

*Research Article*

# The Effect of Competency and Motivation on Employee Performance with Service Leadership as A Moderating Variable (Study at The Semarang Productivity Vocational Training Center)

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the influence of competence and motivation on employee performance, while also examining the moderating role of servant leadership. Competence and motivation are considered key drivers of improved performance; however, their effectiveness may vary depending on the leadership style adopted within the organization. This research employs a quantitative method using a survey approach targeting employees at BBPVP Semarang. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression techniques. The findings reveal that competence has a positive and significant impact on employee performance, whereas motivation does not show a direct effect. Furthermore, servant leadership was found to weaken the relationship between competence and performance but strengthen the link between motivation and performance. This suggests that the more servant leadership is applied, the stronger the influence of motivation on employee performance. These findings offer practical implications for organizations to focus on competence development, enhancing employee motivation, and adopting a service-oriented leadership style to foster optimal performance.

**Keywords:** Competence, Motivation, Employee Performance, Servant Leadership (:)

## 1. Introduction

Employee performance is a key indicator of organizational success, including government agencies such as BBPVP Semarang that are tasked with implementing vocational and productivity training. However, data from 2023 shows that the realization of performance indicators has not fully reached the target, for example, only 83.06% of the workforce was successfully certified from the overall target.

In addition, only around 56% of ASNs have participated in competency development, even though according to regulations, at least 20 JPs per year must be fulfilled. The low level of employee training is feared to affect the quality of performance. Meanwhile, the high frequency of leadership changes (4 times in the last 5 years) indicates instability in leadership direction, which has an impact on employee motivation and productivity.

Some previous studies have shown inconsistent results, with competence shown to have a significant effect on performance in some studies (Mulang, 2021; Maizar et al., 2023), but not significant in others (Oppong & Zhau, 2020). Motivation also showed mixed results; some showed a positive relationship (Hidayat et al., 2023; Arifai et al., 2022), while other studies found no significant effect (Wardana et al., 2022). Servant leadership is still rarely used as a moderating variable in studies related to employee performance in the public sector, especially in vocational training institutions such as BBPVP Semarang.

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Improving employee performance is a necessity for public sector organizations that are oriented towards community service and achieving institutional targets. Semarang Vocational Training Center for Productivity (BBPVP), as a vocational training institution under the Ministry of Manpower, plays a strategic role in producing competent workers who are able to compete in the industrial world. The performance of BBPVP employees not only reflects the achievement of organizational targets, but also reflects the effectiveness of bureaucratic governance and the quality of public services provided. Therefore, serious attention is needed to the various factors that affect employee performance, both internal and external factors of the organization.

One internal factor that has strong implications for employee performance is competence. Competencies include knowledge, skills and work attitudes that must be possessed by each individual in carrying out their duties and responsibilities professionally. Without adequate competence, employees tend to experience difficulties in meeting organizational targets and expectations. At BBPVP Semarang, the low level of employee participation in competency development programs indicates a gap that has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of task implementation. This is a challenge for management to encourage competency improvement in order to create optimal performance.

In addition to competence, motivation is also a major determinant in employee performance. High motivation will encourage employees to work harder, show loyalty, and make a positive contribution to the organization. However, the phenomenon of low motivation within the government bureaucracy is often attributed to uncertainty in leadership direction, lack of incentives, and weak reward and recognition systems. This condition is also seen in BBPVP Semarang, where high leadership rotation causes employees to face organizational dynamics that have the potential to cause demotivation and job uncertainty.

Leadership uncertainty in public organizations can have a significant impact on employee performance. Frequent leadership changes can create instability in the implementation of policies and strategies, thus affecting the continuity of work programs and employee morale. This is where the role of leadership becomes crucial. Servant leadership offers an approach that focuses on the empowerment, well-being and development of team members. This leadership model is believed to be able to create a work environment that supports the achievement of optimal performance, while increasing employee motivation and satisfaction. Research examining the relationship between competence, motivation and employee performance with the moderating variable of servant leadership is still very limited, especially in the vocational training institution sector. The few existing studies focus more on the private sector or formal education organizations, so the context of government bureaucracy has not been explored much. In fact, the characteristics and dynamics of public organizations have significant differences that require a more contextual and relevant research approach.

In the context of BBPVP Semarang, servant leadership has the potential to be the answer to the problem of organizational direction uncertainty and weak employee motivation. Leaders who prioritize service to subordinates will create a harmonious, collaborative, and individual development-oriented work environment. When employees feel valued, supported and empowered, their motivation and commitment levels will increase, which in turn has a positive impact on performance. The influence of competence on performance is not always linear and absolute, but can be influenced by contextual factors such as leadership style. Servant leadership is believed to strengthen the influence of competencies on performance by providing the support and guidance employees need in implementing their skills and knowledge. The influence of competence on performance depends not only on individual capacity, but also on the facilitative role of leaders in creating a conducive work climate.

Motivation as a psychological factor can interact with servant leadership in influencing performance. Highly motivated employees will be more easily directed and supported by leaders who apply servant leadership principles, so the synergy between motivation and leadership style will result in better performance. Therefore, an integrative approach that combines these variables is very relevant to be researched empirically. In the current digital era and industrial disruption, vocational training institutions are required to be more adaptive and innovative in developing HR development strategies. Employee competence and motivation must always be improved in order to be able to face the dynamics of changes in the labor market and technology. Leaders are also required to be able to become role models who are able to inspire, guide and serve employees so that they can reach their maximum potential.

Based on this background, this study is expected not only to make a theoretical contribution in filling the void of literature related to the role of servant leadership as a moderating variable, but also to provide practical implications for HR management in BBPVP Semarang. The results of this study are expected to be the basis for formulating more effective internal policies in order to improve employee performance, create a healthy work climate, and encourage the achievement of organizational goals in a sustainable manner.

## 2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Performance is understood as the result of work that a person achieves based on the standards set by the organization. Performance is influenced by individual (ability, motivation), psychological (attitude, personality), and organizational (structure, leadership) factors. Performance indicators include quality, quantity, timeliness, cost effectiveness, need for supervision, and interpersonal impact (Bernardin & Russell, 1993).

Competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and observable behaviors required to achieve superior performance (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Boyatzis, 1982). Competency models such as the Iceberg Model include five main elements: motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills.

Motivation is defined as the process that explains the intensity, direction, and persistence of individuals in achieving goals (Robbins & Judge, 2019). McClelland's (1961) theory suggests that work motivation is driven by three main needs: the need for achievement (nAch), affiliation (nAff), and power (nPow). This theory is used as the basis for motivation indicators in the study.

Servant leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes service to team members. Leaders act as servants by putting the needs and growth of others first (Greenleaf, 1970). Spears (2007) identified 10 key characteristics, such as listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, and community building. This leadership is believed to strengthen the relationship between competence/motivation and employee performance.

Previous research generally concluded that: Competence and motivation positively affect employee performance (Susanto, 2024; Wibowo, 2022) and Service leadership can moderate and strengthen the influence of competence and motivation on performance (Amir & Sallatu, 2022; Taylor & Clark, 2021). However, some studies also show inconsistent results, opening room for further research.

Therefore, this research is an explanatory quantitative study that aims to test and explain the influence between the independent variables (Competence and Motivation) on the dependent variable (Employee Performance), with Servant Leadership as a moderating variable. The analysis model used is multiple linear regression and moderation regression.

Data were collected using a closed questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree), which was distributed to employees at the Vocational Training and Productivity Center (BBPVP) Semarang. Population: All 133 employees of BBPVP Semarang. Sample: 133 respondents selected using the census sampling method, based on the criteria of active employees at BBPVP Semarang who have at least 2 years of work experience.

The research instrument is a questionnaire that is compiled based on the theoretical indicators of each variable. For competency variables, it refers to the theory of Spencer & Spencer (1993) (motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, skills). The motivation variable, refers to McClelland's (1961) theory (nAch, nPow, nAff). Performance variables, based on the theory of Bernardin & Russell (1993) and service leadership variables, using the characteristics theory of Larry C. Spears (2007).

## 3. Proposed Method

The data in this study were analyzed using SPSS software version 25 and involved several stages of analysis: Instrument Test consists of Validity Test (KMO>0.50, Loading Factor>0.50) and Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha>0.70), Descriptive Analysis (Respondents and Variables), Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (R<sup>2</sup> Test, F Test and t Test), Moderation Regression Analysis using interaction variables (X1Z and X2Z), and 5% test significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Description of Respondents

The following table is a table of descriptive statistics of respondents:

**Table 1.** Composition of Respondents Based on Demographic Characteristics

No	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Men	60	45,1%
		Women	73	54,9%
2	Age	35-44 years old	69	51,9%
3	Education	Bachelor (S1)	86	64,7%
4	Length of service	>15 years old	56	42,1%

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents were female, productive age (35-44 years), S1 education, and long tenure (>15 years). This indicates high performance potential and organizational maturity in service.

### 4.2. Statistical Description of Research Variables

The following table is a descriptive statistical table of employee performance variables:

**Table 2.** Average Variable Score

No	Variable	Number of Indicators	Average (Mean)
1	Competence (X1)	10	6,07
2	Motivation (X2)	6	6,04
3	Employee Performance (Y)	12	6,11
4	Servant Leadership (Z)	20	5,67

Interpretation:

Highest: Employee performance (6.11)

Lowest: Servant leadership (5.67)

This means that employee perceptions of leaders are still not maximized, even though performance and competence are high.

### 4.3. Test Instrument

The following is a table of validity and reliability test results

**Table 3.** Summary of KMO Test and Cronbach's Alpha

No	Variable	KMO	Cronbach Alpha	Status Validity & Reliability
1	Competence (X1)	0,854	0,874	Valid & Reliable
2	Motivation (X2)	0,821	0,828	Valid & Reliable
3	Employee Performance (Y)	0,902	0,930	Valid & Reliable
4	Servant Leadership (Z)	0,910	0,936	Valid & Reliable

Interpretation:

All research instruments are valid and reliable. Worth using in further analysis.

#### 4.4. Regression Analysis Results and Moderation Test

The following is a table of regression and moderation results

**Table 4.** Regression Analysis Results & Moderation Test

Variable Relationship	Regression Model Equation						
	Model Test			Hypothesis Test			
	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	F	Sig.	B	T	Sig.	Ket
Model 1	$Y_1 = a + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e$						
Effect of Competence on Employee Performance (H1)	0,556	42,316	0,000	0,380	3,309	0,001	Hypothesis 1 Accepted
Effect of Motivation on Employee Performance (H2)				0,390	-1,483	0,141	Hypothesis 2 Rejected
Model 2	$Y = \alpha_2 + \beta_3 X_1 + \beta_4 X_1.Z + e_2$						
Interaction of Competence with Servant Leadership - Employee Performance (H3)				0,067	-1,984	0,049	Hypothesis 3 Accepted
Model 3	$Y = \alpha_3 + \beta_5 X_2 + \beta_6 X_2.Z + e_3$						
Interaction of Motivation with Servant Leadership - Employee Performance (H4)				0,069	2,207	0,029	Hypothesis 4 Accepted

Based on Table 4.1, the mathematical equation can be arranged as follows:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e$$

$$Y = 0,380 X_1 + 0,390 X_2 + e$$

Based on this equation can be explained as follows:

a. The Effect of Competence on Employee Performance

Based on table 4. It is known that the beta coefficient of Competence on Employee Performance is 0.380 with a significance of 0.001 smaller than 0.5. This means that Competence has a positive effect on Employee Performance, meaning that the more often Competence is improved, the more Employee Performance will increase.

b. The Effect of Motivation on Employee Performance

Based on table 4. it is known that the beta coefficient of Motivation on Employee Performance is 0.390 with a significance of 0.141 greater than 0.5. This means that Motivation has no effect on Employee Performance.

#### 4.4.1. Model Test

##### a. Determination Test

From table 4. it is known that the Adjusted R Square is 0.556, meaning that 55.6% of Competence and Motivation are able to explain Employee Performance, while the remaining (44.4%) is explained by other variables outside the model studied, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational culture, etc.

##### b. F test

Based on table 4. It is known that the calculated F value is 42.316 with a significance of 0.000 less than 5% or 0.05. This means that Competence and Motivation jointly affect Employee Performance at BBPVP Semarang.

#### 4.4.2. Test t

Based on the explanation of the results of the t test (Hypothesis):

##### a. Hypothesis 1. Competence has a positive effect on Employee Performance

Based on Table 4. it is known that the beta value of competence is 0.380 with a significant  $0.001 < 0.05$ , meaning that competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Thus Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

##### b. Hypothesis 2. Motivation has a positive effect on Employee Performance

Based on Table 4. it is known that the beta value of competence is 0.390 with a significant  $0.141 > 0.05$ , meaning that motivation has no effect on Employee Performance. Thus Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

##### c. Hypothesis 3. Servant Leadership Moderates Competence on Employee Performance.

Based on table 4. obtained the beta coefficient value of the interaction between servant leadership and competence of -1.984 at a significant level of  $0.049 < 0.05$ . This shows that the service leadership variable is a moderating variable. The negative beta value indicates that servant leadership weakens the effect of competence on employee performance. Thus Hypothesis 3 is accepted.

##### d. Hypothesis 4. Servant Leadership Moderates Motivation on Employee Performance.

Based on table 4. obtained the beta coefficient value of the interaction between serving leadership and motivation of 2.207 at a significant level of  $0.029 < 0.05$ . This shows that the serving leadership variable is a moderating variable. The positive beta value indicates that the service leadership variable strengthens the effect of motivation on employee performance. Thus Hypothesis 4 is accepted.

#### 4.4.3. Moderation

Based on table 4. Moderation results are obtained:

Leadership successfully moderates competence on employee performance, but the results obtained actually weaken the influence of existing competencies.

Leadership serves to strengthen the relationship between motivation and performance, supporting research from Spears (2007), and research from Dewi & Putra (2022).

#### 4.5. Discussion and Discussion

This research was conducted at BBPVP Semarang to examine how competence and motivation affect employee performance, and the extent to which servant leadership acts as a variable that moderates the relationship between these variables.

##### 1. Effect of Competence on Performance

The results showed that competence has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. This indicates that the higher the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes of employees, the greater the contribution to performance achievement. Competent employees are generally able to complete tasks more effectively, make decisions rationally, and are able to adjust to various work dynamics. This is in line with the resource-based view theory, which places competence as one of the strategic assets in creating organizational excellence.

2. **The Effect of Motivation on Performance**  
In contrast to competence, motivation is not proven to have a significant effect on employee performance. This suggests that motivation is not the only driver of performance in the work environment. This finding is reinforced by Herzberg's two-factor theory, which states that achievement and responsibility actually trigger the formation of motivation itself-not the other way around. Employees who already have high competence tend to rely less on external encouragement to perform well.
3. **Servant Leadership as a Moderator between Competence and Employee Performance**  
Servant leadership turns out to negatively moderate the relationship between competence and performance. This means that the presence of a servant leadership style actually tends to reduce the positive impact of competence on employee performance. This can be caused by employees' perceptions of the lack of support and exemplary leadership in facing work challenges, especially when decisions made do not reflect the values of justice and integrity.
4. **Servant Leadership as a Moderator between Employee Motivation and Performance**  
Unlike the previous relationship, servant leadership serves to strengthen the influence of motivation on performance. Leaders who are empathetic, open in communication, and involve employees in the decision-making process are proven to be able to lift employee morale. This shows that a leadership style that emphasizes service is able to build employees' internal motivation into real and quality performance.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This shows that increasing employee competence has a direct impact on improving employee performance.
2. Motivation has no effect on performance.
3. Leadership serves to moderate competence on performance, but is weakening.
4. Servant leadership moderates motivation on performance and its nature reinforces the influence of motivation on performance.

### Theoretical Implications

The results of this study are expected to add to the study of human resource management, especially regarding competence, motivation, performance and leadership.

### Managerial Implications

Based on the research results, the following suggestions are given:

1. The results of the moderation test show that service leadership strengthens the relationship between motivation and performance, so in improving performance, BBPVP Semarang should improve service leadership by increasing fairness and integrity in making policies and supporting employees when experiencing difficulties.
2. BBPVP Semarang should increase employee motivation by encouraging employees to take job risks and improve relationships between employees.
3. BBPVP Semarang should improve employee competence by regularly socializing the vision and mission of the organization. By understanding the vision and mission of the organization, it is hoped that employees will be motivated to work well according to their competence.

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