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The Nexus of Teamwork, Communication Competence, and Employee Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Competence

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This paper aims to explore how employee performance is impacted by factors such as teamwork, communication competence, and employee competence in several countries and industries. Currently, there is no existing literature that acknowledges aspects related to teamwork, communication competence, and employee competence impact on employee performance within the context of a Indonesian public service organization.

Design/Methodology/Approach – The study employs a quantitative method using a path analysis model. This study involved the analysis of data from 205 employees working in a public service organization. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire items are conducted via Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) analysis, and the related hypotheses are tested using the path analysis model.

Findings – The results showed the positive impact of teamwork, communication competence, and employee competence on employee performance. Additionally, employee competence mediated the influences of teamwork and employee performance. Also, employee competence mediated the impacts of communication competence and employee performance.

Research Implications – The research was conducted within a specific Indonesian public service organization, making it challenging to apply the findings universally across various sectors and international contexts. The results of the research hold the promise to assist leaders within public service organizations in creating approaches that enhance the skills of employees. This involves designing impactful human resource development initiatives and boosting the employee capacity to reach the organization's intended aims and objectives. The study is new in its effort to bring together four frameworks to create a novel performance model explaining the importance of teamwork and communication competence with employee competence and employee performance.

Keywords: communication competence, employee competence, employee performance, teamwork

JEL Classifications: J81, M12, M21

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I. Introduction

Communication competence leads to performance among public service employees (Yu & Ko, 2017). Ismanto et al. (2021) stated that low communication competence is the cause of inadequate communication skills, reduced employee responsiveness, and subpar online services among public service employees. Furthermore, public service employees acknowledge that communication is the most challenging task, underscoring the necessity of ensuring that all employees possess adequate communication competencies (Ismanto et al., 2021).

Communication competence has been confirmed as a valuable source for enhancing public service within public organizations (Steele & Plenty, 2015). Studies concerning communication competence among employees have investigated its relevance to employee competence and performance (Steele & Plenty, 2015), as well as teamwork (Potnuru et al., 2019). Overall, research findings indicate that communication competence plays an important role for employees.

In addition to communication competence, other important factors influencing employee performance are teamwork and employee competence. Teamwork refers to shared strategies of thinking and behavior utilized collectively to enhance collaboration, emphasizing autonomy as a fundamental human trait. The aim of teamwork is to improve service to the community within public organizations. Teamwork approaches should prioritize team efforts over individual work, be based on equality aspects, and involve participation from all organizational members (Potnuru et al., 2019).

The significance of this research focuses on enhancing employee performance for the benefit of public services. Specifically, this study examines the impacts of teamwork and communication competence on employee competence, which, in turn, affect employee performance. The influences of teamwork, communication competence, and employee competence on employee performance

are also be elucidated. Employees with low levels of communication competence tend to exhibit low employee competence, resulting in subpar job performance (Yu & Ko, 2017).

The impact of teamwork on performance tends to be stronger when it is supported by high employee competence. Meanwhile, employees with high levels of employee competence tend to experience a heightened relationship between teamwork, communication competence, and employee performance. Thus, situations in which the effects of teamwork and communication competence on employee performance are mediated by employee competence will be analyzed. This analysis will enrich the existing literature on teamwork and communication competence by shedding light on how both factors can enhance job performance.

Despite existing confirmations of the relationship between teamwork and organizational outcomes (Salas et al., 2015), as well as the relationship between communication competence and performance (Yu & Ko, 2017), there has been no confirmation regarding the mediating role of employee competence in the relationship between teamwork, communication competence, and employee performance. Therefore, this research aims to investigate correlations among teamwork, communication competence, and job performance in employees working in public services.

Building upon previous studies that discussed employee competence as a mediator between teamwork and communication competence, this research contributes to the existing knowledge by considering the role of employee competence as a mediator. By deepening the understanding of the interaction among teamwork, communication competence, and employee performance, the findings of this study may provide valuable insights for public services regarding the reasons behind employee actions. Ultimately, these insights could assist in making strategic decisions in the field of human resource management.

The present research combines ideas from the resource-based view introduced by Barney (2018), along with the perspective of competence. This

combination establishes a robust theoretical basis for investigating how teamwork, communication competence, and employee competencies influence employee performance. Through empirical evidence, this study addresses gaps in knowledge related to the impact of teamwork, communication competence, and employee competencies on employee performance. Despite the importance of teamwork, communication competence, and employee competence, most existing literature focuses on theoretical aspects and considers commitment, productivity, and satisfaction the primary outcomes (Arunachalam & Palanichamy, 2017; Potnuru et al., 2019; San-Valero et al., 2019). Only a limited number of studies have explored how employee competencies, such as commitment, engagement, and satisfaction, mediate these relationships (Huang et al., 2018; Rai & Maheshwari, 2021). Therefore, the significance of this study lies in empirically confirming the role of employee competence in mediating the connections among teamwork, communication competence, and employee performance.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the relationships among teamwork, communication competence, employee competence, and employee performance. More specifically, this research will investigate the influence of teamwork and communication competence on employee competence, while also determining the mediating impact of communication competence on the relationship between teamwork and employee competence.

II Literature Review

1. Teamwork and Employee Performance

Potnuru et al. (2019) provided the definition of “teamwork” as “the ability of an individual to develop, support, and lead a team to achieve goals”. It represents the demonstration of required behaviors and a positive mindset among team members, which is essential for realizing both personal and organizational aims. According

to Marcus and Le (2013), teamwork entails collaborative efforts, information sharing, and improved resource allocation, leading to the enhancement of employee performance. It fosters cooperative and effective teams, facilitates the attainment of group objectives, enhances quality, increases team involvement, and improves overall organizational efficacy. In recent years, the significance of teamwork has garnered substantial attention within various organizations, prompting them to devise strategies aimed at fostering and nurturing employee collaborative abilities. This ultimately contributes to heightened and sustained organizational growth. Consequently, the hypothesis below is posited.

H1: Teamwork influences employee performance.

2. Communication Competence and Employee Performance

Communication competence refers to “the ability to select from available communicative behaviors to achieve one’s own interpersonal goals during an interaction while upholding the dignity and reputation of fellow participants within the contextual boundaries” (Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016). Communication competence encompasses attributes that encompass individual knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required for the effective “sharing of information, ideas, thoughts, and emotions with others” (Robbins & Judge, 2022). To possess communicative competence, an individual needs to effectively employ communicative tools like language, tone, and gestures in suitable ways (Boyd, 1991). This involves active listening, clear and concise expression, prompt sharing, and response to information (Ewing et al., 2019). Communication competence plays a pivotal role in fostering productive and collaborative team formation, enhancing employee performance, mitigating conflicts within organizations, promoting employee engagement (Elbaz et al., 2018), and bolstering employee productivity, job satisfaction, and organization commitment (Oluwatomilola,

2016). Consequently, this leads to enhanced employee performance. As a result, we posit the following hypothesis.

H2: Communication competence impacts employee performance.

3. Employee Competencies and Employee Performance

Salman et al. (2020a) defined Employee Competence as the “ability to adjust to change, readiness to learn, readiness to develop oneself, readiness and ability to initiate action, trust, endurance, receptiveness, broad-mindedness, self-discipline, self-esteem, individuality, and self-determination”. It encompasses a spectrum of knowledge, skills, and abilities used to identify personal strengths and weaknesses, evaluate personal and professional goals, manage oneself during stressful situations, and comprehend and address work-related motivations and emotions (Elbaz et al., 2018). It is contended that “self-competence augments employees’ capabilities, efficiency, performance, success, and adaptability in stressful situations” (Salman et al., 2020b). Research indicates that self-competence holds a significant and positive correlation with organizational commitment (Cetin et al., 2015) and job satisfaction (Bhagat & Allie, 1989), thus leading to enhanced employee performance. Essentially, employee competence stands as an important determinant of employee performance levels, thereby aiding organizations in successfully attaining objectives and achieving superior performance (Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016). Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis.

H3: Employee competence influences employee performance.

4. Teamwork and Employee Competence

Teamwork is not only the cornerstone of successful management but also an important tool for enhancing employee competence as a whole.

Hanaysha (2016) revealed that teamwork increased employee competence and drove higher levels of employee performance. Through teamwork, each employee has a chance to share professional approaches to specific tasks with colleagues. Within a team environment, employees can exchange knowledge and learn from one another, thereby enhancing employee competence and overall team performance. Consequently, we believe that by embracing collaboration among team members, the prospects for collective learning and improving employee competence will be significantly amplified. Previous research has confirmed that teamwork has a positive impact on employee competence and job performance (Senen et al., 2017). Furthermore, Senen et al. (2017) asserted that effective teamwork activities can lead to increased employee competence and higher job performance. Accordingly, we propose the hypothesis below.

H4: There is a significant impact of teamwork on employee competence.

5. Communication Competence and Employee Competence

Communication competence refers to an individual’s skills in effectively communicating, including the ability to convey information clearly, listen attentively, and interact with others productively (Salman et al., 2020a). On the other hand, employee competence pertains to the combination of skills, character, quality, capacity, and capability that support job performance and organizational outcomes (Abas & Imam, 2016). Several prior studies have explored the relationship between communication competence and employee competence (He et al. 2019; Mikkelsen et al. 2015; Steele & Plenty, 2015). found that high communication competence enhanced employee performance by facilitating effective information sharing and team collaboration. Additionally, Alsabbah & Izwar Ibrahim (2013) affirmed that employee competence encompasses aspects relevant to communication competence,

such as the ability to interact with colleagues and convey ideas clearly. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis.

H5: Teamwork has a significant impact on employee competence.

6. Employee Competence as Mediator

Mishra (2014) argued that employee consist of groups of individuals that are interdependent in performing tasks and share responsibility for the outcomes. Teams enable individuals to collaborate, enhance personal skills, and provide constructive feedback without interpersonal conflicts (Aga et al., 2016). Teamwork plays a significant role in ensuring the smooth functioning of an organization. Given the increasing complexity of most organizational activities due to technological advancements, teamwork has become a primary focus for many organizations. Participation in teams offers members the opportunity to improve skills, knowledge, and abilities, ultimately positively impacting employee performance (Mishra, 2014).

Organizations that emphasize teamwork tend to achieve enhanced employee performance, higher productivity, and improved problem-solving abilities in the workplace (Mishra, 2014). Bacon and Blyton (2006) underscored two important factors: self-management within teams and interpersonal team skills. These factors enhance communication and interpersonal relationships among team members, thereby contributing to employee performance. Teamwork serves as a vital tool in the structure of the modern organization, providing a relevant measure that exhibits various features across different types of organizations, including nonprofit entities. A research study concluded that effective managers entrust responsibilities to employees in the form of groups or teams to maximize employee efforts (DeRosa et al., 2004). Another study affirms that enabling the design of team development systems within each organization is a step toward promoting and disseminating best practices while optimizing

outcomes. The primary focus in designing and implementing such systems ultimately resides in enhancing employee learning (Carvalho, 2016). DeRosa et al. (2004) posited that teamwork is a potential strategy for improving individual and organizational performance, yet it requires continuous nurturing over time. Organizations must formulate strategies to enhance performance in an increasingly competitive environment. Top managers need to have a vision to introduce team-based activities within the organization, possess the sensitivity to sustain such initiatives, and exhibit the courage to grant teams a pivotal role in decision-making. O'Neill and Salas (2018) asserted that teams offer opportunities for participation, challenges, and greater senses of accomplishment.

Employees require supervisors to guide them in setting objectives for communication, enabling them to effectively complete tasks in the workplace (Ewing et al., 2019). When supervisors clearly communicate expectations, goals, and procedures, employees become better equipped to carry out job-related tasks (Hynes, 2012; Mikkelsen et al., 2015). Effective communication from supervisors assists employees in enhancing their job skills, thereby establishing a positive correlation between effective communication and employee competence (Mikkelsen et al., 2021).

Similarly, employees need to possess competencies to concentrate on their tasks, ensuring successful task completion. Employee focus on these tasks aids in achieving predefined goals and contributes to personal competency enhancement (Yukl & Gardner, 2019). Employees concentrating on tasks tend to elevate their performance and contribute to accomplishing job-related goals; thus, the competency of task-oriented employees should also exhibit a positive correlation with employee performance.

H6: Employee Competence mediates the relationship between teamwork and employee performance.

H7: Employee Competence mediates the relationship between communication competence and employee performance

III. Research Methodology

1. Data Collection

For this study, data were gathered using a 25-item questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Part 1 contained five questions related to participant backgrounds, while Part 2 consisted of 20 questions focusing on functionality at the organizational level. In Part 2, participants were asked to rate teamwork, communication competence, employee competence, and employee performance using a Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The survey was administered online via Google Drive, with a total of 205 participants completing it.

2. Study Participants

Participants for this study were selected via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a suitable method for sensitive studies wherein participant identities need protection (Berndt, 2020). Due to the sensitive nature of the study, which involved participants rating their current or well-known organizations, the researcher used snowball sampling to minimize risks. A few individuals were initially recruited from various public organizations across Indonesia, who then invited others, creating a snowball effect. Participant background information was used to

filter the responses. Among the 205 respondents, 55.61 percent were male and 44.39 percent were female. Participant education levels varied, with 5.37 percent holding doctoral degrees, 15.61 percent having Master’s degrees, 34.15 percent completing undergraduate degrees, and around 44.88 percent having associate degrees or some college coursework. Years of work experience also varied, with 34.15 percent having over 20 years of experience, 14.15 percent having 10 to 19 years, 44.39 percent having 5 to 9 years, and the remaining 7.32 percent having 4 years or less.

3. Data Analysis

The data were subjected to analysis using SPSS Version 23. The analytical process for this study involved several sequential steps. First, a multiple-factor analysis was performed to condense the extensive item list and generate a more manageable set of variables for further analysis. Subsequently, the original set of 20 items categorized into four variables (Teamwork, Communication Competence, Employee Competence, and Employee Performance) was tested to determine reliability using factor analysis and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sample adequacy. Additionally, the reliability of the identified factors was evaluated through Cronbach’s α . After organizing the data for analysis, a series of multiple regression analyses were performed. The findings from each of these analyses are shown below.

Table 1. Variable Factorability

Variable	KMO
Teamwork	0.74*
Communication Competence	0.79*
Employee Competence	0.87*
Employee Performance	0.76*

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$.

Based on Table 1, the four variables show KMO levels ranging from 0.74 to 0.87. Variables with a KMO level above 0.5 are generally considered factorable. Once factorability was confirmed, principal component analyses were carried out for each of the four variables, resulting in the formation of four variables: Teamwork, Communication Competence, Employee Competence, and Employee Performance. Each

variable required a minimum inclusion coefficient of 0.63, in line with the rule of thumb presented by Comrey and Lee (1992). The guideline indicates excellent consistency at ≥ 0.7 , very good at ≥ 0.63 , good at ≥ 0.55 , and fair at ≥ 0.45 .

As depicted in Table 2, all variables exhibited α levels of ≥ 0.80 , indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the items within each variable.

Table 2. Reliability Results

Variable	α
Teamwork	0.74*
Communication Competence	0.79*
Employee Competence	0.87*
Employee Performance	0.76*

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$.

Path analysis was employed to gauge the extent of association between exogenous variables (EXs) and endogenous variables (EDs). This method reveals the orientation, connection, and degree of influence that variables exert within a model. One approach to conducting path analysis involves a series of multiple regression procedures. The coefficients derived from multiple regression analyses serve as path coefficients, wherein the standardized β score indicates the magnitude of the impact of EXs on ED.

agree” (5). Utilizing stepwise multiple regression, two out of the three EXs were retained, yielding Model II, wherein Teamwork and Communication Competence demonstrated direct and significant influences on the ED, Employee Competence. The research found that teamwork, communication competence, and employee competence play a significant role in enhancing employee performance. Furthermore, the results confirm that employee competence also has a role in mediating the aforementioned relationships. Detailed insights into these findings are elaborated below.

IV. Results and Discussion

In the first model, the EXs comprised three variables: Teamwork, Communication Competence, and Employee Competence. The ED for this initial regression was employee performance, encompassing all survey instrument items. Participants assigned ratings to their respective organizations using a 5-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly

1. Results

To assess the indirect effects of the remaining two EXs (Teamwork and Communication Competence) on Employee Performance through the mediator of Employee Competence, a sequence of multiple regression analyses was conducted. Table 3 provides an overview of EDs and EXs for each regression analysis, along with the associated R^2 and standardized β statistics.

Table 3. Regression Model Results

Model	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	β	R ²	Sig.
I	Teamwork	Employee Performance	0.519	0.712	0.000
	Communication Competence		0.174		0.035
	Employee Competence		0.245		0.002
II	Teamwork	Employee Competence	0.462	0.494	0.000
	Communication Competence		0.295		0.005

According to Model I in Table 3, approximately 71.20% of the variance in Employee Performance (EP) can be accounted for by the interplay among Teamwork (T), Communication Competence (CC), and Employee Competence (EC). In Model II, Teamwork and Communication Competence collectively explained 49.40% of the variance in

Employee Competence.

Direct and indirect influences of EXs on each ED are illustrated in Figure 1 through a path model coefficient diagram and path structure. Fig. 1 visually represents the employee performance model derived from this study, while Fig. 2 elucidates the process of path structure.

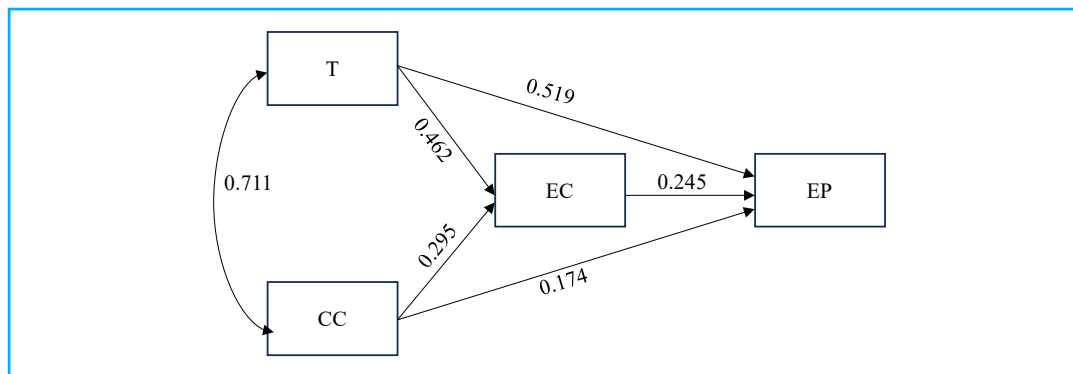
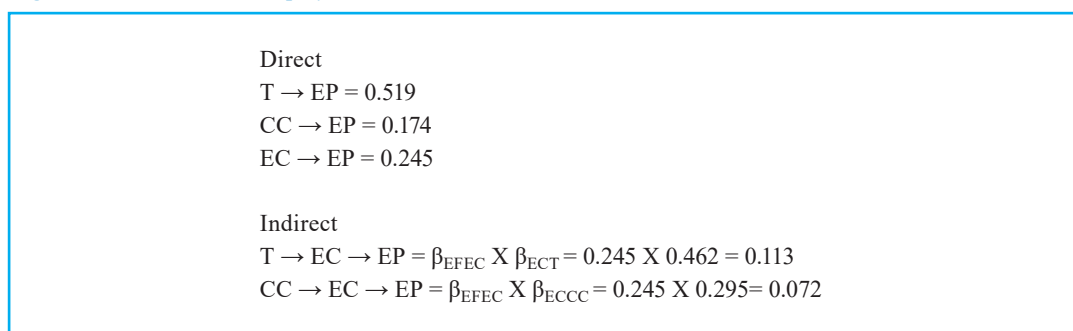
Fig. 1. Path Model of Employee Performance**Fig. 2.** Path Structure of Employee Performance

Table 4 outlines the immediate and indirect impacts of each EX on employee performance. Consequently, Teamwork, Communication Competence, and Employee Competence emerged as the three of variables exerting direct influence on employee performance, with corresponding

β values of 0.519, 0.174, and 0.245, respectively. Likewise, Teamwork and Communication Competence were identified as the two variables with a direct impact on Employee Competence, with β values of 0.462 and 0.295, respectively.

Table 4. Path Analysis Results

Variable	Effect		Total
	Direct	Indirect	
Teamwork	0.519	0.113	0.632
Communication Competence	0.174	0.072	0.246
Employee Competence	0.245	-	0.245

Moreover, Teamwork and Communication Competence exerted indirect effects on employee performance through Employee Competence, with combined β values of 0.365 and 0.247, respectively.

2. Discussion

The results of the data analysis suggest that three variables related to individual and group organizational behavior levels, which were obtained through factor analysis (Teamwork, Communication Competence, and Employee Competence), showed significant impacts on Employee Performance. These variables were used to develop a model for Employee Performance, wherein the degree of influence that each variable has on Employee Performance varied.

The initial finding highlighted that variables related to Employee Competence had direct effects on employee performance. This finding aligns with various studies in the field of public services that focus on employees. Scholars like Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Abas and Imam (2016) emphasized the favorable contributions of a competent employee to overall employee performance. The concept of Employee Competence is often described using the term

“communities of professionals”, which signifies interactions among public service staff aimed at delivering exceptional service to positively influence public outcomes, a widely accepted measure of effectiveness in public service organizations. Furthermore, the positive influence of Employee Competence on Employee Performance identified in this study corroborates the findings from previous investigations on public service personnel. For instance, Yang et al. (2016) and Almusaddar et al. (2014) found a statistically significant and positive correlation between Employee Competence and achievements in public services. Similarly, Demircioglu and Audretsch (2017) argued that they were unable to find any instances where public service organizations improved service achievements without the presence of Employee Competence. Vathanophas (2007) additionally emphasized that the impact of Employee Competence on public service is the second most important variable, ranking just after procedural guidance. In line with these findings, our study found a comparable result, indicating that Employee Competence stands as the second most important variable affecting employee performance.

In this study, we identified direct impacts of Teamwork and Communication Competence on employee performance, contributing indirectly to the overall model. Similarly, we observed that Teamwork and Communication Competence indirectly influence employee performance through employee competence. Previous studies examining the effects of Teamwork and Communication Competence align with the findings of this investigation (Jakobsen et al., 2023; Redmond, 2013; Yu & Ko, 2017). Likewise, Communication Competence establishes the pathways by which tasks are achieved. Effective public service organizations have pre-established frameworks, activities, and operations that guarantee the streamlined fulfillment of task and obligations (Hanaysha, 2016; Jałocha et al., 2014; Potnuru et al., 2019). In the absence of consistently dependable approaches for carrying out public service functions, inefficiency can compromise the effectiveness of employee communication.

It is important to acknowledge that path analysis studies inherently rely on assumptions provided by scholars. In the context of this study, the assumptions encompass three core elements within organizations: Teamwork, Communication Competence, and Employee Competence, all of which contribute to Employee Performance. The study considers both individual and group levels within organizational behavior. Additionally, the study posits a cause-and-effect relationship between Teamwork, Communication Competence, Employee Competence, and Employee Performance. Furthermore, it's worth noting that future studies employing different variables and alternative assumptions may not necessarily yield identical outcomes. This model can serve as a starting point for further research, and its effectiveness can be enhanced by building upon the assumptions and variables integrated within this model.

V. Conclusion

The results of this study offer valuable

theoretical insights in several ways. First, it deepens the understanding of how teamwork and communication competence impact employee performance, with employee competence playing a mediating role. The findings affirm that when employees possess positive competencies, the connection between teamwork and communication competence becomes stronger. Creating a work environment that supports continuous employee development and fostering the acquisition of new knowledge and skills can enhance the relationship between teamwork and communication skills. This study supports the idea that positive employee competence amplifies the impact of teamwork on employee competency. Furthermore, by demonstrating that employee competence serves as a mediator between teamwork, communication skills, and employee performance, this study contributes to the resource-based view, particularly from a contingency standpoint. Additionally, it extends the applicability of these concepts (teamwork, communication competence, and employee competence) to a novel context, specifically, the emerging economy of Indonesia. It highlights that in such dynamic and uncertain environments, implementing teamwork and communication competence can enhance employee performance by elevating employee competency levels.

According to Barney (2018), there is widespread agreement today that an important factor for organizations to gain a competitive edge is the capacity to adapt and respond effectively to challenges arising from both internal operations and external surroundings. It is clear that significant emphasis should be placed on nurturing employee competence to improve performance, ultimately leading to the creation of a competitive advantage and increased organizational effectiveness. The paper's findings also provide recommendations for managers striving for success. To begin, based on the results of mediated path analysis, managers should acknowledge that merely promoting teamwork and communication competence is insufficient. The organization must take responsibility for fostering employee

competence to enhance employee performance. Firstly, based on the findings of mediated path analysis, managers should acknowledge that merely offering teamwork and communication competence is insufficient. It becomes the organization's responsibility to increase employee competence in order to improve employee performance.

Secondly, organizations must capitalize on employee competence by emphasizing the significance of managers and their attitudes in effectively implementing conditions for employee competence within the organization. This highlights that managers play a crucial role in fostering employee competence within the organization, and this can be accomplished by integrating the attributes of employee competence in a manner that makes competence development the primary driver of employee proficiency (Salman et al., 2020a).

Thirdly, the clear implication from the study's findings is that employee competence is the primary and most important factor within any business process aimed at enhancing employee performance. Consequently, managers that aspire to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in

operations should prioritize employees, aligning with the viewpoint expressed by Jakobsen et al. (2023).

The study has certain limitations; however, these limitations present opportunities for future research. We collected data at a specific point in time, employing a cross-sectional study design. This approach may raise questions about the establishment of causation between variables. We recommend that future researchers consider conducting a longitudinal study to address potential causality concerns. Additionally, our study predominantly relied on subjective opinions collected from employees through surveys. While Salman et al. (2020a) suggested that subjective assessments obtained through multi-item scales typically align with objective measures, there may still be disparities between perceptions and objective data. Future investigations could delve deeper into this aspect by incorporating objective measures. Lastly, it is worth noting that our study focused on Indonesian public service organizations, so it is advisable to exercise caution when extrapolating our findings to a broader range of sectors and global contexts.

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