

The Impact of Competency on Employee Performance at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the influence of competence on employee performance at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method, and a sample of 39 employees through a total sampling technique. Data collection was carried out by Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using simple linear regression. The results of the study showed that competence had a positive and significant effect on employee performance, as shown by a significance value of $0.004 < 0.05$. This means that increasing competence in terms of knowledge, skills, and work attitudes will contribute to improving the quality of employee performance in providing social services to the community.

INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations have an important role in providing services to the community. Optimal service requires employees who have the ability to work effectively and efficiently. In government agencies, the quality of employee performance is one of the determining factors for the success of the implementation of bureaucratic functions. According to (Sedarmayanti, 2018), employee performance is influenced by various internal and external factors. One of the important factors that is often a concern is employee competence.

Competency is the basic ability that employees have in carrying out tasks according to their fields. Competence includes not only knowledge, but also skills and work attitudes. (Andi et al., 2024) explained that competence plays a role in determining the quality of work implementation. Competent employees will be able to complete tasks correctly and with satisfactory results. Conversely, low competence can have an impact on poor organizational performance and services.

In the context of government agencies, improving employee competencies is not only an internal need, but also a societal demand. Today's society demands fast, precise, and satisfaction-oriented public services. (Wulandari, 2023) stated that the demands for bureaucratic reform emphasized the importance of the professionalism of the apparatus. Therefore, employees in the government environment must have adequate competence to be able to respond to the dynamics of public needs.

The Tebing Tinggi City Social Service is a local government agency that has responsibility for implementing social welfare policies and programs. The services provided include poverty management, social protection, and community empowerment. These tasks require employees who are able to work with full responsibility and professionalism. So that competence is an important aspect in supporting the success of social programs.

The performance of employees in the Social Service must be measured from the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of services on the community. According to (Rivai, 2013), performance can be judged from quality, quantity, timeliness, and responsibility in completing tasks. If employees have good competence, the performance produced tends to be optimal. However, if the employee's competence is not in accordance with the tasks carried out, then performance will decrease.

Problems related to employee competence often arise in the form of a lack of technical skills, lack of understanding of regulations, and low mastery of information technology. This condition can hinder the social service process that requires quick and appropriate handling. (Khonsa, 2023) emphasizing that inadequate competence can reduce the overall productivity of the organization. Therefore, improving competence is a strategic need.

In addition, the development of social policies and the dynamics of community needs continue to change from time to time. Employees must be able to adapt to these changes. High learning and adaptation skills are needed so that employees can continue to develop. (Spencer & Spencer, 2008) states that competencies are dynamic and must be updated through training and work

experience. This shows the importance of continuous competency development efforts.

Research on the relationship between competence and employee performance is important to be carried out in order to describe the extent to which employees' abilities affect the quality of service at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. By knowing the level of competence that employees have, organizations can develop strategies to increase employee capacity. (Malayu, H. S. & Hasibuan, 2017) argues that employee coaching and development must be based on organizational needs.

Good employee performance will have a direct impact on the success of social welfare programs. Good service will increase public trust in the government. Conversely, if performance is low, social programs will not run effectively. Therefore, competence is one of the keys to improving the quality of public services. (Idrus et al., 2023) emphasizing that the success of the organization depends heavily on the quality of human resources.

In the reality in the field, there are still some employees who have not shown optimal performance. This can be seen from the delay in completing the work, the lack of data accuracy, and the limited mastery of the service information system. This condition shows that employee competence still needs to be strengthened. Competency improvement must be carried out through training, coaching, and placement of employees according to their expertise.

In addition to competency factors, organizational support also greatly affects employee performance. However, the focus of this study is on competence as the main variable that is suspected to have a significant influence. (Anwar Prabu, 2017) stating that competence is a personal factor that contributes greatly to the quality of work results. Thus, competence is identified as an internal factor that needs attention.

The Tebing Tinggi City Social Service has a fairly complex organizational structure, with various service areas such as social assistance, social rehabilitation, and social empowerment. Each field has different service characteristics. Therefore, the competence of employees in each field must be adjusted to the existing technical and administrative needs. Competency mismatches can result in a decrease in service effectiveness.

Employees who have high competence tend to show a positive work attitude, are able to work independently, and have the motivation to achieve. (Judge & Robbins, 2013) explained that competence is closely related to employee work behavior. Competent employees will have confidence in completing tasks and adapt faster to changes. This will have a positive impact on the achievement of organizational targets.

This research was conducted to find out the extent to which competence affects the performance of employees at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. The results of this study are expected to provide an overview of the current state of employee competencies. In addition, this research can also be the basis for the agency in formulating policies to improve the quality of human resources.

The formulation of the problem in this study is how the impact of competence on the performance of employees in the Social Service of Tebing

Tinggi City. To answer the formulation of the problem, an analysis was carried out based on competency theory and employee performance theory. The analysis is carried out by looking at the suitability of employee competencies with their duties and responsibilities.

This research is important because social services are an integral part of public services that directly touch the interests of the community. Suboptimal services can cause dissatisfaction and hinder the achievement of social development goals.

Good employee competence will help the right decision-making process in social services. Competent employees will be able to analyze social problems well and provide targeted solutions. In addition, competence can increase the effectiveness of coordination between departments within the organization. So that competence not only has an impact on individuals, but also on the performance of the organization as a whole.

In carrying out their duties, employees are also required to work in accordance with social service ethical values, such as empathy, justice, and responsibility. Employee competence is also related to the ability to understand social dynamics and the conditions of the service recipient community. This shows that competence in the social field is not only technical, but also emotional and interpersonal.

As the demands of social services develop, local governments need to continue to increase the capacity of employees through education and training. Competency development must be carried out systematically and continuously. (Sutrisno, 2009) emphasized that human resource management has a responsibility in developing employee potential in order to make maximum contributions.

Thus, this study aims to examine and analyze the impact of competence on employee performance in the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. This research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution, especially in an effort to improve the quality of public services. The results of this research are also expected to be a reference in designing employee competency improvement programs in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee competencies are often defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavioral abilities that enable employees to perform tasks effectively. The theoretical framework of competence emphasizes that competence is not just a technical capability, but also includes intellectual and affective abilities that support decision-making and social interaction in work. Literature review shows that the definition of this competency is the basis for measuring the quality of human resources in public and private organizations (Wijayanti & Sari, 2023).

Employee performance in the public sector is measured through indicators such as service quality, punctuality, productivity, administrative accuracy, and level of community satisfaction. The modern public performance model links service outcomes with the internal capabilities of employees –

including competence — so that competency improvement is seen as a strategic way to increase bureaucratic effectiveness. Several conceptual studies state that competence is the main input in the chain of causes that leads to improved public service outcomes (Hidayat et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence in the Indonesian context is relatively consistent showing the positive influence of competence on performance. Quantitative research in various regional agencies found that competency variables were positively and significantly correlated with measures of employee performance, either directly or through mediators such as job satisfaction or motivation. These findings give legitimacy to efforts to develop employee competencies as part of bureaucratic reform and improve the quality of social services.

However, the competency-performance relationship is not always as simple as "more competent → better perform". Some studies emphasize the role of organizational context (e.g., organizational culture, work environment, tools and infrastructure, employee placement) that can strengthen or weaken the influence of competencies. This means that individual competencies can be suboptimal if they are supported by weak work systems or inappropriate placement. These kinds of studies demonstrate the need to look at competencies within the framework of a broader managerial system (Sofiatun & Rijanti, 2025).

Research on regional social services shows typical cases: Social services work on complex problems (poverty, vulnerability, social rehabilitation) so technical competencies must be complemented by social-interpersonal competencies such as empathy, communication skills, and understanding of social contexts. Therefore, competency indicators for Social Service employees should include technical and non-technical dimensions that are relevant to social service tasks (Haryati & Delvianti, 2023)Haryan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is quantitative, with an explanatory design (explanation/hypothesis testing) using a cross-sectional survey approach. The goal is to test the influence of competence (independent variable) on employee performance (tied variable).

Location and Research Period

- Location: Tebing Tinggi City Social Service.
- Period: May 2025 – August 2025 (data collection, processing, analysis, and reporting are carried out within this time range).

Population and Sample

- Population: All employees who work at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service who meet the research criteria.
- Sample: 39 employees. Sampling was done using total sampling (all members of the population who met the criteria were included in the sample).

- Inclusion criteria: permanent employees/ASN or workers who have been bound for at least 1 year, active in service/operations in the service, willing to fill out a questionnaire.
- Exclusion criteria: temporary employees who have only been working <1 month or are on leave/outside duties.

Variables and Operationalization

1. Independent Variables – Competency (X)
 - Dimensions: knowledge, technical skills, work attitude/professionalism, social competence.
 - Indicators: each dimension is measured by a few statement items (e.g. 3–5 items per dimension).
 - Measurement scale: Likert 1–5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).
2. Bound Variable – Employee Performance (Y)
 - Dimensions: quality of work, quantity/productivity, punctuality, thoroughness/accuracy, responsibility/commitment.
 - Indicators: 8–12 statements related to the above aspects.
 - Scale: Likert 1–5.

Research Instruments

- A closed questionnaire compiled based on a literature review and operational indicators.
- Before use, the instrument will go through:
 1. Content validity test by 2–3 experts/validators (academics/government human resources managers).
 2. Pilot test on 10–15 non-sample respondents to assess the clarity of the item.
 3. The construct validity test uses exploratory factor analysis (EFA) or confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) when using SEM.
 4. Reliability test with Cronbach's alpha, a minimum threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ is considered adequate.

Data Collection Techniques

- Distribution of questionnaires directly (paper-based) or online (Google Forms) according to field conditions and organizational permissions.
- Brief interviews (if required) to clarify answers and gather supporting qualitative data.
- Documentation (internal archives, performance reports if available) for data triangulation.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondent Description

The number of samples in this study is **39 employees** of the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service (using total sampling). The composition of the respondents' education level is shown in the following table:

Table 1. Respondent's Education Level

Education	Sum	Percentage
High School/Equivalent	9	23,1%
Diploma (DII/DIII)	4	10,2%
Bachelor (S1)	26	66,7%
Total	39	100%

The data shows that the majority of employees have a bachelor's education, so in general the basic knowledge capacity to work is considered sufficient.

Description of Competency Variables (X)

Competency measurement was carried out through a questionnaire with a Likert scale. The recapitulation of the competency questionnaire scores can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Competency Variable Questionnaire Score (X)

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
121 - 139	Very High	6	15,4%
102 - 120	Tall	22	56,4%
83 - 101	Keep	11	28,2%
< 83	Low	0	0%
Total		39	100%

The majority of employees (71.8%) are in the high to very high competence category. This shows that employees generally have basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are in accordance with the demands of social service work.

The Effect of Competency on Employee Performance (Partial Test)

To test the effect of competence on performance, a **t-test** was used on a partial regression model. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 3. Results of the Variable Competency Test on Employee Performance

Variable	B	t count	Sig.	Information
Competencies (X)	0,519	3,087	0,004	Significant

- Calculated t value (**3.087**) > t table (**2.021**)
- Significance value **0.004** < **0.05**

Thus, H_1 is accepted, which means:

Competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. This means that the higher the employee's competence (knowledge, technical skills, and professional attitude), the higher the performance produced.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that competence had a positive and significant influence on the performance of employees at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service, which was proven through a partial regression test where the calculated *t* value of 3.087 was greater than the *t* table of 2.021, with a significance value of $0.004 < 0.05$. This indicates that improving employee competence is followed by a real improvement in employee performance.

This finding is in line with the descriptive results of competency variables which show that the majority of employees are in the high to very high category, with a percentage of 71.8% in this category. This shows that employees have adequate knowledge, technical skills, and work attitudes in carrying out social service tasks.

Theoretically, these results are in line with the opinion (Spencer & Spencer, 2008) which states that competence is a basic characteristic of individuals that is directly related to the effectiveness of work implementation. Good competencies allow employees to work according to operational standards, complete tasks on time, and serve the community with better quality.

The results of this study also support the statement (Khonsa, 2023) that competence is not only related to knowledge, but also skills and work attitudes. In the context of the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service, empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal communication are important competencies in providing services to vulnerable communities such as people with disabilities, the elderly, and poor families.

In addition, these findings reinforce the results of previous research by (Muslim et al., 2023) which found that competence has a positive and significant influence on the performance of government employees. Research by (Nuryanto et al., 2017) It also shows that competence makes a significant contribution to the work productivity of public service employees. Thus, the findings of this study strengthen the empirical consistency that competence is a factor that determines the level of employee performance.

However, the findings of this study also indicate that even though employee competence is high, there are still some employees who are in the medium competency category. This shows that there is still a need to improve certain aspects, especially the ability to master social service information technology and the accuracy of the preparation of administrative reports, which are the demands of modern bureaucratic performance.

The results of this study contain strategic implications for the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. To maintain and improve employee performance, competency development needs to be carried out on an ongoing basis through need-based training, placement of employees according to skills (job matching), and professional attitude coaching. Because competence is not only obtained through formal education, but also through continuous learning in the work environment.

Thus, it can be concluded that competence is a fundamental factor that determines the success of employee performance at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. Improving competence will have a direct impact on improving the quality of social services provided to the community.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study show that competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Tebing Tinggi City Social Service. Employees with knowledge, skills, and a good work attitude are able to produce more effective and quality performance. The majority of employees have a high level of competence, but there is still a need to improve in terms of mastery of technology and the accuracy of report preparation. The recommendation is that the agency needs to organize continuous training, improve work assistance, and ensure the placement of employees according to their fields of expertise. In addition, periodic competency evaluations need to be carried out to maintain consistency in performance improvement.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research suggests adding other variables such as work motivation, organizational culture, discipline, or leadership to look at a more comprehensive influence on performance. Qualitative methods are also suggested to deepen understanding of the dynamics of employee performance in the social service environment.

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