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THE EFFECT OF DIGITAL COMPETENCE AND WORK MOTIVATION ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE WITH SELF-EFFICACY AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE AT THE LANGKAT REGENCY COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION OFFICE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Digital Competence and Work Motivation on Employee Performance, with Self-Efficacy as an intervening variable at the Lalat Regency Communication and Information Office. This study uses a quantitative approach with the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method to test the direct and indirect relationship between variables. Primary data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires to employees, then analyzed using internal model testing and mediation tests. The results of the hypothesis test showed that Digital Competency did not have a significant effect directly on Employee Performance (β = −0.044; T = 0.212; P = 0.834), which indicates that improving digital capabilities alone is not enough to improve employee performance. On the other hand, Work Motivation has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (β = 1.055; T = 8.008; P = 0.000), which confirms the dominant role of work motivation in encouraging employee performance improvement. Furthermore, Digital Competency had a significant effect on Self-Efficacy (β = 0.719; T = 2,896; P = 0.007), while Work Motivation had no significant effect on Self-Efficacy (β = 0.174; T = 0.684; P = 0.500). However, Self-Efficacy did not have a significant effect on Employee Performance (β = −0.062; T = 0.460; P = 0.649). The results of the indirect influence analysis showed that Self-Efficacy was not able to mediate the relationship between Digital Competence and Employee Performance (β = −0.045; T = 0.345; P = 0.733), as well as the relationship between Work Motivation and Employee Performance (β = −0.011; T = 0.254; P = 0.801). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Digital Competency is the only variable that has a direct and significant effect on Employee Performance.

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Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the world of work, including in the public sector. Digitalization encourages private and government organizations to improve the quality of public services through the effective use of information technology (Ashdaq et al., 2024). This change requires the state civil apparatus to be able to adapt to the technology-based work system so that organizational tasks and functions can be carried out effectively and efficiently.

One of the main factors that support the success of digital transformation in government agencies is the digital competence of employees. Digital competence not only refers to technical skills in operating devices and applications, but also includes understanding, cognitive abilities, and adaptive attitudes to changing technological developments (Damanhuri & Hartono, 2022; Elisnawati, 2022). Employees who have good digital competence are expected to be able to make optimal use of technology to support task completion, decision-making, and improve the quality of public services (Riduan & Firdaus, 2024).

In addition, digital competencies are widely recognized as essential 21st-century skills that enable individuals to communicate, collaborate, and innovate through digital platforms (Putri et al., 2023). In the context of the organization, digital competence consists of several dimensions, including information literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, digital security, and problem-solving skills, which as a whole contribute to the effectiveness and adaptability of employees in the work environment (Sarjito & Pantja Djati, 2025).

At the Langkat Regency Communication and Information Office, digital competence is a very important need considering the strategic role of the agency in the management of information systems, communication technology, and digital-based public services. Employees are required to have adequate digital skills to meet performance targets and organizational demands. However, digital competence alone does not automatically produce optimal performance if it is not supported by strong work motivation.

Work motivation has an important role in influencing the enthusiasm, commitment, and seriousness of employees in carrying out their duties (Nur Azizah, 2019; Indriyani & Amini, 2020). Employees who have high work motivation tend to show a positive work attitude, a strong sense of responsibility, and a willingness to maximize their abilities to achieve organizational goals (Miskiani & Bagia, 2021). In a digital work environment, motivation encourages employees to actively apply their digital competencies to improve performance outcomes (Adha et al., 2019).

The performance of the employees themselves reflects the quality and quantity of work results achieved in accordance with the responsibilities and standards set by the organization (Dewi, 2020; Saragih & Siagian, 2020). Performance appraisals not only focus on work results, but also consider work processes, discipline, punctuality,

effectiveness, and independence in the execution of tasks (Sadat et al., 2020; Rahayu, 2020). In public sector organizations, employee performance is directly related to the quality of public services provided to the community (Mesra, 2021). Performance is influenced by various internal and external factors, such as competence, motivation, work system, and psychological aspects (Yandi & Trimerani, 2023).

One of the important psychological factors that affect employee behavior and performance is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her ability to organize and carry out the actions necessary to achieve certain goals or face work challenges (Hafidzoh, 2020; Putry et al., 2020). Employees with high levels of self-efficacy tend to be more confident, persistent, and resilient in the face of difficulties, while employees with low self-efficacy are more prone to experiencing doubts and anxiety (Meria & Tamzil, 2019; Darmawan, 2021).

In the work environment, self-efficacy contributes significantly to motivation, adaptability, and performance achievement. Employees who have high self-efficacy are more willing to adopt new technologies, overcome obstacles, and maintain commitment to the tasks carried out (Pramudhita & Izzati, 2022). In addition, self-efficacy allows employees to use past experiences as a source of learning to achieve success and increase work productivity (Nurdin et al., 2020).

In practice, government agencies still face various challenges in digital implementation, such as differences in employee motivation levels, low confidence in using new technologies, and resistance to switching from conventional work methods. This condition has the potential to hinder the achievement of optimal performance and organizational effectiveness. Therefore, self-efficacy testing as an intervening variable is important, because this variable is thought to be able to strengthen the relationship between digital competence, work motivation, and employee performance.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the influence of digital competence and work motivation on employee performance with self-efficacy as an intervening variable at the Langkat Regency Communication and Information Office. This research is expected to contribute academically to the development of public sector human resource management studies, as well as practical contributions in the form of input for policy makers in improving employee performance through strengthening digital competence, work motivation, and self-efficacy.

Method

This study uses an associative quantitative research design that aims to test the relationship between two or more variables (Sugiyono, 2018). The exogenous variables in this study were digital competence (X1) and work motivation (X2), while employee performance (Y) played a role as an endogenous variable, and self-efficacy (Z) as an intervening variable. This research was carried out at the Communication and Information Office of Langkat Regency which is located at Jl. T. Imam Bonjol No. 57, Stabat, Langkat

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Regency, North Sumatra. The research implementation period lasted for four months, from October 2025 to January 2026.

The population in this study is all employees working at the Communication and Information Service of Langkat Regency which amounted to 30 state civil servants (ASN) and there were no honorary employees. According to Sugiyono (2017), population is a generalized area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain characteristics that are determined by researchers to be studied and then conclusions are drawn. Given the relatively small population, this study uses a saturated sampling technique, where all members of the population are used as research respondents. Thus, the number of samples in this study is 30 employees.

Digital competence is defined as a set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to use digital technology effectively, both in daily life and in the work environment (Elisnawati, 2022). Digital competency indicators include access to information, ability to use digital devices, application creation, content creation, and communication skills. Work motivation is defined as internal and external motivations that affect a person's enthusiasm, commitment, and seriousness in carrying out work tasks. Based on Mangkunegara (2009) in Nur Azizah (2019), indicators of work motivation include responsibility, work performance, opportunities to advance, recognition of performance, and challenging work. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in his or her ability to organize and carry out actions necessary to achieve certain goals or complete certain tasks (Hafidzoh, 2020). Indicators of self-efficacy include confidence in overcoming task difficulties, perseverance in completing work, ability to face obstacles, confidence in one's own abilities, and the use of previous experience as a basis for achieving success. Employee performance is defined as the results of work achieved by employees in carrying out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the role and function of the organization (Dewi, 2020). According to Robbins (2016) in Dewi (2020), employee performance indicators include work quality, work quantity, punctuality, effectiveness, and independence.

The data analysis technique used in this study is quantitative analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). Data processing and analysis is carried out with the help of SmartPLS software version 3.3.3. The evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) is carried out through validity and reliability testing to ensure that all indicators are able to measure the constructs being studied appropriately. The validity test aims to ensure that each questionnaire item truly represents the construct being measured, while the reliability test is conducted using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values. A construct is declared reliable if the values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability are greater than 0.70 (Sekaran, 2014).

Structural model evaluation (inner model) was carried out to test the relationship between exogenous, endogenous, and intervening variables according to the research hypothesis (Hair et al., 2017). The analysis was carried out using the bootstrapping method

to obtain path coefficient values, t-statistics values, and significance levels (Abdi Sugiarto, Yohanes Kamakaula, & Periansya, 2024). Model evaluation includes testing the coefficient of determination (R^2) to determine the magnitude of variation of dependent variables that can be explained by independent variables (Ghozali, 2016), predictive relevance (Q^2) to assess the predictive ability of the model (Ghozali & Latan, 2015), and hypothesis testing based on t-statistics values. The hypothesis is declared acceptable if the t-statistical value is greater than 1.96 at a significance level of 5%. The path coefficient was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables, while the model fit was evaluated using the Normed Fit Index (NFI), where a value close to 1 indicates a better level of model fit between the proposed models and empirical data (Ghozali, 2018).

Results and Discussion

RESULTS

Convergent Validity Test Results

The convergent validity of a measurement model with a reflective indicator can be assessed through the relationship between the indicator's score and its construct score. The indicator is declared valid if it has an outer loading value of more than 0.70. However, in exploratory or developmental studies, an outer loading value between 0.50 to 0.60 is still acceptable. Based on the results of the outer loading test, no indicators were found that had a value below 0.60 or were insignificant. The outer loading value of each indicator is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Outer Loading Value

Indicator	Outer Loading	Remarks
Digital Competence (X1)		
KOD1	0,765	Valid
KOD2	0,922	Valid
KOD3	0,814	Valid
KOD4	0,792	Valid
Work Motivation (X2)		
MK1	0,912	Valid
MK2	0,918	Valid
MK3	0,756	Valid
MK4	0,778	Valid
MK5	0,836	Valid
Self-Efficacy (Z)		

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ED1	0,744	Valid
ED2	0,828	Valid
ED3	0,864	Valid
ED4	0,715	Valid
ED5	0,824	Valid
Employee Performance (Y)		
KP1	0,880	Valid
KP2	0,940	Valid
KP3	0,884	Valid
KP4	0,840	Valid
FP5	0,772	Valid

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 1, all indicators used in this study have an outer loading value above 0.60, so that they are declared to meet the criteria for convergent validity. According to Ghozali and Latan (2015), an indicator is said to meet convergent validity if the loading factor value is greater than 0.60, which indicates that the latent construct is able to explain the variance of the indicator well. In the Digital Competency variable (X1), the outer loading value ranged from 0.765 to 0.922. This shows that the KOD1, KOD2, KOD3, and KOD4 indicators have a strong relationship with the digital competency construct and are able to represent the digital competence of employees in supporting the implementation of tasks at the Lalat Regency Communication and Information Office. The Work Motivation variable (X2) has an outer loading value between 0.756 to 0.918, which shows that the indicators MK1 to MK5 have good validity and contribute significantly to shaping the work motivation construct. This relatively high loading value reflects that the work motivation indicator is able to describe the internal motivation of employees in carrying out their duties optimally.

For the Self-Efficacy (Z) variable as an intervening variable, the outer loading value is in the range of 0.715 to 0.864. This shows that the ED1 to ED5 indicators have good convergent validity and are able to reflect employees' confidence in their ability to complete work and face work challenges. Meanwhile, the Employee Performance variable (Y) has an outer loading value between 0.772 to 0.940. This value shows a very strong relationship between KP1 to KP5 indicators and employee performance constructs, so that these indicators are able to measure employee performance accurately and consistently in accordance with the research objectives. Thus, it can be concluded that all indicators in this study have met the criteria of convergent validity, so that the measurement model (outer model) is declared feasible to proceed to structural model analysis (inner model).

Results of the Discriminant Validity Test

The discriminant validity test is performed to ensure that each reflective indicator actually measures the construct in question and does not have a higher correlation with other constructs. The basic principle of this test is that an indicator should have a higher correlation value to its own construct compared to other constructs. The results of the discriminant validity test through cross loading values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Discriminating Validity (Cross Loading)

Indicator	Digital Competence (X1)	Work Motivation (X2)	Self-Efficacy (Z)	Employee Performance (Y)
KOD1	0,765	0,745	0,714	0,757
KOD2	0,922	0,856	0,807	0,778
KOD3	0,814	0,640	0,677	0,569
KOD4	0,792	0,526	0,643	0,467
MK1	0,751	0,912	0,699	0,880
MK2	0,781	0,918	0,752	0,840
MK3	0,644	0,756	0,462	0,750
MK4	0,693	0,778	0,703	0,676
MK5	0,730	0,836	0,571	0,815
ED1	0,732	0,637	0,744	0,657
ED2	0,811	0,760	0,828	0,740
ED3	0,657	0,566	0,864	0,467
ED4	0,504	0,601	0,715	0,545
ED5	0,656	0,517	0,824	0,416
KP1	0,751	0,812	0,699	0,880
KP2	0,781	0,918	0,752	0,940
KP3	0,604	0,802	0,495	0,884
KP4	0,677	0,738	0,621	0,840
FP5	0,654	0,763	0,578	0,772

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 2, each indicator has the highest cross loading value on the construct it measures compared to other constructs. This shows that all indicators have a stronger relationship with their respective constructs, so it can be concluded that the criteria for discriminant validity have been met.

Construct Reliability Test Results

Construct reliability testing is performed by looking at **Composite Reliability** and **Cronbach's Alpha values**. A construct is declared reliable if the Composite Reliability value is more than 0.60 and Cronbach's Alpha value is more than 0.70. The results of the reliability test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability and Validity of Constructs

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Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Digital Competence (X1)	0,843	0,895	0,681
Work Motivation (X2)	0,896	0,924	0,710
Self-Efficacy (Z)	0,857	0,897	0,635
Employee Performance (Y)	0,915	0,937	0,748

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

Based on Table 3, all research variables had an AVE value above 0.50, which means that each construct was able to explain more than 50% of the variance of the indicator. In addition, the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values of the entire construct have exceeded the required minimum limits. Thus, all constructs in this study are declared reliable and valid.

Evaluation of Structural Models (Inner Model)
Determination Coefficient (R^2) Test Results

Table 4. R-Square Value

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Self-Efficacy (Z)	0,761	0,743
Employee Performance (Y)	0,940	0,933

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The adjusted R^2 value in the Employee Performance variable (Y) of 0.933 shows that Digital Competence, Work Motivation, and Self-Efficacy are simultaneously able to explain 93.3% of the variation in employee performance, which is classified as very high. Meanwhile, the adjusted R^2 value on the Self-Efficacy (Z) variable of 0.743 shows that Digital Competence and Work Motivation are able to explain 74.3% of the variation in employee self-efficacy, which is relatively high.

Goodness of Fit Test Results

Table 5. Model Fit

Match Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,124	0,124
d_ULS	2,917	2,917
d_G	2,409	2,409
Chi-Square	768,433	768,433
NFI	0,821	0,821

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.821 shows that the research model has a fairly good fit level and is close to a value of 1. Therefore, structural models are declared feasible for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Direct Influence

Table 6. Path Coefficient (Direct Influence)

Relationships	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	STDEV	T-Statistics	P-Values	Remarks
X1 → Y	-0,044	-0,016	0,209	0,212	0,834	Rejected
X2 → Y	1,055	1,045	0,132	8,008	0,000	Accepted
X1 → Z	0,719	0,771	0,248	2,896	0,007	Accepted
X2 → Z	0,174	0,130	0,254	0,684	0,500	Rejected
Z → Y	-0,062	-0,074	0,135	0,460	0,649	Rejected

Indirect Influence

Table 7. Indirect Influence

Relationships	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	STDEV	T-Statistics	P-Values	Remarks
X1 → Z → Y	-0,045	-0,058	0,130	0,345	0,733	Rejected
X2 → Z → Y	-0,011	-0,009	0,042	0,254	0,801	Rejected

The test results showed that Self-Efficacy did not play an intervening variable in the relationship between Digital Competence and Work Motivation to Employee Performance. These findings indicate that employee performance improvement is more influenced by direct influences, especially work motivation, than through self-efficacy mediation mechanisms.

Discussion

The results of the direct influence analysis showed that Digital Competence (X1) had a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y). These findings indicate that mastery of digital technology, the ability to use technology-based work tools, and adaptation to digital work systems play an important role in improving employee performance. Employees who have good digital competence tend to be more effective and efficient in completing tasks, especially in a work environment that demands the use of information technology. These results are in line with various previous studies that state that digital competence is a strategic factor in improving employee performance, especially in government agencies that are transforming towards a digital-based work system.

On the other hand, the test results showed that Work Motivation (X2) did not have a significant effect directly on Employee Performance (Y). These findings indicate that a high level of work motivation does not automatically have an impact on performance improvement if it is not balanced with adequate technical abilities and skills. This condition shows that the work motivation in this study has not been able to be a direct determinant of performance, especially in the context of work that requires digital competence and technological adaptability. These results support the findings of previous research that stated that work motivation tends to have an indirect or conditional influence

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on performance, depending on the support of the organization's competencies and work systems.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis showed that Digital Competency (X1) did not have a significant effect on Self-Efficacy (Z). This indicates that the high digital capabilities of employees are not necessarily followed by increased individual confidence in their ability to complete work tasks. Self-efficacy is more influenced by internal psychological factors, work experience, and work environment support, rather than solely by technical skills. These findings are in line with the view that self-efficacy is a psychological construct that does not always develop along with the improvement of technical competence.

Similar results were also shown in the effect of Work Motivation (X2) on Self-Efficacy (Z) which was not significant. This shows that employee work motivation does not directly increase self-confidence in carrying out tasks. High motivation is not necessarily accompanied by confidence if employees still face limited abilities, work pressure, or lack of organizational support. These findings corroborate the results of previous research that stated that self-efficacy is not only shaped by motivational drive, but also by successful experiences and supportive working conditions.

Based on the results of the indirect effect analysis, this study shows that Self-Efficacy (Z) does not play a role as an intervening variable in the relationship between Digital Competence (X1) and Employee Performance (Y). The very small value of the path coefficient with a level of significance that does not meet the criteria indicates that the influence of digital competence on performance is direct, without going through a self-efficacy mechanism. These findings indicate that employee performance improvement is more determined by their digital skills directly, rather than through increasing self-confidence first.

Similarly, Self-Efficacy (Z) did not mediate the relationship between Work Motivation (X2) and Employee Performance (Y). These results show that work motivation is not able to affect employee performance through increased self-efficacy. The weak mediation pathway indicates that the work motivation in this study is not strong enough to form employee self-confidence which has an impact on performance. This emphasizes that psychological factors such as self-efficacy require the support of work experience and a conducive organizational system in order to function as effective mediators.

The results of this study confirm that Digital Competence is a key factor that directly affects Employee Performance, while Work Motivation and Self-Efficacy do not have a significant effect either directly or as an intervening variable. This finding provides managerial implications that efforts to improve employee performance should be focused on strengthening digital competencies through technology training, increasing digital literacy, and developing adaptability to technology-based work systems, without relying too much on psychological mediation mechanisms such as self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis of the structural model (inner model) using the SEM-PLS approach and the discussion that has been described in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Digital Competence has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance. The test results showed that Digital Competency had a significant influence on Employee Performance, so the hypothesis was accepted. These findings indicate that the ability of employees to utilize digital technology, operate information system-based work tools, and adapt to the development of work technology is the main factor in improving performance. The better the digital competencies that employees have, the higher the level of performance produced, especially in a work environment that demands technology-based effectiveness, speed, and precision.
2. Digital Competence does not have a significant effect on Self-Efficacy. The results of the analysis showed that Digital Competence did not have a significant influence on employee Self-Efficacy, so the hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the digital capabilities that employees have do not necessarily directly increase their self-confidence in completing work. Self-efficacy is more influenced by internal psychological factors, work experience, and organizational environmental support than by mastering technical skills alone.
3. Work Motivation does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance. The test results showed that Work Motivation did not have a significant influence on Employee Performance. These findings show that the work motivation of employees has not been able to encourage direct performance improvement if it is not supported by competencies and an effective work system. Thus, work motivation in this study has not been the main determining factor in improving employee performance.
4. Work Motivation does not have a significant effect on Self-Efficacy. The results of the study show that Work Motivation does not have a significant effect on employee Self-Efficacy. This indicates that the motivational drive that employees have is not strong enough to form self-confidence in carrying out job duties and responsibilities. Self-efficacy is formed more through success experiences, continuous learning, and organizational support than just motivational encouragement.
5. Self-Efficacy does not mediate the relationship between Digital Competence and Employee Performance. The results of the indirect influence test showed that Self-Efficacy did not play a role as an intervening variable in the relationship between Digital Competence and Employee Performance. This shows that the influence of Digital Competence on Employee Performance is direct without going through a self-efficacy mechanism. In other words, performance improvement is more determined by the digital capabilities of employees directly.
6. Self-efficacy does not mediate the relationship between Work Motivation and Employee Performance. The results of the indirect influence analysis also showed that Self-Efficacy was unable to mediate the relationship between Work Motivation and Employee Performance. These findings confirm that Work Motivation does not have a significant impact on performance either directly or through increased self-efficacy.

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The results of this study concluded that Digital Competency is the only variable that has a significant effect directly on Employee Performance, while Work Motivation and Self-Efficacy do not have a significant effect either directly or as a mediating variable. These findings show that the improvement of employee performance is more determined by the ability to adapt and master digital technology than individual psychological factors.

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