rightarrow Service Quality (Indirect via Competence & Discipline)	0.329	4.713	0.000	Supported

Source: SmartPLS output processed by the author (2025)

Model Fit and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The explanatory capacity of the model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Table 6. Model Summary (R^2 and Q^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Q^2	Interpretation
Competence (Y1)	0.232	0.198	Moderate predictive power
Discipline (Y2)	0.156	0.131	Weak to moderate
Service Quality (Z)	0.471	0.389	Substantial predictive power

Source: SmartPLS output processed by the author (2025)

The R^2 value of 0.232 for Competence shows that talent management accounts for 23.2% of the variance in competence. In other words, nearly one-quarter of the variation in competence levels among civil servants (ASN) can be explained by talent management practices, including training, career development, and merit-based placement.

The R^2 value of 0.156 for Discipline indicates that talent management explains 15.6% of the variance in discipline, a level considered weak to moderate. Although lower than its effect on competence, this result still demonstrates that better talent management contributes positively to shaping employee discipline, including punctuality, compliance with regulations, and consistency in performance.

The R^2 value of 0.471 for Service Quality indicates that competence and discipline jointly account for 47.1% of the variance in public service quality, representing a substantial contribution. This finding suggests that nearly half of the improvements in service quality stem from human resource factors, while the remaining variation may be influenced by other contextual or organizational elements such as infrastructure, budget allocation, or leadership approach.

The Q^2 values, all greater than zero, confirm the predictive relevance of the model, with the strongest effect observed for service quality ($Q^2 = 0.389$). This indicates that the model is capable of reliably predicting improvements in public service outcomes.

These results show that competence and discipline collectively account for 47.1% of the variance in public service quality, affirming the model's strong predictive relevance.

Mediation Test

The mediating effects of competence and discipline were examined through a bootstrapping procedure.

Table 7. Indirect Effects (Mediation)

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect	t-value	p-value	Mediation Status
Talent Management → Competence → Service Quality	0.206	4.129	0.000	Partial mediation
Talent Management → Discipline → Service Quality	0.123	3.482	0.001	Partial mediation

Source: SmartPLS output processed by the author (2025)

The indirect effect of Talent Management → Competence → Service Quality ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 4.129$, $p = 0.000$) demonstrates significant mediation. This finding indicates that talent management enhances service quality both directly and indirectly through competence. Practically, when employees benefit from structured training and career development, their competence increases, which in turn leads to improved service delivery.

The indirect effect of Talent Management → Discipline → Service Quality ($\beta = 0.123$, $t = 3.482$, $p = 0.001$) reveals significant partial mediation. This indicates that discipline provides an additional pathway through which talent management contributes to service quality. In practice, employees evaluated through transparent, merit-based performance appraisals and guided by structured management tend to demonstrate stronger discipline, which in turn enhances the reliability and consistency of public services.

Overall, the findings confirm that competence and discipline act as mediating variables that amplify the impact of talent management on service quality. Although the direct effect of talent management is significant, the indirect pathways further reinforce the relationship, showing that effective talent management should be complemented by initiatives to enhance both competence and discipline simultaneously.

The results show that competence and discipline serve as partial mediators in the relationship between talent management and public service quality.

Discussion

These findings provide empirical evidence that talent management practices—such as succession planning, training, career development, and performance appraisal—directly strengthen competence and discipline, which subsequently enhance public service quality. This outcome is consistent with Ghafar et al. (2024) and Susanto et al. (2024), who highlight the strategic importance of competence in driving organizational performance. Likewise, Hutahuruk et al. (2022) emphasize that discipline remains a key determinant of employee productivity and, in this context, plays a crucial role in shaping service delivery outcomes.

The results further underscore the vital role of human resource management in advancing bureaucratic reform. Although infrastructure and financial resources are essential, lasting improvements in public services ultimately depend on the professionalism, competence, and discipline of civil servants.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the main determinants of public service quality in Cilegon City by analyzing the direct and indirect effects of talent management, competence, and discipline. Competence and discipline were positioned as mediating variables that connect managerial practices with service outcomes.

The empirical findings indicate that competence is the strongest predictor of variation in service quality ($\beta = 0.427$; $p = 0.000$), underscoring bureaucratic capacity as a cornerstone of effective service delivery from a human capital perspective. Discipline also exerts a significant positive influence on service improvement ($\beta = 0.311$; $p = 0.000$), emphasizing the critical role of compliance with organizational standards, punctuality, and consistency in building public trust.

Talent management was found to influence service quality through both direct and indirect pathways. The direct effect ($\beta = 0.219$; $p = 0.000$) indicates that structured initiatives such as career planning, training, and succession management significantly enhance service outcomes. Indirectly, its impact is mediated through competence ($\beta = 0.206$; $p = 0.000$) and discipline ($\beta = 0.123$; $p = 0.001$), showing that talent management exerts its greatest effect when it develops employee capabilities and reinforces organizational discipline. These results highlight that human resource systems yield meaningful benefits only when they translate into behavioral improvements and performance outcomes.

A key contribution of this research lies in introducing an integrated model of talent management, competence, and discipline within a public sector context, which remains underexplored in existing literature. The study demonstrates that talent management alone is not a performance driver unless supported by both competence development and discipline enforcement. In the context of local governments facing bureaucratic reform demands and high public expectations, competence and discipline function as strategic connectors between talent management policies and actual service quality.

This study is constrained by its quantitative design, which limits the ability to fully capture the sociocultural and political dynamics inherent in bureaucratic systems. Although supplementary interviews with OPD leaders provided some contextual understanding, the qualitative component remained relatively limited. The analysis was restricted to talent management, competence, discipline, and service quality, excluding other potentially influential factors such as organizational culture, digital infrastructure, leadership style, and stakeholder engagement. Future research should incorporate these dimensions and adopt a more extensive qualitative approach to better account for contextual dynamics.

In practical terms, this study recommends enhancing human resource capacity through structured training programs that emphasize adaptability, problem-solving, and a strong orientation toward public service. Performance appraisal systems should go beyond monitoring discipline to also reward consistent service behaviors. Talent management needs to be embedded into organizational culture via formal policies, transparent career pathways, and systematic succession planning. By integrating competence development and discipline reinforcement within talent management frameworks, regional governments can drive bureaucratic reform and ensure sustainable improvements in public service quality.

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