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The Influence of Competence and Work Motivation on Employee Performance with Workload as an Intervening Variable in the Hybrid Work Era at the Secanggang Sub-District Office

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effects of competence and work motivation on employee performance, with workload as an intervening variable, at the Secanggang Sub-District Office, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The study employed a quantitative associative design and included all 82 employees as respondents through saturated sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with SmartPLS version 3.3.3. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability, with all indicators meeting the thresholds for convergent and discriminant validity and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70. Structural model evaluation revealed that competence ($\beta = 0.989$; $t = 168.917$; $p < 0.001$) has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, indicating that higher competence—encompassing knowledge, skills, and work abilities—leads to improved performance. In contrast, work motivation does not have a significant direct effect on performance ($\beta = -0.006$; $t = 0.326$; $p > 0.05$). Additionally, neither competence nor motivation significantly influence workload, and workload was not found to mediate the relationships between competence or motivation and employee performance. These findings suggest that employee performance improvement occurs primarily through direct effects of competence rather than via workload or motivation. The study highlights that workload is largely determined by external factors such as organizational policies, task allocation, and work system design. Managerial implications indicate that enhancing employee performance in hybrid work environments should prioritize the development of employee competence through training, skill enhancement, and continuous professional capacity building. Overall, this study emphasizes competence as the key determinant of employee performance in the public sector, while work motivation and workload have limited influence.

Introduction

In the era of hybrid work, where the boundaries between office-based and home-based working arrangements have become increasingly fluid, employee performance has emerged as a central concern for public sector organizations, particularly within government bureaucracies such as the Secanggang Sub-District Office. Employee performance reflects the quality and quantity of work achieved by individuals in carrying out their duties in accordance with assigned responsibilities Mangkunegara, (2020). Performance is not merely an outcome but a multidimensional construct evaluated through effectiveness, efficiency, discipline, creativity, timeliness, and contributions toward organizational objectives Robbins & Judge, (2015). In public service institutions, employee performance directly affects service quality, organizational credibility, and public trust, making it a critical indicator of institutional effectiveness in the hybrid work era.

One of the most fundamental determinants of employee performance is competence. Competence represents a combination of knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes that enable employees to perform their tasks effectively and responsibly. Within the Indonesian public sector, competence is formally regulated through the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PermenPAN-RB) Number 6 of 2024, which classifies competence into technical, managerial, and socio-cultural dimensions. These competencies encompass not only technical mastery and decision-making abilities but also ethical behavior, adaptability, and effective communication in diverse social contexts. Syafi'i (2024) emphasizes that competence is observable, measurable, and developable through systematic training and capacity-building programs, reinforcing its role as a strategic resource in enhancing public service effectiveness. Similarly, Rosadi (2024) highlights competence as a core value under Law Number 20 of 2023, aligned with the ASN value system BerAKHLAK, which underscores professionalism, adaptability, and collaborative behavior.

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that competence plays a significant role in shaping employee performance. Firmansyah & Nugrohoseno (2022) found that employee competence has a significant positive effect on performance, although the influence of workload may vary across organizational contexts. Apriyanti (2023) further revealed that competence contributes to performance both directly and indirectly through workload, suggesting that competence enables employees to manage job demands more effectively. These findings indicate that competence is not only a personal attribute but also a mechanism through which employees navigate workload pressures, especially in hybrid work settings that demand technological adaptability and self-regulation.

The hybrid work system introduces new dynamics that reshape how competence is utilized and assessed. According to *The Guardian* (2024), hybrid work arrangements make employees "happier, healthier, and more productive," primarily due to increased flexibility and improved work–life balance. However, such flexibility also requires employees to possess adequate digital competence and the ability to manage tasks independently. Employees who lack technological proficiency may experience difficulties adapting to digital systems, which can reduce efficiency and delay public service delivery. This condition underscores the importance of competence as a foundational factor for sustaining performance in hybrid work environments.

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In addition to competence, work motivation plays a crucial role in influencing employee performance. Robbins & Judge (2019) define work motivation as the psychological forces that determine the direction, intensity, and persistence of work-related behavior. Motivation extends beyond financial incentives to include intrinsic factors such as recognition, responsibility, and achievement Herzberg, (2017). Hasibuan (2021) further explains that motivation arises from both internal and external drivers that encourage employees to perform optimally in achieving organizational goals. In hybrid work systems, motivation becomes increasingly significant because flexible arrangements demand higher levels of self-discipline, accountability, and personal initiative. While hybrid work has been shown to enhance employee well-being and productivity Guardian, (2024), motivation may decline when organizational communication weakens, supervisory support diminishes, or workload expectations become unclear Deci & Ryan, (2017).

Workload represents another critical factor that interacts with competence and motivation in shaping employee performance. Bakker & Demerouti, (2017) conceptualize workload as the physical, mental, and emotional demands experienced by employees while performing their job responsibilities. Sukmawati & Hermana (2024) define workload as the volume and complexity of tasks assigned to employees within a specific period. An imbalance in workload—whether excessive or insufficient—can lead to fatigue, decreased motivation, increased stress, and declining performance. In public sector organizations, workload distribution often reflects disparities in employee competence, where highly competent employees tend to receive a greater share of responsibilities, while less competent employees receive lighter workloads. Such imbalances may generate work fatigue among high-performing employees and reduce overall organizational effectiveness Ghozali, (2021).

Preliminary observations conducted at the Secanggang Sub-District Office indicate that although several employees demonstrate adequate competence in administrative and public service tasks, there are substantial disparities in technological mastery and adaptability to hybrid work systems. Employees accustomed to conventional work patterns continue to experience difficulties in utilizing digital applications, resulting in reduced efficiency and slower service delivery. Furthermore, workload distribution has not been managed equitably, with competent employees frequently burdened with additional tasks. This condition not only increases the risk of work fatigue but also undermines service quality and organizational sustainability.

A pre-survey conducted in accordance with Sugiyono (2018) revealed that the Secanggang Sub-District Office faces performance-related challenges, as reflected in institutional performance evaluation scores that indicate suboptimal employee performance. These findings suggest that performance issues are not solely attributable to individual shortcomings but may also stem from systemic factors related to competence development, workload management, and work motivation in the hybrid work context.

Considering these conditions, it becomes essential to examine how competence and work motivation influence employee performance, as well as how workload functions as an intervening variable in this relationship. Understanding these dynamics is particularly important in public sector organizations undergoing structural and technological transformation. This study is therefore expected not only to validate existing theoretical frameworks but also to provide a richer and more contextualized understanding of hybrid

work dynamics in public service institutions, particularly within the Secanggang Sub-District Office.

Method

This study employed a quantitative associative research design aimed at examining the relationships among multiple variables (Wahyuni & Rindrayani, 2025). The research framework was developed to analyze both direct and indirect effects, with competence (X1) and work motivation (X2) specified as exogenous variables, employee performance (Y) as the endogenous variable, and workload (Z) as the intervening variable. The study was conducted at the Secanggang Sub-District Office, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia, and data collection was carried out from November to December 2025.

The research population consisted of all employees working at the Secanggang Sub-District Office, totaling 82 individuals. Population refers to the entire group of subjects possessing characteristics relevant to the research problem and serving as the basis for data collection and generalization (Mushofa, 2024). Given the relatively small population size, this study applied a saturated sampling technique, in which all population members were included as research respondents, resulting in a final sample of 82 employees.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS version 3.3.3. The measurement model was evaluated through validity and reliability testing to ensure that the indicators accurately and consistently measured their respective constructs. Validity testing confirmed that all items appropriately captured the intended variables, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Sugiarto et al., 2024; Cheung, 2024).

The structural model was examined using a bootstrapping procedure to test the hypothesized relationships among latent variables (Hair et al., 2021). Model evaluation included the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the explanatory power of exogenous variables, the Stone–Geisser Q^2 test to evaluate predictive relevance, and path coefficient analysis to determine the direction and strength of relationships. Hypotheses were considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 at a 5% significance level. Overall model fit was assessed using the Normed Fit Index (NFI), with values approaching 1 indicating a good fit between the proposed model and the observed data (Fauzi, 2022; Hair et al., 2022).

Results and Discussion

Results

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The outer model analysis in this study was conducted using the algorithm procedure in SmartPLS version 3.0 to obtain outer loading values that meet the requirements of validity and reliability.

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Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of the reflective measurement model was assessed by examining the correlation between indicator scores and their respective construct scores. Indicators with outer loading values greater than 0.70 are considered valid, although values between 0.50 and 0.60 are still acceptable in exploratory research. The results of the outer loading analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Outer Loading

Indicator	Outer Loading	Remark
Competence (X1)		
Komp.1	0.995	Valid
Komp.2	0.991	Valid
Komp.3	0.981	Valid
Motivation (X2)		
MOT.1	0.998	Valid
MOT.2	0.998	Valid
Workload (Z)		
BK.1	0.995	Valid
BK.2	0.995	Valid
BK.3	0.990	Valid
BK.4	0.977	Valid
Employee Performance (Y)		
KP.1	0.970	Valid
KP.2	0.981	Valid
KP.3	0.986	Valid
KP.4	0.966	Valid
KP.5	0.985	Valid
KP.6	0.981	Valid
KP.7	0.968	Valid

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

As shown in Table 1, all indicators exhibit outer loading values above 0.60, exceeding the minimum threshold for convergent validity. According to Ghozali and Latan (2015), indicators with loading values greater than 0.60 are considered valid, as they explain more than 60% of the variance of their construct. These results confirm that all indicators strongly represent their respective latent variables, indicating that the measurement model satisfies convergent validity requirements.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using cross-loading values to ensure that each indicator correlates more strongly with its associated construct than with other constructs. The results of the discriminant validity test are presented in Table 2.

Tabel 2. ***Discriminant Validity***

Indicators	X1 (Competencei)	X2 (Motivationi)	Y (Employee Performance)	Z (Workload)
BK.1	-0,117	-0,136	-0,132	0,995
BK.2	-0,116	-0,115	-0,132	0,995
BK.3	-0,130	-0,134	-0,142	0,990
BK.4	-0,095	-0,132	-0,104	0,977
KOMP.1	0,995	0,023	0,986	-0,119
KOMP.2	0,991	0,045	0,977	-0,102
KOMP.3	0,981	-0,009	0,977	-0,125
KP.1	0,975	0,007	0,970	-0,098
KP.2	0,992	0,039	0,981	-0,138
KP.3	0,968	-0,003	0,986	-0,148
KP.4	0,972	0,033	0,966	-0,113
KP.5	0,958	0,000	0,985	-0,153
KP.6	0,956	-0,016	0,981	-0,136
KP.7	0,953	0,047	0,968	-0,102
MOT. 1	0,009	0,998	0,006	-0,129
MOT. 2	0,030	0,998	0,025	-0,133

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The cross-loading results demonstrate that each indicator has the highest loading on its respective construct compared to other latent variables. This confirms that all constructs meet the criteria for discriminant validity, indicating that the indicators accurately distinguish between different latent variables.

Reliability Test

Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Competence (X1)	0.989	0.993	0.978
Motivation (X2)	0.996	0.998	0.996
Employee Performance (Y)	0.992	0.993	0.954
Workload (Z)	0.993	0.995	0.979

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

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The results indicate that all constructs have Composite Reliability values above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50, confirming satisfactory reliability and discriminant validity (Cheung, 2024). Therefore, the measurement model is considered reliable and suitable for further structural analysis.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)
The structural model evaluation was conducted to assess the robustness and predictive accuracy of the proposed research model.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)
The R^2 values for the endogenous variables are presented in Table .4.

Table 4.4 R-Square Results

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Employee Performance (Y)	0.982	0.981
Workload (Z)	0.030	0.006

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025
The adjusted R^2 value of 0.981 for employee performance indicates that competence, motivation, and workload collectively explain 98.1% of the variance in employee performance, representing very strong explanatory power. Meanwhile, the adjusted R^2 value for workload is relatively low, suggesting that workload is largely influenced by factors outside the model, such as organizational policies and job design.

Goodness of Fit
Model fit was evaluated using the Normed Fit Index (NFI), as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Model Fit

Indicator	Value
SRMR	0.019
NFI	0.806

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025
The NFI value of 0.806 indicates that the model demonstrates an acceptable goodness of fit and is suitable for hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2022).

Hypothesis Testing Results
After conducting the inner model analysis, the next step is to evaluate the relationships among latent constructs in order to test the research hypotheses. Hypothesis testing in this study was carried out by examining the T-statistics and P-values. A hypothesis is considered accepted if the T-statistics value is greater than 1.96 and the P-values are less than 0.05. The results of the path coefficients for the direct effects among variables are presented in the following table. The results of the direct effect analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Path Coefficients* (Direct Effect)

Variabel	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Hasil
X1 (Competence) -> Y (Employee Performance)	0,989	0,989	0,006	168,917	0,000	**Accepted**
X2 (Motivation) -> Y (Employee performance)	-0,006	-0,004	0,017	0,326	0,745	**Rejected**
X1 (Competence) -> Z (Workload)	-0,114	-0,142	0,098	1,161	0,249	**Rejected**
X2 (Motivation) -> Z (workload)	-0,129	-0,135	0,106	1,212	0,229	**Rejected**
Z (workload) -> Y (employee performance)	-0,015	-0,015	0,012	1,255	**0,213**	**Rejected**

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2025

Based on the results presented in Table 6, several findings regarding the direct effects among the variables can be explained as follows.

First, Competence (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y). This relationship is supported by a very high path coefficient ($\beta = 0.989$), a T-statistic of 168.917 (> 1.96), and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). These results indicate that employee competence plays a crucial role in enhancing performance. Employees with higher levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities tend to perform their tasks more effectively and achieve better performance outcomes.

Second, Motivation (X2) does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Performance (Y). This is shown by a low T-statistic of 0.326 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.745 (> 0.05), despite the path coefficient being slightly negative ($\beta = -0.006$). This finding suggests that motivation alone is not sufficient to directly improve employee performance without being supported by other factors.

Third, Competence (X1) does not have a significant effect on Workload (Z). The path coefficient is −0.114, with a T-statistic of 1.161 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.249 (> 0.05). Although the relationship shows a negative direction, it is not statistically significant, indicating that employee competence does not directly influence the level of workload experienced.

Fourth, Motivation (X2) does not significantly affect Workload (Z). This relationship is indicated by a path coefficient of −0.129, a T-statistic of 1.212 (< 1.96), and a P-value of 0.229 (> 0.05). These results imply that differences in employee motivation do not significantly change the workload, which is more likely determined by organizational structure and job design.

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Finally, Workload (Z) does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance (Y). This is evidenced by a path coefficient of −0.015, a T-statistic of 1.255 (< 1.96), and a P-value of 0.213 (> 0.05). This finding indicates that workload does not directly contribute to changes in employee performance within this research model.

Overall, the direct effect analysis shows that competence is the only variable that has a significant direct influence on employee performance, while motivation and workload do not have significant direct effects. To further examine whether workload serves as an intervening variable, the analysis of indirect effects is presented in the following section. The next analysis is presented in the table of indirect effects (specific indirect effects) as follows:

Table 7. Indirect Effect

Variabel	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Hasil
X1 (competence) -> Z (workload) -> Y (Employee performance)	0,002	0,002	0,003	0,669	0,505	Rejected
X2 (Motivation) -> Z (workload) -> Y (employee peformance)	0,002	0,002	0,002	0,789	0,433	Rejected

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2025

The findings indicated that workload does not mediate the relationship between competence or motivation and employee performance. Both indirect paths are statistically insignificant, suggesting that performance improvement occurs primarily through direct effects rather than through workload as an intervening variable.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the structural model (inner model) analysis using the SEM-PLS approach, as well as the preceding discussion, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Competence has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance. The hypothesis testing results show a T-statistic of 168.917 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the hypothesis is supported. The very high path coefficient (β = 0.989) demonstrates that competence is a dominant factor in improving employee performance. This finding indicates that the mastery of knowledge, skills, and work abilities is a key determinant of task accomplishment and performance target achievement at the Secanggang Sub-District Office in the era of hybrid work.
2. Competence does not have a significant effect on Workload. The analysis shows a T-statistic of 1.161 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.249 (> 0.05), leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. Although the direction of the effect is negative (β = −0.114),

employee competence does not significantly influence perceived workload. This suggests that workload is more strongly determined by task allocation systems, organizational policies, and hybrid work arrangements rather than by individual competence levels.

3. Work Motivation does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance. The test results indicate a T-statistic of 0.326 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.745 (> 0.05), resulting in the rejection of the hypothesis. The very small and negative path coefficient ($\beta = -0.006$) indicates that work motivation alone has not been able to directly enhance employee performance. This implies that motivation without adequate competence and effective work systems is insufficient to produce optimal performance.
4. Work Motivation does not have a significant effect on Workload. A T-statistic value of 1.212 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.229 (> 0.05) indicate that the hypothesis is rejected. This finding suggests that the level of employee motivation does not directly influence perceived workload. Workload tends to be structural in nature and is primarily determined by organizational demands and job design.
5. Workload does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance. This is evidenced by a path coefficient of −0.015, a T-statistic of 1.255 (< 1.96), and a P-value of 0.213 (> 0.05). These results indicate that workload does not have a significant direct effect on employee performance. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that workload significantly affects employee performance is rejected.
6. Workload does not mediate the relationship between Competence and Employee Performance. The indirect effect test shows a T-statistic of 0.669 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.505 (> 0.05). Thus, workload does not function as an intervening variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance. The effect of competence on performance is direct and does not operate through workload mechanisms.
7. Workload does not mediate the relationship between Work Motivation and Employee Performance. A T-statistic of 0.789 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.433 (> 0.05) indicate that the indirect effect of work motivation on employee performance through workload is not significant. This confirms that workload does not serve as a mediating variable in the research model.

Overall, the findings conclude that competence is the only variable that has a significant direct effect on employee performance, whereas work motivation and workload do not have significant effects either directly or as mediating variables. These results emphasize that improving employee performance at the Secanggang Sub-District Office in the hybrid work era is more strongly determined by the quality of employee competence than by psychological factors or perceived workload.

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