



The Influence of Competence and Work Motivation on Employee Performance with Job Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable: A Narrative Literature Review

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of competence and work motivation on employee performance with job satisfaction as a mediating variable through a narrative literature review approach. The review utilized 20 scientific articles published between 2021 and 2025, sourced from national and international journals indexed in academic databases such as Google Scholar. Inclusion criteria included similarity of research variables, namely competence, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Data analysis was conducted descriptively through the process of reviewing, grouping, and synthesizing findings from previous studies to identify patterns of relationships among variables. The results indicate that competence and work motivation generally have a positive effect on employee performance, both partially and simultaneously. Competence plays a role in improving employees' technical, conceptual, and interpersonal abilities, while work motivation drives enthusiasm, commitment, and work productivity. In addition, job satisfaction is proven to be a significant mediating variable in strengthening the relationship between competence and work motivation on employee performance. The findings also indicate that competence and work motivation influence job satisfaction, which subsequently impacts the improvement of employee performance. However, some studies show variation in results, where partially competence and work motivation do not always have a significant effect on employee performance. Nevertheless, simultaneously, both variables continue to have a meaningful influence, with job satisfaction as the dominant factor. This confirms the strategic role of job satisfaction as a mediator in enhancing the effectiveness of the relationships among variables. In conclusion, competence, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, organizations need to manage these three aspects in an integrated manner to sustainably improve employee performance.

Keywords: *competence, employee performance, job satisfaction, narrative literature review, work motivation*

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a crucial factor that determines an organization's success in achieving its objectives. In the public service environment, optimal employee performance is essential to ensure that services to the community are delivered effectively and efficiently [1]. An institution that responsible for managing and delivering public services, requires employees who possess high levels of competence, strong work motivation, and adequate job satisfaction in order to support productivity and enhance service quality.

Competence is defined as a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes possessed by an individual that enable them to perform their tasks in a professional, effective, and efficient manner [2]. Mangkunegara [3] explains that competence encompasses technical, conceptual, and interpersonal dimensions, which collectively shape an employee's capacity to perform organizational functions. Several studies have confirmed that competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. [4], [5].



In addition to competence, work motivation is also identified as a key factor driving employee productivity. Work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that stimulate individuals to act in a particular manner in order to achieve desired goals [6]. Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivator factors, where motivators—such as recognition, achievement, and responsibility—play a more significant role in enhancing long-term performance. [7], [8]. Previous studies have also demonstrated that work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance. [9], [10].

Among these variables, job satisfaction is often identified as a mediating variable that plays a strategic role. Job satisfaction is defined as a positive emotional state experienced by employees as a result of their evaluation of their job and work-related experiences. [11]. When competence and work motivation are fulfilled, employees tend to experience greater job satisfaction, and this satisfaction subsequently drives more consistent improvements in performance [12]. Robbins and Judge [13] emphasize that job satisfaction is closely related to organizational commitment, productivity, and lower employee turnover rates.

Although the relationship among these three variables has been widely studied, research findings reveal considerable variation across different organizational contexts. Some studies report strong and significant effects, while others indicate inconsistent results, particularly when examined in a partial analysis [14]. This condition highlights the need for a literature review that synthesizes findings from various studies in order to identify more comprehensive patterns of relationships among the variables.

This study employs a narrative literature review approach to analyze and synthesize findings from 20 relevant scholarly articles published between 2021 and 2025. The main objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the effect of competence on employee performance, (2) to analyze the effect of work motivation on employee performance, (3) to examine the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable in these relationships, and (4) to provide a comprehensive synthesis that may serve as a reference for the development of human resource management in public service institutions.

METHOD

This study employs a narrative literature review approach, which is a method aimed at identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing findings from previous studies that are relevant to the topic under investigation [15]. In contrast to a systematic literature review, which follows a strict and structured protocol, a narrative literature review offers greater interpretative flexibility, enabling researchers to explore patterns, similarities, and differences among research findings in greater depth [16]. This approach was chosen because it is aligned with the study's exploratory and synthetic objectives.

Data Sources and Inclusion Criteria

The research data were obtained from scholarly articles published in national and international journals that are accessible through open access scientific databases, particularly Google Scholar. The article search process was conducted using relevant keywords in both Indonesian and English, including: 'kompetensi', 'motivasi kerja', 'kepuasan kerja', 'kinerja pegawai', 'competence', 'work motivation', 'job satisfaction', dan 'employee performance'.

The inclusion criteria established for article selection include: (1) articles published within the period of 2021–2025; (2) articles that are fully accessible and open access; (3)

articles with a valid Digital Object Identifier (DOI); (4) articles that examine at least one of the research variables, namely competence, work motivation, job satisfaction, or employee performance; and (5) articles published in indexed or reputable scientific journals. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria include: (a) articles without a DOI, (b) articles published before 2021, (c) articles that are not available in full-text format, and (d) articles that are not directly relevant to the research variables.

Article Selection Process

The article selection process was carried out through several stages. First, the initial search yielded 187 articles related to the predefined keywords. Second, the articles were screened based on their titles and abstracts to ensure relevance to the research topic, resulting in 74 articles. Third, the eligible articles from the initial screening were read in full to verify the alignment of variables and the availability of DOIs, resulting in 38 articles. Fourth, from all articles that met the inclusion criteria, 20 of the most representative and comprehensive studies were selected for in-depth analysis. This process adopted the principles proposed by Snyder [17] in the guidelines for conducting literature reviews in the field of management science.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-narrative approach, which involves identifying, categorizing, and synthesizing findings from each reviewed article. The stages of analysis include: (1) coding the variables examined in each article; (2) grouping the articles based on the main variables studied; (3) identifying patterns of relationships among variables based on research findings; and (4) conducting a narrative synthesis that integrates various findings into a comprehensive overview. This process refers to the analytical framework proposed by Baumeister and Leary [16] regarding standards for writing a high-quality narrative literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Article Selection Results and Description of Articles

From the search process conducted through Google Scholar using the predefined keywords, a total of 187 articles related to the research topic were identified. After undergoing a selection process based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria, 20 articles that met all requirements were selected for in-depth analysis. A summary of these 20 articles is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Articles (2021–2025)

No	Author/Year	Title	Research Variables	Method	Findings
1	Fitriani, D., Foeh, J. E. H. J., & Manafe, H. A. (2022)	Pengaruh Kompetensi, Motivasi, dan Budaya Organisasi terhadap Kinerja Pegawai melalui Kepuasan Kerja sebagai Variabel Intervening	X1: Competence X2: Motivation X3: Organizational Culture Z: Job Satisfaction Y: Employee Performance	Literature Review (Narrative)	Competence and motivation positively influence performance through job satisfaction as a mediating variable
2	Hamdan, Gemina, D.,	The Influence of Competence and Career	X1: Competence X2: Career Development	Quantitative – Regression	Competence and career development significantly



No	Author/Year	Title	Research Variables	Method	Findings
	Yuningsih, E., Samsuri, S., & Ismartaya (2023)	Development on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable	Z: Work Motivation Y: Employee Performance		influence performance through work motivation
3	Hajjali, I., Kessi, A. M. F., Budiandriani, Prihatin, E., & Sufri, M. (2022)	Determination of Work Motivation, Leadership Style, Employee Competence on Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance	X1: Work Motivation X2: Leadership Style X3: Competence Y1: Job Satisfaction Y2: Employee Performance	Quantitative – SEM	Work motivation and competence have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction and employee performance
4	Riyanto, S., Endri, E., & Herlisha, N. (2021)	Effect of Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance: Mediating Role of Employee Engagement	X1: Work Motivation X2: Job Satisfaction Z: Employee Engagement Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – SEM-PLS	Work motivation positively influences performance with job satisfaction and employee engagement as mediating variables
5	Mubarak, T. M. S., Lindayani, L., & Farizah, S. N. (2021)	The Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance	X: Job Satisfaction Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – Correlation	Job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance
6	Nursaid, Fathiah, K. S., Martini, N. N. P., Sanosra, A., & Qomariah, N. (2021)	The Impact of Competence and Work Environment on Employee Motivation and Performance in The Financial and Asset Management Division	X1: Competence X2: Work Environment Z: Motivation Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – Multiple Regression	Competence has a positive effect on employee motivation and performance
7	Wijayanti, F., & Sari, R. T. (2023)	The Influence of Competency on Employee Performance: A Literature Review	X: Competence Y: Employee Performance	Literature Review	Competence is proven to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance
8	Nugrohasmono & Sukesu (2022)	Pengaruh Motivasi Kerja dan Pelatihan Kerja terhadap Kinerja Karyawan melalui Kepuasan Kerja sebagai Variabel Mediasi pada PT. Shelter Nusantara di Surabaya	X1: Work Motivation X2: Job Training Z: Job Satisfaction Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – Path Analysis	Work motivation positively influences performance with job satisfaction as a partial mediating variable
9	Rachman, M. M. (2022)	The Impact of Motivation on Performance: The Role of Organizational Commitment	X: Motivation Z: Organizational Commitment Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – SEM	Motivation has a positive effect on performance; organizational commitment acts as a mediating variable
10	Janah, I. R., Rachmansyah, Y., & Sutanto, H. A. (2023)	The Influence of Competence on Employee Performance with Mediation of Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment	X: Competence Z1: Job Satisfaction Z2: Organizational Commitment Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – SEM-PLS	Competence influences performance through job satisfaction and organizational commitment as mediating variables
11	Laras, T., Jatmiko, B., & Wawuru, E. (2021)	Kinerja Pegawai: Dampak Komitmen Organisasi dan Kompetensi dengan Kepuasan Kerja sebagai Pemediasi	X1: Organizational Commitment X2: Competence Z: Job Satisfaction	Quantitative – SEM	Competence positively influences job satisfaction and employee performance



No	Author/Year	Title	Research Variables	Method	Findings
			Y: Employee Performance		
12	Mathori, M., Ambara, E., & Kusumastuti, D. A. (2024)	Pengaruh Gaya Kepemimpinan dan Motivasi Kerja terhadap Kinerja dengan Kepuasan Kerja sebagai Variabel Mediasi	X1: Leadership Style X2: Work Motivation Z: Job Satisfaction Y: Performance	Quantitative – Multiple Regression	Work motivation positively influences performance; job satisfaction is confirmed as a mediating variable
13	Novia, M., & Walla, D. D. (2023)	The Influence of Job Satisfaction and Motivation on Employee Performance of PT. Marumo Indonesia Forging	X1: Job Satisfaction X2: Motivation Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – Multiple Regression	Job satisfaction and motivation have a positive and significant effect on employee performance
14	S. D. Trisnarningsih & Suhana (2024)	Peran Mediasi Kepuasan Kerja pada Pengaruh Kompetensi dan Mutasi terhadap Kinerja Pegawai	X1: Competence X2: Job Transfer Z: Job Satisfaction Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – Path Analysis + Sobel Test (SPSS 25)	Job satisfaction significantly mediates the effect of competence on employee performance
15	Setyowati, E., et al. (2023)	Mediasi Motivasi Kerja Hubungan Kompetensi dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Pegawai	X: Competence Z: Work Motivation Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – SEM-PLS	Work motivation mediates the effect of competence on employee performance
16	Hidayat, R. (2021)	Pengaruh Motivasi, Kompetensi dan Disiplin Kerja terhadap Kinerja	X1: Motivation X2: Competence X3: Work Discipline Y: Performance	Quantitative – Multiple Regression	Motivation and competence have a positive and significant effect on performance
17	Masruchiyah, Ratnasih, C., & Putri, O. A. (2024)	Pengaruh Kompetensi dan Motivasi terhadap Kepuasan Kerja Karyawan Selama Masa Pandemi Covid-19 di PT. Kao Indonesia	X1: Competence X2: Motivation Y: Employee Job Satisfaction	Quantitative – Multiple Regression	Competence and motivation positively influence employee job satisfaction
18	Wardiansyah, et al. (2024)	The Effect of Employee Motivation and Employee Engagement on Job Performance Mediated by Job Satisfaction	X1: Motivation X2: Employee Engagement Z: Job Satisfaction Y: Performance	Quantitative – SEM-PLS	Motivation positively influences performance; job satisfaction acts as a significant mediating variable
19	Kanafiah, Prahawana, W., & Suherna (2021)	Pengaruh Kompetensi (Hard Skill) dan Pelatihan terhadap Kinerja Pelaksana Teknis melalui Kepuasan Kerja sebagai Variabel Intervening	X1: Competence (Hard Skill) X2: Training Z: Job Satisfaction Y: Performance	Quantitative – Path Analysis	Competence significantly influences performance through job satisfaction as a mediating variable
20	Ibrahim, M., Karollah, B., Juned, V., & Yunus, M. (2022)	The Effect of Transformational Leadership, Work Motivation and Culture on Millennial Generation Employees Performance	X1: Transformational Leadership X2: Work Motivation X3: Organizational Culture Y: Employee Performance	Quantitative – SEM	Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of millennial generation employees

Source: Author's Analysis Results



Effect of Competence on Employee Performance

Based on the review of 20 analyzed articles, most studies indicate that competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Wijayanti and Sari [4], in their literature review, confirm that competence—which includes technical knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes—consistently improves employee performance across various organizational sectors. Similar findings were reported by Hidayat [18], who found that competence, together with motivation and work discipline, simultaneously has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

Nursaid et al. [19] in their study found that employee competence has a positive effect on both motivation and performance within the finance and asset management division. High levels of competence enable employees to complete complex tasks more efficiently, reduce work errors, and increase confidence in facing job challenges. This finding is consistent with Mangkunegara [3], who emphasizes that competence is the foundation of superior performance.

Laras, Jatmiko, and Wawuru [20], in their study at the Regional Secretariat of Sleman Regency, found that competence has a positive effect on both job satisfaction and employee performance, with job satisfaction acting as a mediating variable. Kanafiah, Prahiawan, and Suherna [21] also found that hard skill competence has a significant effect on performance through job satisfaction as an intervening variable. These findings confirm that investment in employee competence development is an effective strategy for improving organizational performance.

Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

The review results show that work motivation consistently has a positive effect on employee performance. Riyanto, Endri, and Herlisha [9] found that work motivation positively influences employee performance, with job satisfaction and employee engagement acting as mediating variables. Rachman [22] also confirmed that motivation has a positive effect on performance, where organizational commitment serves as a moderating factor in this relationship.

Nugrohasiono and Sukesu [23], in a study at PT. Shelter Nusantara in Surabaya, found that work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance, with job satisfaction acting as a partial mediating variable. Mathori, Ambara, and Kusumastuti [10], in their research at the UPT Cultural Heritage Area Management in Yogyakarta, reported similar findings, showing that work motivation positively influences performance and that job satisfaction mediates this relationship. Ibrahim et al. [24] also found that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of millennial employees in the manufacturing industry.

Wardiansyah et al. [25] in their study found that motivation has a positive effect on performance, and job satisfaction was proven to be a significant mediating variable in this relationship. Novia and Walla [26] also confirmed that job satisfaction and motivation jointly have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. However, Hamdan et al. [5] found that competence and career development influence performance through work motivation, indicating that motivation can also function as a mediating variable in different contexts.



The Role of Job Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable

One of the most consistent findings from this review is the significant role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable in the relationship between competence and work motivation and employee performance. Mubarak, Lindayani, and Farizah [12] confirmed that job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Janah, Rachmansyah, and Sutanto [27] found that competence influences performance through job satisfaction and organizational commitment as mediating variables.

Fitriani, Foeh, and Manafe [14], in their literature review, confirmed that competence and motivation have a positive effect on performance through job satisfaction as an intervening variable. Setyowati et al. [28] found that work motivation mediates the effect of competence on employee performance. Trisnaningsih and Suhana [29], in a study conducted in a government institution, found that job satisfaction significantly mediates the effect of competence on employee performance.

Hajjali et al. [30], in a quantitative study using SEM, found that work motivation and competence have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, which in turn contributes to improved employee performance. Masruchiyah, Ratnasih, and Putri [31] confirmed that competence and motivation positively influence employee job satisfaction, which serves as an initial step in the causal chain leading to better performance outcomes.

Variation in Findings and Comprehensive Discussion

Although most studies show positive and significant results, some studies report variations that need to be considered. Several contextual factors such as organizational sector, employee characteristics, organizational culture, and work environment conditions may moderate the strength of the relationships among the examined variables [14]. In some studies, competence or work motivation does not always have a significant partial effect on employee performance; however, when analyzed simultaneously, both variables still provide a meaningful influence on performance.

This highlights the importance of a holistic approach in human resource management, where competence, work motivation, and job satisfaction must be managed in an integrated manner. Organizations cannot rely on only one factor; instead, they need to ensure a balance among these three aspects to optimize employee performance [17]. Job satisfaction has been shown to be a dominant factor that mediates and strengthens the relationship between competence and work motivation and employee performance.

In the context of an organization, these findings have significant practical implications. Efforts to improve employee performance should begin with competency development through continuous training and education, accompanied by well-targeted motivation programs, as well as the creation of a work environment that promotes employee satisfaction. This integrated approach will result in more optimal service performance and have a positive impact on the community being served.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a narrative literature review of 20 scientific articles published in the 2021–2025 period, it can be concluded that: First, competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Competence, which includes knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes, is an important predictor of employee performance across various



types of organizations. Second, work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. High motivation encourages employees to be more productive, committed, and enthusiastic in carrying out their duties. Third, job satisfaction is proven to be a significant mediating variable in the relationship between competence and work motivation and employee performance. When employees possess good competence and are motivated to work, the resulting job satisfaction strengthens and consistently improves their performance.

Fourth, simultaneously, competence and work motivation influence employee performance, with job satisfaction acting as a dominant mediating factor in this relationship. Fifth, although some studies report variations in partial effects, the overall pattern identified in this review confirms that the three variables are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, an organization need to manage competence, work motivation, and job satisfaction in an integrated and sustainable manner to improve service performance to the community. Future research is recommended to examine other moderating factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, and employee demographic characteristics in strengthening the relationships among the studied variables.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Claude AI (Anthropic) for language assistance and content structuring. Following the use of this tool or service, the author carefully reviewed, edited, and validated the content to ensure its accuracy and academic integrity. The author assume full responsibility for the final content of this publication.

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