

The Influence of Competency, Motivation, and Work Discipline on Employee Performance in the Trade and Industry Department of Gowa Regency

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A B S T R A C T

This research aims to examine the effect of motivational competence and work discipline on the performance of employees at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency. Employing a quantitative research approach, the study involved a sample of 34 employees with civil servant (PNS) and government contract (PPPK) status. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of several statements, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. The research instrument adopted the Likert scale for measurement. Statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The findings reveal that competence, motivation, and work discipline positively and significantly influence employee performance.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The effectiveness of regional and national development programs depends largely on the capacity and performance of civil servants. Both Civil Servants (PNS) and Government Employees with Work Agreements (PPPK) serve as the core machinery of public administration. They are tasked with delivering services to the public in a professional, honest, fair, and equitable manner, grounded in the principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. As such, improving their performance is crucial for enhancing institutional service quality and public trust [1].

Human resources (HR) are widely recognized as the most critical asset in any organization. Employee performance directly reflects an organization's ability to realize its strategic goals. It is defined as the output quality and quantity achieved by an individual in carrying out duties according to assigned responsibilities [2]. Performance thus serves as both an individual metric and an organizational indicator. According to Mangkunegara, performance includes results achieved by an employee in accordance with the responsibilities given [3].

Among various determinants of employee performance, competence, motivation, and work discipline are often emphasized in the literature. Competence refers to a combination of knowledge, skills, and behavior required to perform a job effectively. Spencer and Spencer describe competence as underlying personal characteristics that result in superior performance [4]. Motivation is understood as an internal or external drive that influences an individual's willingness to achieve work goals. Robbins and Judge emphasize that motivation impacts performance through intensity, direction, and persistence of effort [5]. Meanwhile, discipline represents the degree of employee compliance with organizational rules and norms and is closely linked to responsibility and reliability [6].

Despite their importance, these three factors competence, motivation, and discipline are not always well-developed in public institutions. At the Department of Trade and Industry of Gowa Regency, field observations revealed low levels of employee discipline, poor motivation, and underperformance. Attendance records from 2024 documented 44 unexcused absences (alpa) and 81 instances of tardiness within an eight-month period among just 34 civil servants evidence of concerning behavioral trends that hinder institutional productivity. Additional findings revealed that some employees arrive only to sign attendance and then leave the office, show a lack of initiative, or frequently delay task completion.

Empirical research further supports the importance of these factors. Studies by Siswati and Nadiatulkhoiro [7], Saptalia et al. [8], and Ahmadi and Sulistiyono [9] found that competence, motivation, and discipline significantly and positively affect employee performance in government institutions. These findings reinforce the argument that strengthening these three factors is key to improving organizational effectiveness.

Building on these issues and supported by theoretical and empirical evidence, this research examines the effects of competence, motivation, and work discipline on employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry, Gowa Regency. The study aims to offer practical recommendations for enhancing human resource management within local government institutions.

1.2 Problem Statement

This research seeks to address the following questions: (1) To what extent does competence affect employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry, Gowa Regency? (2) To what extent does motivation affect employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry, Gowa Regency? (3) To what extent does work discipline affect employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry, Gowa Regency? These questions stem from preliminary observations indicating low levels of discipline, insufficient motivation, and varying degrees of competence among employees, which are believed to influence overall performance outcomes.

1.3 Objectives and Scope

The main purpose of this research is to examine the extent to which competence, motivation, and work discipline affect employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry, Gowa Regency. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) determine the influence of competence on employee performance, (2) evaluate the influence of motivation on employee

performance, and (3) assess the influence of work discipline on employee performance. By focusing on these three factors, the research seeks to identify the most influential drivers of performance within a regional government office setting.

The scope of the study is confined to civil servants and government contract employees (PNS and PPPK) currently serving at the Department of Trade and Industry in Gowa Regency. A total of 34 employees were included as the research sample, selected through a saturated sampling technique. This study employs a quantitative approach, collecting data through questionnaires and analyzing it using statistical methods to ensure empirical accuracy. While the results offer valuable recommendations for local human resource management, they are context-specific and may not be directly applicable to other government institutions without further comparative research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Related Work

Numerous empirical studies have investigated the influence of competence, motivation, and work discipline on employee performance in public sector organizations. For example, Rosmaini and Tanjung H [7] examined civil servants in government offices and concluded that all three variables competence, motivation, and discipline significantly and positively affect employee performance. Their findings align with this study's premise, particularly in highlighting the importance of simultaneous influence among the three factors.

Ahmadi and Sulistiyono [9] investigated the impact of competence, leadership, and work discipline on employee performance at the Land Office in Bogor Regency. Their study revealed that each independent variable had a significant and positive partial effect on employee performance. While their model included leadership instead of motivation, their findings on the importance of competence and discipline provide a comparative reference point.

Norwijaya [10] conducted research at the Human Resources Development Agency in Barito Selatan Regency, where competence, discipline, mental attitude, and motivation were analyzed. Similar to this research, Norwijaya found competence to be the dominant influence on performance, emphasizing its foundational role in task execution. However, unlike the present study, Norwijaya also included psychological variables such as mental attitude, which expands the explanatory model.

Nurlinda and Rahim [11], In a study conducted at the Department of Industry in South Sulawesi Province, the findings revealed that motivation and discipline had a significant influence on performance, whereas competence did not exhibit a statistically significant effect. This contrasts with the present research, which expects a positive relationship between competence and performance, highlighting the importance of verifying these divergent results across different institutional contexts.

These related works collectively underscore the relevance of competence, motivation, and work discipline as key determinants of performance. However, the present study adds value by focusing specifically on the regional context of Gowa Regency a setting that remains

underexplored in the literature. Furthermore, by applying a quantitative approach using SPSS-based analysis, this research aims to contribute empirical evidence to support human resource policy development at the local government level.

2.2 Research Gap

While numerous studies have explored the influence of competence, motivation, and work discipline on employee performance, many of these investigations have focused on national-level institutions, large bureaucracies, or private-sector environments. There is a relative scarcity of empirical research that concentrates on local government offices in developing regions such as Gowa Regency, where contextual, cultural, and organizational dynamics may differ significantly from those in metropolitan or central government settings [7,9–11].

Most prior works tend to treat these variables in generalized contexts, often without considering how they interact within small-scale bureaucratic institutions that face unique resource constraints and managerial challenges. Moreover, although studies such as those by Nurlinda and Rahim[11] provide insights into industrial government units in South Sulawesi, they reveal mixed findings particularly on the inconsistent effect of competence on performance thereby indicating the need for more localized validation.

Another critical gap lies in the methodological approach. Some studies lack rigorous statistical analysis or fail to integrate multiple independent variables in a single regression model. This limits the ability to understand the combined and relative contribution of each factor on performance outcomes. The present study addresses this gap by applying a quantitative method using multiple linear regression to simultaneously assess the partial and simultaneous effects of competence, motivation, and discipline.

Additionally, performance problems observed in the Trade and Industry Department of Gowa Regency such as high rates of absenteeism and poor task commitment have not been specifically investigated in academic literature. As such, this study contributes original data and context-specific analysis that can inform strategic interventions tailored to the needs of regional bureaucracies.

By narrowing its focus to a specific local government unit with observable performance issues, and by utilizing a robust methodological framework, this research seeks to fill an important gap in both the theoretical understanding and practical application of performance management in decentralized public administration.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

This study employed a quantitative approach using primary data collected through structured questionnaires. The target population consisted of all civil servants and government employees with work agreements (PNS and PPPK) working at the Department of Industry and Trade of Gowa Regency. A saturated sampling technique was applied due to the relatively

small population size. As a result, the entire population of 34 employees was included as the research sample.

The questionnaire used for data collection was designed based on indicators derived from established theoretical constructs related to competence, motivation, work discipline, and employee performance. Each variable was operationalized into several measurable items, rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Prior to full distribution, the questionnaire underwent a validity and reliability test to ensure that each item met statistical standards for inclusion in the final analysis.

Data collection was carried out within a specified timeframe by distributing questionnaires directly to respondents at their workplace. To maintain confidentiality and minimize response bias, participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and used solely for academic purposes. The completed questionnaires were subsequently coded and processed using SPSS version 26 for statistical analysis.

3.2 Analysis Techniques

The data obtained in this research were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Several analytical procedures were applied to ensure the validity, reliability, and accuracy of the results.

- First, an instrument test was conducted, comprising both validity and reliability analyses. Validity testing utilized the Pearson correlation method to assess whether each statement item was significantly correlated with the total score. Items with a significance value below 0.05 and a correlation coefficient (r count) greater than the critical r value were deemed valid. Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach’s Alpha, where a value above 0.60 indicated acceptable internal consistency, confirming that the instrument was reliable for data collection.
- Second, descriptive statistical analysis was used to summarize the distribution of responses for each variable, providing insights into overall trends related to competence, motivation, discipline, and employee performance.
- Third, classical assumption tests were conducted to verify that the regression model satisfied essential statistical requirements, including:
 - a. Normality Test, using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test to verify that the residuals were normally distributed.
 - b. Multicollinearity Test, based on tolerance values and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), to detect potential intercorrelations among independent variables.
 - c. Heteroscedasticity Test, using the Glejser test, to examine whether residuals had constant variance.
- Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was applied to assess the influence of the independent variables (competence, motivation, and work discipline) on the dependent variable (employee performance). This model allowed for both partial testing (t-test) and simultaneous testing (F-test). The t-test determined whether each independent variable had a significant individual effect, while the F-test evaluated the joint significance of all

independent variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also computed to measure the proportion of variance in employee performance explained by the model.

3.3 Validation

To guarantee the accuracy and consistency of the data, this study implemented two primary validation procedures: instrument validity testing and reliability testing. These procedures were crucial to ensure that the measurement items accurately represented the constructs being studied and consistently yielded reliable results.

- Validity testing was carried out using Pearson's product-moment correlation, in which each questionnaire item was correlated with the total score of its respective variable. An item was deemed valid if the calculated correlation coefficient (r count) exceeded the critical r table value at the 5% significance level and if the significance (p -value) was below 0.05. All items that satisfied these criteria were retained, thereby ensuring both content and construct validity of the instrument.
- Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate the internal consistency of items within each variable. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.60 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument consistently measured the intended variable. The results revealed that all variables competence, motivation, work discipline, and employee performance had Alpha values above this threshold, confirming the instrument's reliability for subsequent statistical analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Key Findings

a. Characteristics of Respondent

Table 1. Characteristics based on Gender

Characteristics	Number of People	Percentage
Male	18	52.94%
Female	16	47.06%
Total	34	100%

Based on the gender distribution of respondents, as shown in Table 1, there are 18 male employees (52.94%) and 16 female employees (47.06%). This means that the majority of respondents in the study are male. In the context of research on competence, motivation, and work discipline, the predominance of male respondents (52.94%) can offer several contributions, such as:

- Gender perspective:

Men may have different experiences and perspectives on competence, motivation, and work discipline in the workplace. They may face different challenges, opportunities,

and dynamics that can provide valuable insights for the study. Data variety: With a majority of male respondents, there is an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how men perceive and experience competence, motivation, and work discipline in the workplace. Representation: If men constitute a significant portion of the employee population being studied, having a majority of male respondents will help ensure that the study adequately captures their experiences and perspectives.

Table 2. Characteristics based on Age

Characteristics	Number of People	Percentage
Age (n = 60)		
30 – 40 years	5	14.71%
40 – 50 years	14	41.71%
50 – 60 years	15	44.12%
Total	34	100%

Based on Table 2, the respondents' ages vary, with 5 people (14.71%) aged 30–40 years, 14 people (41.17%) aged 40–50 years, and 15 people (44.12%) aged 50–60 years. The majority of respondents are in the 50–60 age group (44.12%), indicating that the perspectives and experiences of this group dominate the research findings, particularly in the context of work at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency. If related to work or career, this data is very relevant. For example, respondents aged 50–60 may be at a different career stage compared to those aged 30–40, which could influence their views and experiences regarding competence, motivation, and discipline in the workplace. The effectiveness of employees aged 50 years and above at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency can be influenced by several factors, such as greater work experience compared to younger employees, which can help them carry out their duties and responsibilities more effectively. In addition, with age and experience, employees generally develop better skills and competencies, enabling them to complete tasks more efficiently and effectively.

Table 3. Characteristics based on Education

Characteristics	Number of People	Percentage
High School (SMA)	2	5.88%
Diploma (D3)	0	0%
Bachelor's (S1)	23	67.65%
Master's (S2)	9	26.47%
Doctorate (S3)	0	0%
Total	34	100%

Employees' level of education can affect various aspects of their work, including their competencies, skills and knowledge. In the context of the Department of Trade and Industry of Gowa Regency, the fact that 67.65% of employees have a bachelor's degree indicates several things such as competence and skills: With an S1 education, employees are expected to have the competencies and skills necessary to carry out their duties and responsibilities. They are also expected to have solid theoretical knowledge that they can apply in practice. Then qualifications: An S1 level of education may be the minimum qualification for some positions in the Trade and Industry Agency of Gowa Regency. This shows that this organization values education and sees it as an important factor in employee performance.

b. *Variable Description Test*

Table 4. Description of Competency Variables (X1)

Item Statement	Frequency and Percentage										Mean
	SS (5)		S (4)		KS (3)		TS (2)		STS (1)		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
X1.1	19	55,9	13	38,2	2	5,9	0	0	0	0	4,5
X1.2	12	35,3	22	63,7	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,35
X1.3	10	29,4	21	61,8	2	5,9	1	2,9	0	0	4,18
X1.4	11	32,4	21	61,8	2	5,9	0	0	0	0	4,26
X1.5	13	38,2	20	58,8	0	0	1	2,9	0	0	4,32
X1.6	14	41,2	17	50	3	8,8	0	0	0	0	4,32
X1.7	11	32,4	22	64,7	1	2,9	0	0	0	0	4,29
X1.8	13	38,2	20	58,8	1	2,9	0	0	0	0	4,35
X1.9	11	32,4	19	55,9	2	5,9	1	2,9	1	2,9	4,12
X1.10	12	35,3	18	52,9	3	8,8	1	2,9	0	0	4,18
Total Mean for Competency Variable (X1)											4,28

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis of the competency variable (X1), the total mean value obtained is 4.28. This indicates that respondents possess high competence in performing their duties and responsibilities. Of the 10 statement items used to measure this variable, most respondents provided positive responses, namely strongly agree (SS) and agree (S). The highest mean value, 4.50, is found in statement item X1.1 (I maintain work quality), while the lowest mean value, 4.12, is found in statement item X1.9 (skills possessed according to technical work). Overall, the descriptive analysis results show that employee competence at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency is at a good level

Table 5. Description of Motivation Variables (X2)

Item Statement	Frequency and Percentage										Mean
	SS (5)		S (4)		KS (3)		TS (2)		STS (1)		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
X2.1	8	23,5	25	73,5	0	0,00	1	2,9	0	0,00	4,18
X2.2	12	35,3	22	64,7	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,35
X2.3	11	32,4	21	61,8	2	5,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,26
X2.4	10	29,4	21	61,8	2	5,9	1	2,9	0	0,00	4,18
X2.5	12	35,3	20	58,8	2	5,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,29
X2.6	8	23,5	23	67,6	3	8,8	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,15
X2.7	10	29,4	23	67,6	1	2,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,26
X2.8	9	26,5	24	70,6	0	0,00	1	2,9	0	0,00	4,21
X2.9	11	32,4	21	61,8	2	5,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,26
X2.10	8	23,5	23	67,6	3	8,8	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,15
Total Mean for Motivation Variable (X2)											4,22

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis of the motivation variable (X2), the total mean value is 4.22. This indicates that respondents have high motivation in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Of the 10 statement items used to measure this variable, most respondents provided positive responses, namely strongly agree (SS) and agree (S). The highest mean value, 4.35, is found in statement item X2.2 (receiving a salary increase based on job performance), while the lowest mean value, 4.15, is found in statement items X2.6 (availability of adequate administrative resources) and X2.10 (providing development opportunities for employees). Overall, the descriptive analysis results show that employee motivation at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency is at a good level, although several aspects still require attention.

Table 6. Description of Work Discipline Variables (X3)

Item Statement	Frequency and Percentage										Mean	
	SS (5)		S (4)		KS (3)		TS (2)		STS (1)			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
X3.1	14	41,2	20	58,8	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,41	
X3.2	15	44,1	16	47,1	2	5,9	1	2,9	0	0,00	4,32	
X3.3	14	41,2	18	52,9	2	5,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,35	
X3.4	14	41,2	17	50,0	3	8,8	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,32	
X3.5	14	41,2	16	47,1	3	8,8	1	2,9	0	0,00	4,26	
X3.6	14	41,2	19	55,9	1	2,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,35	

X3.7	15	44,1	17	50,0	2	5,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,32
X3.8	12	35,3	21	61,8	1	2,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,32
Total Mean for Work Discipline Variable (X3)										4,33	

Based on the descriptive analysis of the work discipline variable (X3), the total mean value is 4.33. This indicates that respondents demonstrate excellent work discipline in performing their duties and responsibilities. Of the eight items used to measure the work discipline variable, the majority of respondents responded positively, namely strongly agree (SS) and agree (S). The highest mean score was 4.41 for statement X3.1 (employees always arrive and leave work on time), while the lowest mean score was 4.26 for statement X3.5 (currently available facilities can optimize work output). Overall, the descriptive analysis results indicate that employee work discipline at the Gowa Regency Trade and Industry Office is at an excellent level, thus serving as a supporting factor for strong employee performance.

Table 7. Description of Employee Performance Variables (Y)

Item Statement	Frequency and Percentage										Mean
	SS (5)		S (4)		KS (3)		TS (2)		STS (1)		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Y.1	15	44,1	19	55,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,44
Y.2	10	29,4	23	67,6	1	2,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,26
Y.3	11	32,4	20	58,8	3	8,8	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,24
Y.4	12	35,3	19	55,9	2	5,9	1	2,9	0	0,00	4,24
Y.5	12	35,4	20	58,8	2	5,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,24
Y.6	11	32,4	20	58,8	2	5,9	1	2,9	0	0,00	4,21
Y.7	14	41,2	19	55,9	1	2,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,35
Y.8	12	35,3	20	58,8	2	5,9	0	0,00	0	0,00	4,24
Total Mean for Employee Performance Variable (Y)											4,27

Based on the descriptive analysis of the employee performance variable (Y), the total mean value is 4.27. This indicates that respondents have performed very well in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Of the eight statement items used to measure employee performance, most respondents gave positive responses, namely strongly agree (SS) and agree (S). The highest mean score was 4.44 for item Y.1 (work that meets the work quantity standards set by the organization/agency), while the lowest mean score was 4.21 for item Y.6 (ability to select and view problems from different perspectives). Overall, the descriptive analysis results indicate that employee performance at the Gowa Regency Trade and Industry Office is at an excellent level, indicating that employees have carried out their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

c. *Instrument Testing*

- The validity test results indicate that all question items for the Competency (X1), Motivation (X2), Work Discipline (X3), and Employee Performance (Y) variables have an r count value greater than the r table value (0.339). This means that all items are valid and appropriate for measuring the intended variables. An r count value exceeding the r table value reflects a significant correlation between each item and the corresponding variable, indicating that the item serves as a good indicator for that variable. Thus, the validity test confirms that the measurement instrument (questionnaire) used in this study has strong validity and is appropriate for collecting accurate data.
- The reliability test results show that all variables in this study—Competency (X1), Motivation (X2), Work Discipline (X3), and Employee Performance (Y)—have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.600, indicating that the measurement instrument (questionnaire) has excellent reliability. A high Cronbach's Alpha value reflects strong internal consistency among the questionnaire items, meaning that respondents provided consistent answers to the questions. Therefore, the results of this study can be considered reliable and trustworthy.

d. *Hypothesis Test*

- *Partial Test (t Test)*

The partial test (t-test) results indicate that the t values for the Competence, Motivation, and Work Discipline variables are greater than the t table value (2.045). This signifies that each of these variables has a significant effect on employee performance. The interpretation of the partial test results for each variable is as follows:

- 1) Competency (X1): The calculated t value (2.571) is greater than the t table value (2.045), and the Sig. value (0.015) is less than 0.05. Therefore, H1 is accepted, indicating that competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency.
- 2) Motivation (X2): The calculated t value (2.189) is greater than the t table value (2.045), and the Sig. value (0.024) is less than 0.05. Thus, H2 is accepted, meaning that motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency.
- 3) Work Discipline (X3): The calculated t value (3.827) is greater than the t table value (2.045), and the Sig. value (0.028) is less than 0.05. Consequently, H3 is accepted, which means that work discipline has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency.

Thus, the partial test (t-test) results indicate that Competence, Motivation, and Work Discipline have a positive and significant effect on the Employee Performance of the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency. This implies that improvements in Competence, Motivation, and Work Discipline can lead to enhanced Employee Performance.

- *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Test*

The multiple regression equation obtained:

$$Y = 1.881 + 0.425X_1 + 0.152X_2 + 0.331X_3$$

Remarks:

Y = Employee Performance

X₁ = Competency

X₂ = Motivation

X₃ = Work Discipline

From the multiple linear regression equation above, it can be analyzed as follows:

- 1) The regression coefficient for the constant is 1.881, which means that if all independent variables (Competence, Motivation, and Work Discipline) are valued at 0, the fixed or baseline value of employee performance is 1.881. This indicates that even when the independent variables are absent or constant at 0, employee performance remains positive. Therefore, it can be concluded that changes in the values of the independent variables will influence the value of the dependent variable.
- 2) The Regression Coefficient of Competence (X₁) is 0.425, meaning that if competence (X₁) is getting better, the resulting employee performance value (Y) will be better too.
- 3) The Motivation Regression Coefficient (X₂) is 0.152, meaning that if the motivation (X₂) is getting better, the resulting employee performance value (Y) will be better too.
- 4) The Regression Coefficient of Work Discipline (X₃) is 0.331, meaning that if work discipline (X₃) is getting better, the resulting employee performance value (Y) will be better too.

4.2 Interpretation of Results

- The Influence of Competence (X₁) on Employee Performance

Competence, as a basic ability that individuals must possess to perform their work in an organization, is closely linked to their performance. Competence must be aligned with the field or position they occupy. This will significantly improve employee performance. However, if an employee's competency doesn't align with their position, they may face difficulties in completing their work according to organizational targets. Therefore, competency is one of the fundamentals that organizational leaders must consider when placing employees in certain positions. This will improve employee performance within the organization/agency. Consequently, organizational targets can be achieved more effectively and efficiently.

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that competence has a significant effect on employee performance at the Gowa Regency Trade and Industry Office. The regression coefficient is 0.425, with a significance level of 0.015. Based on Table 4.3, the t-test shows a t-count of 2.571, which is greater than the t-table value of 2.045 ($2.571 > 2.045$). Since the significance value (0.015) is less than 0.05, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. This confirms that the competence variable has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at the Gowa Regency Trade and Industry department.

The research findings are consistent with those of Norwijaya, who identified a positive and significant effect of competency variables on employee performance at the South Barito Regency Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency [10]. These findings also align with Spence's view in Wibowo, which states that competency serves as the foundation of an individual's characteristics, reflecting how they behave or think, adapt to situations, and sustain long-term relationships [12].

Competence plays an important role in improving employee performance in organizations, including in this study conducted at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency. The results of the regression analysis show that competence has a correlation value of 0.425 with employee performance. Furthermore, the results of the partial t-test indicate a significance value of $0.01 < 0.05$, meaning the effect is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the competency variable and the employee performance variable are positively and significantly related.

- The Influence of Motivation (X2) on Employee Performance

Motivation is important in a person, because with this motivation it is hoped that each individual employee can have great encouragement and enthusiasm in carrying out every task and responsibility given. Leaders should also be able to motivate employees with the hope of achieving goals efficiently and achieving more optimal employee performance. Employees who have a high level of motivation will basically show high work performance as well. Every agency not only needs capable and skilled employees, but no less important are employees who are willing to learn and have a great desire to achieve optimal work results.

The results of hypothesis testing show that motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency. The regression coefficient value obtained is 0.152, with a significance level of 0.024. Based on the t-test results, the t count is 2.189, which is greater than the t table value of 2.045 (t count $>$ t table), and the p-value of 0.024 is less than 0.05. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, meaning that the motivation variable has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency.

This study's findings align with Mangkunegara's view that there is a link between work motivation and employee performance achievement [13], indicating that individuals with very high motivation tend to achieve high performance results. The influence of motivation on performance refers to the idea that an individual's level of motivation can determine how effectively they can perform their tasks or work. Motivation can be internal (such as the desire to succeed, personal interest, or satisfaction from performing a task) or external (such as financial incentives, recognition, or promotion). When a person has high motivation, they tend to be more dedicated, work harder, and be more focused in their work, which can ultimately improve their performance. Conversely, if a person has low motivation, they may be less dedicated or less passionate about their work, which can decrease their performance.

The relationship between motivation and employee performance is consistent with the findings of Mulia and Saputra [14], who demonstrated that motivation positively influences

employee performance at the Regional Secretariat of Padang City. Understanding motivation theory is essential for leaders, as it enables them to identify factors that drive employees to work. This aligns with the view of Kurniawan et al., who define motivation as the driving force that fosters enthusiasm for work, encouraging individuals to collaborate, work effectively, and integrate their efforts to achieve job satisfaction[15].

5. Discussion

5.1 Comparison with Prior Research

The findings of this study indicate that competence, motivation, and work discipline each have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry in Gowa Regency. These results are in line with several previous studies. For instance, Rosmaini and Tanjung as well as Saptalia et al. found that competence, motivation, and discipline positively affect performance among civil servants[7,8]. Similarly, Ahmadi and Sulistyono concluded that competence and discipline significantly influenced employee performance, although their model also included leadership as a variable [9]. Furthermore, the findings of this study support the work of Norwijaya, who emphasized competence as the dominant factor influencing employee performance [10]. The alignment with Norwijaya reinforces the argument that skill and ability, when properly aligned with job roles, are critical in enhancing performance outcomes.

In the case of motivation, the current study's results are consistent with the theories proposed by Mangkunegara and supported by Mulia and Saputra, both of whom assert that motivation directly drives individual performance [13,14]. Employees who are motivated tend to exhibit greater commitment and productivity. However, this research differs from the study conducted by Nurlindah and Rahim, which revealed that competence had no significant impact on employee performance at the Department of Industry in South Sulawesi Province [11]. This contradiction highlights the possibility of contextual differences, such as organizational culture, leadership style, or institutional structure, which may mediate the relationship between competence and performance.

Overall, although most previous studies support the positive influence of competence, motivation, and discipline on performance, this study contributes by confirming these relationships specifically within the local government context of Gowa Regency an area that has received relatively limited empirical attention in this domain.

5.2 Limitations

Although this study offers valuable insights into the effects of competence, motivation, and work discipline on employee performance, it is important to recognize several limitations.

- First, this research employed a quantitative method with cross-sectional data, capturing employee perceptions at only one point in time, thereby failing to reflect possible changes in behavior or performance over a longer duration
- Second, the study's sample was limited to 34 employees of the Department of Trade and Industry in Gowa Regency. Although a saturated sampling technique was applied due to the small population, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other government

agencies or larger institutions with differing organizational structures and operational cultures.

- Third, the study relied solely on self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccuracies in respondents' self-assessment. Future studies could incorporate direct performance appraisals or supervisor evaluations to improve measurement objectivity.
- Lastly, this research focused only on three independent variables competence, motivation, and work discipline. Other potentially influential factors such as leadership style, organizational climate, reward systems, or communication patterns were not included but may also play a significant role in shaping employee performance.

Recognizing these limitations can help guide future research efforts to build on and refine the findings of this study, particularly by employing broader samples, mixed-method approaches, and longitudinal designs.

5.3 Future Research

Future research is encouraged to expand upon the findings of this study by addressing its limitations and exploring additional variables that may influence employee performance in government institutions. Subsequent studies may consider employing larger sample sizes across multiple departments or agencies, which would improve the generalizability of results and allow for cross-institutional comparison. Moreover, researchers are advised to incorporate other relevant factors, such as leadership style, organizational culture, communication effectiveness, or compensation systems, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers of employee performance. Future investigations could also benefit from adopting a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data with qualitative insights such as interviews or focus groups to capture more nuanced perspectives on employee behavior and organizational dynamics. Lastly, it is recommended that upcoming studies adopt a longitudinal design to observe how the relationships between competence, motivation, discipline, and performance evolve over time. This would be particularly useful in capturing the long-term effects of policy or managerial interventions on employee outcomes .

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of testing and data analysis, the conclusions of this research are as follows:

- Hypothesis testing results indicate that the competency variable has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry of Gowa Regency.
- Hypothesis testing results indicate that the motivation variable has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry of Gowa Regency.
- Hypothesis testing results indicate that the work discipline variable has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at the Department of Trade and Industry of Gowa Regency.

7. Recommendation

There are several suggestions that can be given as consideration for organizations or agencies, further research and interested parties, as follows:

- Regarding the competency variable (X1), it can be suggested to have skills that are in accordance with the technical work through training and development, internships or work practices, self-study, and attending seminars or workshops organized by the agency. By applying this method, employees can improve skills and improve organizational performance.
- Regarding the Motivation variable (X2), it can be suggested that government agencies can provide training and development that is relevant to the needs of employees and organizations. provide opportunities to work with colleagues in teams to increase comfort and productivity. In this way, employees are motivated to provide development opportunities for employees and make employees feel comfortable interacting with coworkers, thereby increasing productivity and job satisfaction.
- Regarding the work discipline variable (X3), it can be suggested to improve work discipline: evaluate currently available facilities and identify unmet employee needs. By improving work discipline, employees can optimize work results by using the facilities currently available.
- Employee performance at the Trade and Industry Office of Gowa Regency is influenced not only by competence, motivation, and work discipline, but also by many other factors. Therefore, future researchers are advised to broaden the scope of their studies by adding more samples or incorporating other variables that may affect employee performance.

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