

Mediating Effect of Work Motivation on Competence and Teachers Performance

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Received: 27/07/2025

Accepted: 18/11/2025

Published: 26/12/2025

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of teacher competence on elementary school teacher performance in Kendari City, with work motivation as a mediating variable. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, drawing on a purposive sample of 186 elementary school teachers. Data from Likert-scale (1-5) questionnaires were analyzed via partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test direct and indirect effects. Teacher competence exerted a positive and significant direct effect on performance, whereas its direct effect on work motivation was nonsignificant. Work motivation positively influenced performance and partially mediated the competence-performance relationship. These results underscore the pivotal role of competence development and motivation enhancement in optimizing teacher efficacy within Indonesian primary education contexts. Educational authorities should prioritize sustained training initiatives, incentive mechanisms, and motivational work cultures to elevate teaching performance in Kendari City.

Keywords: Teacher Competence, Work Motivation, Job Performance, Elementary Education, Kendari City

I. INTRODUCTION

Education forms the cornerstone of human resource development for any nation. Indonesia's National Education System Law (Law No. 20/2003) stipulates that national education aims to develop learners' potential to become individuals who are faithful and pious to the one true God, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic citizens responsible for their societal roles. High-quality instructional services in schools represent a critical, non-negotiable factor in realizing these objectives, with teachers as primary educators holding a pivotal role in shaping elementary school learning quality (Sutrisno, 2024). Teachers transcend mere content delivery; they manage learning processes, foster student character development, cultivate classroom academic cultures, and facilitate linkages with parents and educational stakeholders. Teacher quality, manifested through performance, indicates educational success in schools. Performance encompasses lesson planning quality, effective implementation, learning assessment, classroom management, and broader school contributions (Rahmawati, 2023).

Teacher competence one of the most influential internal factors on performance quality spans pedagogical, professional, personal, and social domains essential for effective professional functioning. Pedagogical competence involves designing and executing learner-appropriate strategies; professional competence demands deep subject mastery; personal competence embodies ethics and character; social competence enables effective interactions with students and school communities. Such mastery equips teachers to address dynamic instructional demands and curriculum shifts (Sutrisno, 2024).

Human resource management literature positions individual competence as human capital driving work productivity. Human Capital Theory posits that higher knowledge, skills, and abilities yield greater productivity; in education, investments in teacher development via formal training and experience optimize learning management and elevate performance (Becker, 1993). Economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz framed humans as empowerable assets through education and training, yielding enhanced instructional quality and student outcomes (Schultz, 1961).

Competence alone insufficiently guarantees optimal performance absent robust work motivation the internal impetus directing goal-oriented behavior. In teaching, motivation extends beyond financial incentives to encompass professional responsibility, achievement satisfaction, social recognition, and personal contributions to student growth, yielding diligent, creative, and consistent high-quality instruction (Nugroho, 2024).

Studies confirm work motivation's positive impact on teacher performance; elementary school research shows motivated teachers excel in instruction and administration (Wahyuni, 2023). Competence and motivation interrelate,

jointly boosting performance across institutions (Bajang, 2023). Professional competence and motivation significantly affect elementary teacher performance simultaneously (Putri, 2024), with high competence fostering motivation via confidence and expertise (Santosa, 2023). Cross-level studies affirm competence's direct and mediated through motivation has positive effects on performance; junior high research reveals significant correlations (Fauzi, 2023), while senior high analyses highlight partial and collective influences (Putri, 2024).

These competence-motivation-performance linkages, empirically validated across contexts, mirror challenges in Kendari City's schools and systems, necessitating targeted elementary teacher studies examining direct relationships and motivation's mediation. Such inquiries address regional knowledge gaps, offering actionable strategies for schools, principals, and education departments to bolster competence and motivation for optimal performance (Sutrisno, 2024; Putri, 2024).

Kendari elementary teacher performance grapples with competence variations: some exhibit strong skills, yet others falter in content mastery or learner-tailored strategies, yielding inconsistent quality and diminished student outcomes. High-motivation teachers innovate, but others lag due to inadequate incentives, administrative burdens, or insufficient principal/environmental support, undermining instruction despite adequate competence.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Teacher Competence

Teacher competence encompasses a multifaceted array of knowledge, skills, and abilities essential for educators to fulfill their professional responsibilities with efficacy and impact. These competencies pedagogical, professional, personality, and social collectively shape instructional quality and educational service delivery. Pedagogical competence equips teachers to design, implement, and evaluate learning experiences tailored to learners' diverse characteristics and needs.

Professional competence demands mastery of subject matter alongside sustained professional growth via ongoing training and reflective practice. Teachers exhibiting this trait demonstrate deep content knowledge and adaptability to curricular evolutions, ensuring relevance in dynamic educational contexts. Research highlights its direct correlation with elevated performance metrics in instructional delivery.

Personality competence manifests in teachers' ethical integrity, emotional stability, and role-modeling behaviors that inspire trust and discipline among students. It underpins a noble character, authoritative yet approachable demeanor, and commitment to moral leadership within the school ecosystem. Scholarly analyses link robust personality traits to heightened student motivation and behavioral alignment.

Social competence enables effective communication and collaboration with students, parents, colleagues, and community stakeholders, fostering inclusive and empathetic interactions. Key indicators include adaptability, objectivity, and cultural sensitivity, which cultivate harmonious educational networks. This competency amplifies teacher influence beyond the classroom, supporting holistic school engagement.

2.2 Work Motivation

Work motivation constitutes the intrinsic and extrinsic forces propelling educators toward organizational objectives, manifesting in heightened diligence, creativity, and task persistence. Intrinsic elements, such as professional fulfillment and responsibility, interplay with extrinsic incentives like recognition and career advancement to sustain engagement. Studies quantify its substantial variance explanation in performance outcomes, often mediating environmental influences.

2.3 Teacher Performance

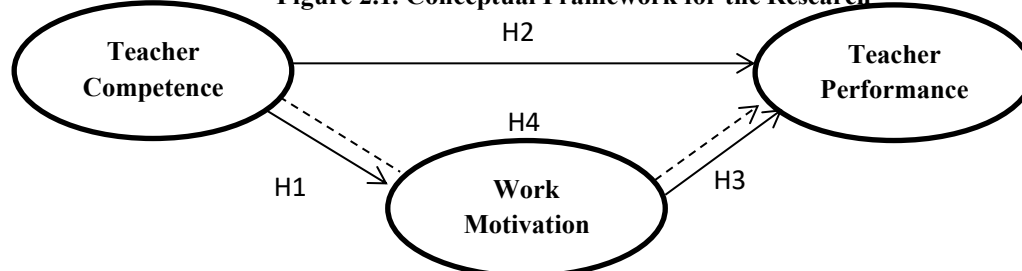
Teacher performance encapsulates observable professional outputs in lesson delivery, assessment, classroom governance, and stakeholder relations, reflective of competence application and motivational drive. High performers excel in cultivating conducive learning atmospheres and advancing student progress while contributing to institutional initiatives. Quantitative models reveal that competence and motivation jointly account for up to 75% of performance variability.

2.4 Mediating Role of Work Motivation

Work motivation serves as a pivotal psychological mediator, amplifying the competence-performance linkage by channeling abilities into productive behaviors. Competent educators achieve superior outcomes when motivation bridges cognitive mastery with behavioral execution, as evidenced in structural equation models. This mediation underscores motivation's role in optimizing human capital within educational frameworks.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework for the Research



Research Hypothesis

- H1: Teacher competence has a positive effect on teachers' performance.
 H2: Teacher competence has a positive effect on teacher work motivation.
 H3: Work motivation has a positive effect on teachers' performance.
 H4: Work motivation mediates the effect of competence on teacher performance.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach utilizing a cross-sectional design, facilitating data collection at a single point in time to test inter-variable relationships. This methodology proves suitable for investigations analyzing the influence of teacher competence on performance mediated by work motivation, as it permits simultaneous evaluation of variable interrelationships without necessitating longitudinal observation (Creswell, 2014). The sample comprised 186 elementary school teachers from Kendari City, selected through purposive sampling based on predefined criteria, including a minimum of two years' teaching experience and active engagement in school instructional processes. This sampling technique ensures respondents exhibit attributes pertinent to the research inquiries, yielding representative data on teacher competence, work motivation, and performance (Sugiyono, 2022). Data collection instruments consisted of questionnaires employing a 5-point Likert scale (1–5) to assess teacher competence, work motivation, and performance. Collected data underwent analysis via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), enabling empirical examination of direct and indirect variable relationships alongside mediation effects of work motivation (Hair et al., 2019).

IV. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Result

Table 4.1. Direct Effect

Relationship Between Variables	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Description
Teacher Competence → Teacher Performance	0.482	5.362	0.000	Significant
Teacher Competence → Work Motivation	0.184	1.271	0.132	Not Significant
Work Motivation → Teacher Performance	0.372	4.048	0.004	Significant

The table presents the direct effects among the variables tested using SEM-PLS analysis. The results indicate that teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, with a path coefficient (β) of 0.482, a T-Statistic of 5.362, and a P-Value of 0.000. This finding suggests that the higher the teacher's competence, the better their performance in teaching, classroom management, and evaluation planning.

Meanwhile, the effect of teacher competence on work motivation is not significant ($\beta = 0.184$; T-Statistic = 1.271; P-Value = 0.132). This implies that although teachers possess high competence, it does not automatically enhance their work motivation. Such a condition may be influenced by external factors or other psychological aspects that affect teachers' drive to work.

On the other hand, work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance ($\beta = 0.372$; T-Statistic = 4.048; P-Value = 0.004), indicating that work motivation plays an important role in supporting teacher performance. Motivated teachers tend to be more diligent, creative, and consistent in carrying out their professional duties.

Table 4.2. Indirect Effect

Indirect Effect	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Description
Teacher Competence → Work Motivation → Teacher Performance	0.253	4.116	0.000	Significant

The table shows the indirect effect of teacher competence on performance through work motivation as a mediating variable. The results indicate that the path teacher competence → work motivation → teacher performance is significant, with an indirect effect coefficient of 0.253, a T-Statistic of 4.116, and a P-Value of 0.000. This suggests that teacher competence can still enhance performance through increased work motivation, demonstrating the crucial role of work motivation as a partial mediator in the relationship between competence and teacher performance.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 The Effect of Teacher Competence on Teachers Performance

The results of the SEM-PLS analysis show that teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance of elementary school in Kendari City. This finding indicates that teachers with strong pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies tend to perform better in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities.

Theoretically, this is consistent with Becker's (1993) Human Capital Theory, which explains that improving an individual's competence or skills represents an investment in human resources that can enhance productivity and

job performance. Previous studies also support this finding. For instance, Susanto et al. (2025) and Fauzi (2023) found that teacher competence had a significant positive effect on teacher performance.

4.2.2 The Effect of Teacher Competence on Work Motivation

The research results show that the direct effect of teacher competence on work motivation is not significant. This means that teacher competence does not always directly enhance their internal drive to work harder. Other factors such as the school environment, reward systems, and job satisfaction also play an important role in shaping teacher motivation.

Work psychology theory suggests that motivation is influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Previous research in Madrasah Aliyah institutions indicates that although teachers possess high competence, their work motivation greatly depends on social recognition and workplace support (Halimah, 2023).

4.2.3 The Effect of Work Motivation on Teachers Performance

The analysis indicates that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance of elementary school in Kendari City. Teachers with high motivation tend to be more creative, persistent, and consistent in carrying out their professional duties, including lesson planning, student assessment, and classroom management.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with Herzberg's (1959) Motivation Theory, which emphasizes that intrinsic motivators such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility can enhance job performance. Prior research also supports this finding; for example, a study published in the Undiksha E-Journal (2023) found that elementary school teachers' work motivation significantly influences their performance.

4.2.4 Work Motivation Mediates the Effect of Competence on Teacher Performance

The indirect effect analysis shows that competence has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance of elementary school in Kendari City when mediated by work motivation. This means that even though the direct effect of competence on motivation is not significant, work motivation still plays a partial mediating role that strengthens the relationship between teacher competence and performance.

From a theoretical perspective, the mediation concept introduced by Baron and Kenny (1986) states that a mediating variable explains the mechanism or process through which an independent variable affects a dependent variable. Previous research also found that work motivation mediates the relationship between competence and teacher performance. Thus, teacher competence can more effectively enhance performance when supported by strong work motivation (Putri, 2024).

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that: Teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of elementary school teachers in Kendari City. Teachers who possess strong pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies tend to demonstrate more optimal performance in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities.

The influence of teacher competence on work motivation is not directly significant, indicating that competence alone does not automatically enhance teachers' intrinsic motivation; external factors such as the school environment and reward systems also play a role in shaping motivation.

Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, suggesting that teachers who are internally motivated tend to be more creative, consistent, and productive in carrying out their professional duties. Work motivation partially mediates the effect of teacher competence on performance, implying that teacher competence can improve performance more effectively when supported by high levels of work motivation.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, several practical recommendations for improving the performance of elementary school teachers in Kendari City are as follows:

1. School principals and the Department of Education should design training programs, workshops, and continuous professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies.
2. School principals should establish reward systems, recognition programs, and career development opportunities to foster teachers' work motivation, thereby optimizing their performance.
3. Building a collaborative work culture, strengthening academic supervision support, and providing adequate learning facilities can enhance both competence and motivation, ultimately improving overall teacher performance.
4. Future research may include additional variables such as job satisfaction, workload, or organizational culture to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher performance.

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