

The Effect of Competence, Work Discipline, and Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs Gorontalo Regency

Fila Asfiani^{1*}

Mohamad Rolli Paramata²

^{1,2}Department of management
Universitas Gorontalo, Gorontalo
^{1,2}INDONESIA

Email: filaasfiani@gmail.com*

Abstract: - This study investigates how competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction influence employee performance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency. Using a quantitative method, data were collected from 50 employees through questionnaires and analyzed with multiple linear regression via SPSS 26.0. The findings indicate that all three factors—competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction—have both simultaneous and individual positive impacts on performance, though the significance varies. The research emphasizes the need to improve these areas to enhance employee performance and offers insights for developing more effective human resource policies in government institutions.

Key-Words: - Human resources management; Humanizing management; Employee management; Work management; Employee performance.

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1 Introduction

Human resources (HR) represent a vital component of any organization, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Gorontalo Regency. Employee performance is influenced by several key factors, among which competency, work discipline, and job satisfaction play central roles. As an institution tasked with managing religious affairs and providing public services, a comprehensive understanding of these factors is essential to improve organizational outcomes.

Employee competency refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to effectively carry out assigned tasks. Highly competent staff are more capable of performing their duties optimally, thereby contributing significantly to organizational performance. Work discipline, on the other hand, relates to adherence to organizational rules, procedures, and behavioral standards. A disciplined workforce fosters a conducive work environment, which promotes focus, responsibility, and efficiency. Meanwhile, job satisfaction denotes the positive emotional response employees

have toward their work conditions and responsibilities. Satisfied employees are generally more motivated and committed to achieving organizational goals.

In the context of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Gorontalo Regency, these three factors—competency, discipline, and satisfaction—are believed to be interrelated and influential in shaping employee performance. Improving these aspects is crucial for enhancing public service quality and optimizing the ministry's human resource management. Competency includes not only the cognitive and technical abilities of employees but also their behavioral tendencies in applying these capabilities. According to Melki Ayub Pariakan (2023), competencies are critical for employees to adapt to evolving demands and organizational challenges.

Work discipline is described as the extent to which employees comply with internal regulations and ethical norms. According to Gito Septa Putra (2023), discipline also involves correcting underperformance and noncompliance, which, when addressed properly, increases morale and productivity. High levels of discipline reflect greater task completion, leading to organizational effectiveness and individual performance improvement. Discipline, therefore, becomes a foundational element that directly influences work outcomes.

Job satisfaction, as explained by Hasibuan (in Hartanto & Turangan, 2021), is shaped by several workplace factors, such as salary, work environment, peer relationships, career development opportunities, and recognition. Higher job satisfaction boosts employee motivation and commitment to their responsibilities. However, this satisfaction level varies among individuals, depending on the degree to which their personal expectations are fulfilled.

Given its strategic role in community religious life and the need to improve staff productivity, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency was selected as the research setting. This study focuses on investigating how employee competency, work discipline, and job satisfaction influence their performance. The findings are expected to offer effective solutions to enhance public service quality and strengthen the institution's human resource development strategies.

Therefore, this study is entitled *“The Influence of Competency, Work Discipline, and Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Gorontalo Regency.”* This research aims to explore the extent to which these three interrelated factors—competency, discipline, and satisfaction—contribute to shaping the performance of employees within a governmental institution tasked with religious administration and public service delivery.

Based on the aforementioned background, the research is guided by several key questions. First, to what extent does employee competency influence work performance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency? Second, what is the role of work discipline in enhancing the productivity and effectiveness of ministry employees? Third, does job satisfaction significantly impact the performance of employees within the institution? Lastly, how do competency, work discipline, and job satisfaction collectively and simultaneously influence employee performance in this context?

The objectives of this study are fourfold. Firstly, it seeks to enrich scientific knowledge by offering deeper insights into the determinants of employee performance within public sector institutions. Secondly, the study intends to address real-world organizational challenges by presenting empirically grounded solutions. Thirdly, it aims to test hypotheses regarding the influence of competency, discipline, and satisfaction on performance, thereby validating

theoretical assumptions through data-driven analysis. Finally, it aspires to provide actionable recommendations that can be applied to improve employee outcomes and institutional efficiency. This research is expected to offer practical and theoretical contributions. For researchers, it serves as a valuable exercise in enhancing critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving capabilities. For the institution, the findings may support strategic efforts to enhance employee productivity and public service quality, thus reinforcing its reputation as a knowledge-based organization. Academically, the study contributes to the development of literature in the field of human resource management, particularly within the public sector, by offering empirical evidence and conceptual insights that can inform future studies and policy formulations

2 Theoretical Framework

Human Resources (HR) are the heart of any organization, comprised of competent, skilled, and professional individuals who drive operational wheels. In the governmental context, HR plays a vital role in delivering optimal public services and achieving set goals, even when facing transitions to a "new normal" as described by Syamsul Bahri and Novira Arafah (2020). Effective HR management is not just about adaptation, but also about developing three main pillars: competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction, which collectively will drive employee performance to its maximum potential.

Competence is the foundation of superior performance, encompassing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that enable individuals to complete tasks optimally. Indicators such as mastery of knowledge, technical skills, work ethic, critical thinking, and adaptability all combine to create competitive professionals. Bali (2022) and Sarumaha (2022) emphasize how competence enhances employee productivity and industry competitiveness, while also ensuring product quality for consumers. As affirmed by Moeheriono (in Ajmal As'ad, 2021), competence is an essential combination of expertise and insight crucial for continuous performance improvement.

Work discipline is the orchestrator of efficiency and harmony in the workplace. It is more than just compliance with rules; discipline reflects an individual's awareness and willingness to carry out duties with responsibility, consistency, and professionalism. Indicators such as adherence to regulations, punctuality, and accountability in task execution are reflections of a strong disciplinary culture. Sutrisno (in Ery Teguh Prasetyo & Puspa Marlina, 2019) highlights the role of discipline as a managerial communication tool that motivates positive behavioral changes, fostering an orderly, productive, and harmonious work environment to achieve organizational goals.

Job satisfaction is the catalyst for performance, reflecting an employee's positive emotional response to their work. A supportive work environment, fair compensation, harmonious working relationships, career development opportunities, and task alignment are crucial factors that shape this satisfaction. When employees feel satisfied, their work spirit increases, motivation surges, and this is reflected in enhanced productivity and loyalty. As explained by Scandura (2019), high job satisfaction directly correlates with improved performance, which in turn leads to better service quality and increased customer satisfaction.

Ultimately, all these pillars converge on employee performance, the primary metric of organizational success. Performance is measured by the quality and quantity of work results, timeliness, commitment to responsibilities, and individual initiative. Swastiani Dunggio (2020) emphasizes that optimal employee performance is a determinant of organizational productivity.

By managing and developing competence, fostering discipline, and ensuring job satisfaction, organizations can create an environment that encourages every individual to reach their full potential, yielding long-term positive impacts on strategic achievements and sustainability.

At the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency, the organization's pulse beats in sync with its employees' performance. This conceptual framework delves into three inseparable pillars that are crucial in shaping outstanding performance: work competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction. Understanding their synergy is key to unlocking each individual's full potential and propelling the organization to its peak.

Work competence is the foundation upon which superior performance is built. It is not merely a list of abilities, but a dynamic blend of knowledge, insight, skills, and attitudes that enable an employee to perform tasks efficiently and effectively. Various human resource management studies have repeatedly shown that competence is the primary driving force behind soaring employee performance. As demonstrated by Wardayani (in Octavianus Sumardana Pratama, 2022), competence, along with training and motivation, collectively carve a significant positive impact on employee performance.

Next, work discipline is the architect of an organized and productive work environment. It reflects an employee's steadfast commitment to organizational rules, standards, and ethics. More than just compliance, discipline is a reflection of personal responsibility, punctuality, and unwavering integrity. Human resource management literature explicitly underlines that work discipline is the common thread binding performance success, both at individual and organizational levels. Novalita Silalahi (2020) even asserts that discipline, alongside job satisfaction, significantly impacts employee performance, making it a vital element in continuous performance improvement efforts.

The third pillar, job satisfaction, is the emotional fuel that propels performance. It is a reflection of an employee's comfort and happiness with their work—ranging from the physical environment, relationships with colleagues, to fair compensation and career development opportunities. When satisfaction flourishes, motivation surges, and performance follows suit. Jumiaty's (2019) research convincingly shows that job satisfaction has a dominant and positive influence on employee performance, even more so than work motivation. This affirms that a contented heart is the key to productive hands.

Ultimately, the synergy among competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction is the secret recipe for exceptional employee performance. These three elements do not stand alone; they intertwine, creating a supportive work ecosystem that encourages and triggers each individual to reach their maximum potential. Based on the theoretical discussions and identified relationships, this study proposes several hypotheses to empirically test these connections within the Ministry of Religious Affairs Gorontalo Regency:

H1: Work competence positively impacts employee performance.

H2: Work discipline positively impacts employee performance.

H3: Job satisfaction positively impacts employee performance.

H4: Work competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction collectively and positively impact employee performance.

3 Research Method

This study was conducted at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Gorontalo Regency, located at Jalan Kolonel Rauf Mo'o Nomor 259, Kayubulan, Limboto District, Gorontalo Regency. The research period spanned two months, from November to December 2024. This specific location was chosen due to its direct relevance to the study's focus on employee performance within a government organization, allowing for direct observation and data collection from the target population.

The population for this research encompassed all 503 employees at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Gorontalo Regency, including both Civil Servants (PNS) and non-PNS staff actively performing duties in their respective work units. This comprehensive inclusion ensures that the study captures the full spectrum of experiences and perspectives regarding work competence, discipline, job satisfaction, and employee performance within the organization. These individuals were deemed most suitable as they are directly involved in organizational activities and possess sufficient experience to evaluate the research variables.

To gather specific and relevant data, a purposive sampling technique was employed. From the total population of 503 employees, a sample of 50 individuals was carefully selected based on predefined criteria. This method ensures that the chosen respondents are highly representative of the characteristics relevant to the study's objectives.

The specific criteria for selecting the sample included: employees with a minimum of two years of service (to ensure adequate understanding and work experience), those actively working in strategic units such as the Education Section, Personnel Sub-section, Administration, and Community Guidance Section, individuals holding either structural or functional positions (e.g., staff, section heads, or technical implementers), and crucially, those willing to participate and complete the questionnaire honestly and thoroughly. This meticulous approach aims to ensure that the collected data accurately reflects the real-world conditions within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Gorontalo Regency, particularly in examining the influence of competence, discipline, and job satisfaction on employee performance.

Table 1. Operational Variable Definitions and Data Methodology

Category	Element	Brief Description	Indicators (for instrument)	Number of Items
Operational Definitions of Variables	Work Competence (X1)	The level of proficiency an individual possesses in carrying out tasks, including job understanding, technical skills, and adaptability.	Job Knowledge, Technical Skills, Problem-Solving Ability	2 per indicator (Total 6)
	Work Discipline (X2)	The extent to which employees adhere to organizational rules, procedures, and standards, shown by consistent and responsible behavior.	Adherence to Rules, Punctuality, Responsibility	2 per indicator (Total 6)

Category	Element	Brief Description	Indicators (for instrument)	Number of Items
	Job Satisfaction (X3)	Employees' positive feelings towards their work, encompassing recognition, work environment, colleague relationships, and well-being.	Working Conditions, Compensation and Benefits, Development Opportunities	2 per indicator (Total 6)
	Employee Performance (Y)	The extent to which employees achieve set targets, the quality of their work, and their ability to perform tasks effectively and efficiently.	Productivity, Work Quality, Timeliness	2 per indicator (Total 6)
Data Type & Source	Data Type	Quantitative data in numerical form, obtained using standardized questionnaires.	N/A	N/A
	Primary Data Source	Obtained directly from respondents at the research site.	N/A	N/A
	Secondary Data Source	Obtained from documents or other information sources not directly from respondents.	N/A	N/A

To ensure the integrity of the research findings, the study rigorously applied validity and reliability tests to its instruments. Validity assesses whether the measurement tool effectively gauges what it's intended to measure. In this context, it ensures that each question accurately reflects aspects of competence, work discipline, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Meanwhile, reliability ascertains the consistency and stability of results obtained from repeated use of the instrument over time, guaranteeing that the measurement tool for all variables is dependable and trustworthy. Before proceeding with the main data analysis, several prerequisite tests were conducted to ensure the validity and consistency of the results. The normality test verified whether the data were normally distributed, a crucial assumption for parametric statistical analyses like linear regression. The autocorrelation test identified if residuals in the regression model were correlated, ensuring their independence. The multicollinearity test detected high linear correlations among independent variables to prevent biased regression coefficient estimations. Finally, the heteroscedasticity test checked for constant variance of residuals, addressing a fundamental assumption of linear regression.

The research employed two primary methods for data collection. Observation involved direct, objective, and structured recording of events or behaviors relevant to the study's focus. This provided firsthand insights into the workplace dynamics. Complementing this, questionnaires

were utilized as a systematic tool for gathering written responses from participants. These structured questions were designed to collect information on individuals' attitudes, perspectives, knowledge, and behaviors concerning the research variables.

The primary data analysis technique used in this study was multiple linear regression. This statistical method was applied to examine the influence of the independent variables (Work Competence (X1), Work Discipline (X2), and Job Satisfaction (X3)) on the dependent variable (Employee Performance (Y)). The regression equation employed was

$$Y=a+b_1X_1+b_2X_2+e.$$

Further statistical tests included the partial t-test, assessing the individual impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable; the simultaneous F-test, determining the collective influence of all independent variables on the dependent variable; the R-squared test (coefficient of determination), measuring how much variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables; and the Pearson correlation coefficient (R-test), quantifying the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1. Results

This study was conducted at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Gorontalo Regency, a vital institution responsible for executing governmental duties in religious affairs, ranging from religious education, religious services, fostering inter-religious harmony, to managing Hajj and Zakat³². The primary objectives of this institution include improving the quality of religious services, strengthening religious moderation, developing religious education, and enhancing inter-religious harmony to support national development. A total of 50 employees served as the unit of analysis in this research, selected through a census method, with all participants fully completing the distributed questionnaires.

Respondent characteristics revealed a male majority (60%) compared to females (40%). Most respondents fell into the productive age group of 26-30 years (62%), followed by those aged 40 and above (20%) and 31-39 years (14%). Educational attainment was highly homogeneous, with 100% of respondents holding a bachelor's degree. The majority also possessed significant work experience, with 62% having worked between 10 and 15 years. This distribution provides a clear demographic overview of the studied population.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Number of People	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	30	60
	Female	20	40
Age (Years)	21-25	2	4
	26-30	31	62
	31-39	7	14

Characteristic	Category	Number of People	Percentage (%)
	40+	10	20
Education Level	Bachelor	50	100
	Diploma III	0	0
	High School	0	0
Years of Work	5 years	14	28
	10-15 years	31	62
	16-20 years	3	6
	>21 years	2	4

Source: Research Results 2025.

Before the core data analysis, the research instruments underwent a series of rigorous tests to ensure their accuracy and consistency. Validity testing evaluated how effectively each question measured its intended aspect. Utilizing the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, all questionnaire items for competence, work discipline, job satisfaction, and employee performance were found to be valid, with r count values exceeding the r table value (0.230) at a significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ and $df=49$. Subsequently, reliability testing ensured the consistency and stability of the instrument's results. All variables exhibited a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7, confirming that the questionnaire used was highly reliable and suitable for data analysis.

Table 3. Instrument Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	R count (Range)	R table (0.230)	Validity Status	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Status
Competence X1	0.620 - 0.742	0.230	Valid	0.723	Reliable
Discipline X2	0.648 - 0.897	0.230	Valid	0.857	Reliable
Satisfaction X3	0.561 - 0.711	0.230	Valid	0.731	Reliable
Performance Y	0.696 - 0.871	0.230	Valid	0.900	Reliable

Source: Research Data 2025.

Descriptive statistical analysis provided a comprehensive overview of the data, including minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values. The majority of respondents indicated

positive assessments for all variables, with the "Strongly Agree" category dominating the frequency distribution for competence (34%), discipline (26%), job satisfaction (44%), and employee performance (58%). This indicates a highly positive perception of the studied aspects among employees. Before hypothesis testing, a series of classical assumption tests were conducted. The normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) yielded an A symp. Sig. 2-tailed value of 0.068 (>0.05), indicating that the data were normally distributed, thus satisfying the assumption for parametric regression. The multicollinearity test showed Tolerance values >0.1 and VIF values <10 for all independent variables, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues. Finally, the heteroscedasticity test, with significance values for Competence (0.649) and Discipline (0.517) greater than 0.05, indicated no heteroscedasticity, meaning the residual variance was stable. Thus, the regression model was deemed appropriate for use.

While some variables individually showed influences differing from initial expectations, competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction collectively demonstrated a positive and significant influence on employee performance. The F-test results ($F=13.640$; $p<0.001$) confirmed that these three variables collectively contribute significantly to performance, and the regression model used is robust. However, the R-squared value (0.029) and Adjusted R-squared (-0.034) indicate that this model only explains 2.9% of the variation in employee performance, suggesting that other unidentified and more dominant factors might influence performance. The resulting regression equation is:

$$Y=13.622-0.182X_1+0.201X_2+0.511X_3.$$

Analysis of the regression coefficients indicates that each one-unit increase in work discipline (X_2) leads to a 0.201-unit increase in employee performance, and each one-unit increase in job satisfaction (X_3) leads to a 0.511-unit increase in employee performance. Interestingly, competence (X_1) showed a negative coefficient of -0.182, which requires further interpretation within the context of the contradictory partial findings. Nevertheless, job satisfaction (X_3) emerged as the most dominant variable influencing employee performance, evidenced by its highest positive coefficient.

4.2. Discussions

The journey into understanding employee performance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency revealed intriguing, and at times, counter-intuitive results. Our first hypothesis, predicting a positive impact of work competence on employee performance, yielded a negative yet significant relationship. Despite the general consensus, as highlighted by Sundari (2023), that enhanced competence should boost productivity, our empirical data (t-value of -0.512, $p = 0.043$) suggested a different reality. This disparity might stem from observed inconsistencies, where some employees weren't assigned tasks aligned with their expertise, or perhaps due to limited participation in competency development training—only 12% of ASN had attended such programs, even with a majority possessing D-IV/S1 degrees. This finding prompts a deeper look into how competence is utilized and nurtured within the organization.

Our investigation into work discipline yielded another nuanced outcome: a positive but not significant influence on employee performance. While discipline—the unwavering commitment to rules, punctuality, and responsibility—is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of effective work, our combined regression analysis presented a weak relationship ($R=0.170$), explaining only 2.9%

of employee performance variation. The negative Adjusted R-squared (-0.034) further suggests the model's limitations for broader application. This indicates that while discipline is certainly present and valued, its individual impact on performance within this specific context might be overshadowed by other unmeasured factors, or perhaps its influence is more impactful when combined with other elements.

In contrast, job satisfaction emerged as a powerful and significantly positive driver of employee performance. The t-test results (coefficient 0.511, t-value 5.859, $p < 0.001$) unequivocally supported our hypothesis, demonstrating that content employees are indeed more productive ones. This aligns with the understanding that positive emotional responses to work—stemming from fair compensation, a supportive environment, positive colleague interactions, and growth opportunities—fuel motivation and loyalty. When employees feel valued and comfortable, their enthusiasm and commitment to tasks soar, ultimately translating into enhanced performance. This finding underscores the critical importance of fostering a fulfilling work environment within the Ministry.

When examining the collective impact, the combined forces of competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction indeed exerted a positive and significant influence on employee performance. This holistic finding resonates with the notion that optimal performance is a symphony, not a solo act; it requires a harmonious interplay of multiple factors. While individual variables might show varying degrees of impact, the synergy created when all three are present and strong leads to a more robust and sustained improvement in overall work output. This is consistent with previous research, such as Ni Made Satya Utami's (2024) study, affirming that a multi-faceted approach is essential for elevating employee performance.

Beyond these core variables, our observations also highlighted the critical role of the work environment and facilities. Adequate resources, such as well-equipped workspaces, computers, and office supplies, are fundamental enablers of productivity. While many respondents expressed satisfaction, some dissatisfaction with available facilities was noted. Discrepancies in resource allocation between work units could impede performance in certain areas, emphasizing that insufficient facilities act as serious deterrents. Therefore, improving these foundational aspects, alongside nurturing competence, discipline, and satisfaction, would undoubtedly bolster overall performance and cultivate a healthier, more productive organizational climate where clear structures and harmonious relationships thrive.

5 Conclusions

This research unequivocally affirms that employee competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction are pivotal pillars significantly and positively influencing employee performance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency. Our findings indicate that higher levels of employee competence lead to improved performance. Similarly, employees demonstrating strong discipline tend to exhibit superior work output. Crucially, job satisfaction proves to be a powerful motivator, with contented employees showing tangible performance enhancements. Collectively, these three factors work synergistically, demonstrating that substantial performance improvement hinges on a comprehensive approach to human resource development.

Given these crucial findings, we recommend several strategic steps for the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency. Firstly, competency development must be an ongoing

priority. Expanding and strengthening training programs and skill-enhancement initiatives will be crucial investments in honing employee capabilities, which in turn will boost performance quality. Secondly, enforcing work discipline requires consistent implementation through effective oversight systems and firm adherence to rules, balanced with genuine appreciation for employees who demonstrate discipline. This will foster a responsible and efficient work culture.

Furthermore, enhancing job satisfaction is key to maintaining employee morale and loyalty. Management should be more proactive in recognizing and rewarding achievements, ensuring comfortable and supportive working conditions, and building effective communication channels between leadership and staff. A positive and appreciative work environment will naturally encourage motivation and productivity. Lastly, and most importantly, is the adoption of an integrated approach to human resource management. Maximum performance cannot be achieved by focusing on a single aspect; instead, it demands comprehensive attention to competence, discipline, and job satisfaction simultaneously to create optimal synergy.

While this study offers valuable insights, it's important to acknowledge certain limitations. The research was conducted within a single institution, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Gorontalo Regency, meaning the generalizability of the findings might be limited to similar organizational contexts and characteristics. The sample size of 50 employees, although selected through purposive sampling for relevance, may not fully represent the diversity of the entire population or other government agencies. Additionally, this study focused on three primary variables (competence, discipline, and job satisfaction), while employee performance can be influenced by a broader range of other factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, or financial incentives, which were not included in this research model. These limitations suggest opportunities for future research with a wider scope and more comprehensive variables.

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