

The Influence of Competence on Employee Performance Moderated by Innovation: A Case Study at The Semarang Regency BKUD Office

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Abstract. *This study was conducted to evaluate the extent to which competence influences employee performance, with innovation positioned as a moderating variable, in the context of the Semarang Regency BKUD Office. Competence is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that play a role in achieving optimal performance. Innovation is considered capable of strengthening the influence of competence by presenting new ideas in work implementation. This study adopted a quantitative approach through a survey method, with data collection conducted using questionnaires distributed to employees of the relevant agency. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques processed by SmartPLS version 4 software, to examine the direct influence and interactions between variables in the model. The findings indicate that competence has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. Innovation also contributes to improved performance. However, innovation does not function as a moderating variable in the relationship between competence and performance. This indicates that the form of innovation implemented, namely in the service system, is not yet on target. Increasing innovation should be focused on developing individual employee capacity, for example through training programs, rather than solely through service system updates.*

Keywords: *BKUD Semarang Regency; Competence; Employee Performance; Innovation.*

1. Introduction

The Regional Finance Agency (BKUD) is crucial for financial management at the regional level, for provincial, district, and city governments. The BKUD is responsible for planning, managing, and overseeing the use of regional budgets to support regional development and improve the community's standard of living. The BKUD plays a crucial role in ensuring that

regional finances are properly managed, transparent, and accountable, thus supporting increased regional development and strengthening community welfare. With sound financial management, local governments can provide much-needed public facilities, infrastructure, and other services.

For example, the Semarang Regency Regional Public Service Agency (BKUD) office is responsible for planning, managing, and overseeing the use of regional budgets. However, recently, there has been a surge of public criticism in the form of WhatsApp messages sent to current and former (retired) employees of the Semarang Regency BKUD office. Furthermore, criticism has also come from Google reviews of services at the Semarang Regency BKUD office. The following table details the contents of Google Maps reviews related to services at the Semarang Regency BKUD office:

Table Details of Public Criticism

Rating	Amount	Details of the review content	Summary
1 star	33	Unfriendly service, complicated and long process, incompetent staff	1, 2 and 3 stars total reviews there are 40 reviews saying that the service is not friendly, the process is complicated and takes a long time, the officers are incompetent and work slowly so that people's problems are not resolved.
2 stars	2	The officer is working slowly	
3 stars	5	The embezzlement problem remains unresolved	
4 stars	21	Strategic location, close to large mosque, small office	Of the 69 reviews, few mentioned friendly service, instead focusing on the strategic location of the office and reviews that were not related to the service provided.
5 stars	48	Friendly service, strategic location and reviews not related to service	

Based on the table above, of the total 109 reviews, although the majority (69 reviews) gave 4 and 5 stars, these reviews were not related to the good or bad service of the Semarang Regency BKUD office. Meanwhile, the 40 reviews consisting of 1, 2, and 3 stars almost all gave reviews that the service from the Semarang Regency BKUD office was poor, seen from unfriendly service, incompetent staff, complicated service processes and others. This finding phenomenon provides encouragement for further research that focuses on the quality of service provided by the employees of the Semarang Regency BKUD Office.

Given the numerous criticisms, this is likely due to unsatisfactory service from employees to the public as consumers who use the services of the Semarang Regency BKUD Office. This poor service is usually caused by poor employee performance. The main focus lies on the individual's ability to work independently, identify and resolve problems that arise, and ensure that established deadlines are met properly.(Rozi et al., 2024).

This suggests that criticism is likely due to poor employee performance. Employee performance will improve if several factors are met, such as the office having employees with adequate competencies.(Krisnawati & Bagia, 2021). Competence as an intrinsic factor, where competence itself is defined as the expertise that an employee has, which includes various aspects, including skills, knowledge, and educational background.(Rakhmalina, 2021).

Then, other research related to competency being able to influence employee performance is supported by previous research, namely Komalasari et al., (2024); Rozi et al., (2024) However, other studies show that competence does not affect employee performance. (Rachman & Widiartanto, 2020). The inconsistency of these results is an interesting thing for researchers to investigate further.

In an era of increasingly fierce global competition, organizations require human resources who are not only technically skilled but also able to adapt to change. Employee competency encompasses knowledge, skills, and work attitudes, which are key factors in supporting optimal performance. (Krisnawati & Bagia, 2021) Organizations with competent employees tend to be more effective in achieving their strategic goals because each individual can carry out their duties professionally and efficiently. Therefore, competence is a crucial element in human resource management.

However, competence alone does not guarantee high performance without the ability to innovate. In a dynamic work environment, innovation is a crucial element in maintaining an organization's competitive advantage. Innovation enables employees to find new ways to complete tasks, solve problems, and improve work processes. Thus, innovation can act as a moderating factor in the relationship between competence and performance, strengthening or weakening the influence of competence on employee performance.

Research that discusses the relationship between innovation and employee performance with significant positive results was conducted by Asensoreta & Permoni (2023), with a case study at PT Telkom Akses Area Singaraja. However, other studies have produced inconsistent findings, where innovation did not significantly affect employee performance in the case study at the Tual City Personnel and Development Agency. (Matdoan et al., 2024) These inconsistent results have attracted researchers to explore further with other samples or cases.

Based on this, it is important to further examine how competency influences employee performance, as well as the extent to which innovation plays a role in strengthening this relationship. This research aims to contribute to the development of human resource management theory and serve as a practical reference for organizations in improving employee performance by strengthening competency and creating an innovative culture in the workplace.

2. Research Methods

This study was conducted using quantitative methods as the basis for analysis, grounded in statistical data. The approach used in this research was aimed at responding to the predetermined problem formulation. In this study, the researcher conducted accurate measurements of the variables involved. The goal was to obtain conclusions that could serve as research findings relevant to the case study discussed.

The quantitative approach is a research method based on the philosophy of positivism and is generally applied to study a particular population or sample. (Sugiyono, 2016) Sampling

techniques typically involve random sampling or specific sampling methods. Data collection is carried out using specialized measuring instruments, and the results are analyzed statistically to verify the initial assumptions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Respondent Demographic Analysis

Respondent demographic analysis was grouped according to several criteria. The authors used criteria based on gender, age, length of service, and monthly income. The following table presents the demographic analysis based on these criteria:

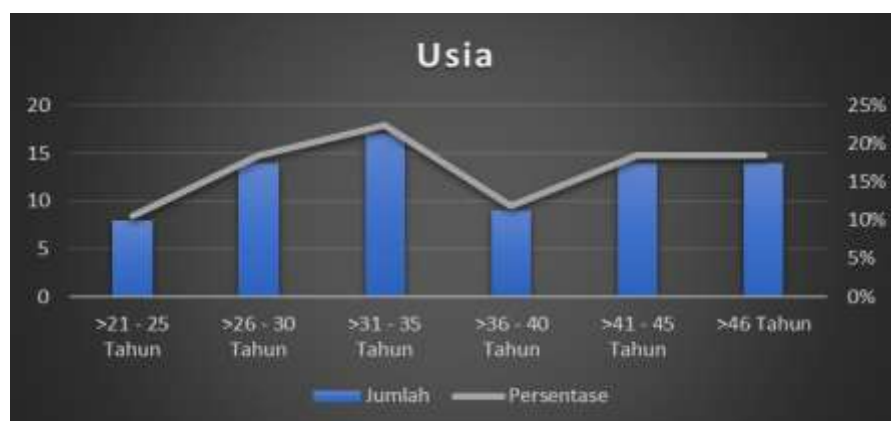
Chart Gender Criteria



Source: processed data (2025)

Respondent characteristics based on gender consist of almost equal percentages of men and women. Of the 76 respondents, 39 were men (51.3%) and 37 were women (48.7%).

Graph Age Characteristics



Source: processed data (2025)

Age characteristics were dominated by those aged 31 to 35, representing 22.4%, or 17 respondents. The age ranges of >26-30, >41-45, and >46 each had the same number of

respondents, 14 (18.4%), followed by 8 (10.5%) for those aged >21-25, and 9 (11.8%) for those aged >36-40.

Chart Characteristics of Length of Service



Source: processed data (2025)

Characteristics based on length of service were dominated by those with over 10 years of service, at 32 (42.1%). Then, for those with more than 1-3 years of service, at 18 (23.7%), respondents with more than 3-5 years and more than 7-10 years each, at 9 (11.8%), and respondents with more than 5-7 years of service, at 8 (10.5%).

Chart Income Characteristics



Source: processed data (2025)

Meanwhile, based on income characteristics, the majority of respondents (70 people, or 92.1%), had incomes of >3-5 million, while the remaining three (3.9%) had incomes of >5-7 million and >7-10 million.

3.2. Research Model Equation

This study aims to analyze the extent to which competency influences employee performance and whether innovation can act as a moderating variable in this relationship. By including innovation as a moderating variable, it is hoped that it will provide a more

comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which competency can more effectively drive performance improvement.

To quantitatively explain the relationship between these variables, the following research equation model was developed, which includes the independent variable (competence), the dependent variable (employee performance), and the moderator variable (innovation), including the interaction effect between competence and innovation. The following is the research equation model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 Z + \beta_3 (X \times Z) + \varepsilon$$

Information:

Y = Employee Performance

X = Competence

Z = Innovation

β_0 = Intercept

β_1 = Coefficient of influence of Competence on Performance

β_2 = Coefficient of influence of innovation on performance

β_3 = Moderation coefficient (interaction effect)

$X \times Z$ = Interaction between Competence and Innovation

ε = Error

3.3. Measurement Evaluation Results (Outer Model)

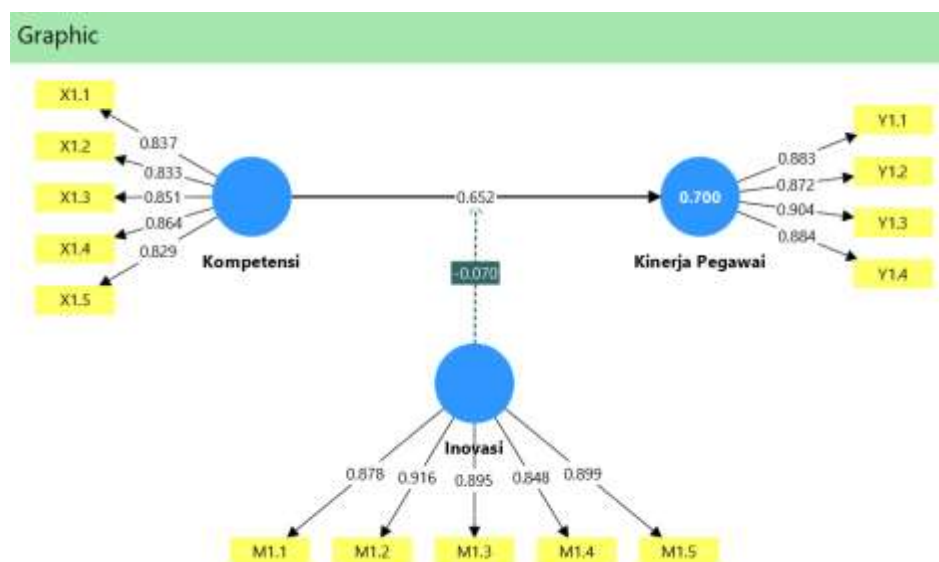


Figure Outer Model (Final Image)

Convergent Validity Results

For validity tests using factor loading values, the minimum value requirements depend on the sample size. Referring to the opinion Hair Jr et al. (2014), based on general guidelines for

the minimum factor loading value, if the sample is 70-80, the minimum value is 0.5. The results of the validity test using SmartPLS Version 4 can be seen in table below:

Table Values Factor Loading

Variables	Item	Statement	Outer Loading
Competence	X1	I understand and comply with laws and regulations and SOPs relevant to my duties, and am able to integrate them into my daily work.	0.837
	X2	I establish effective cooperation with various parties and am able to build synergy to achieve organizational goals.	0.833
	X3	I uphold the values of integrity such as honesty, openness, and democratic attitudes in every professional action.	0.851
	X4	I am able to choose effective and efficient working methods and	0.864
	X5	I am open to input and changes from the external environment in order to improve performance.	0.829
Innovation	M1	I think the current innovations provide greater benefits than previous service methods.	0.878
	M2	This innovation suits my needs and habits in accessing public services.	0.916
	M3	This innovation is easy to understand and use by service users.	0.895
	M4	I had the opportunity to try out this innovation before it was fully deployed.	0.848
	M5	The results of implementing this innovation are clearly visible in the improvement of public services.	0.899
Employee Performance	Y1	I have mastered the tasks and responsibilities in my field of work, and am able to work in accordance with operational standards and leadership directions.	0.883
	Y2	I am able to complete work on time and achieve the set targets while maintaining the quality of the work results.	0.872
	Y3	I actively build constructive collaboration with colleagues across units to support the achievement of organizational goals.	0.904
	Y4	I always consider the efficiency of budget and resource use in every task I carry out.	0.884

Source: Processed data (2025)

Based on the table above, the factor loading values for each indicator used to measure the variables in this study were all greater than 0.5. Thus, it can be concluded that all statement items used have convergent validity.

Construct Reliability Results

This reliability test can be seen by looking at the Cronbach's alpha value which is used to detect the level of consistency of participant answers, where the variable is said to be reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value is at least 0.61, or the composite reliability value is

0.7.(Ghozali, 2011)The results of the reliability test using SmartPLS version 4 can be seen in table below:

Table Reliability Values

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Composite Reliability Value
Competence	0.898	0.925
Innovation	0.933	0.949
Employee Performance	0.908	0.936

Source: processed data (2025)

Referring to the data processing results in the table, all dimensions and variables showed Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.61 and composite reliability values exceeding 0.7. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables in this study have relatively high reliability.

Discriminant Validity Value

Table Discriminant Validity Values

	Innovation	Employee Performance	Competence
Innovation	0.888		
Employee Performance	0.642	0.886	
Competence	0.622	0.816	0.843

Source: processed data (2025)

From the table above, it can be seen that the square root of the AVE value for each variable is greater than the correlation between the construct and other constructs. Discriminant validity in this study was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which aims to ensure that each construct tested has a clear conceptual difference. The analysis results show that the square root of the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) for the Innovation construct is 0.888, Employee Performance is 0.886, and Competence is 0.843, all higher than the correlation values between constructs in the same row and column.

For example, the VAVE value for Innovation (0.888) is higher than the correlation between Innovation and Employee Performance (0.642) and Competence (0.622). Similarly, the VAVE of Employee Performance (0.886) is higher than its correlation with Innovation and Competence, and the VAVE of Competence (0.843) is also higher than its correlation with other constructs. Thus, it can be concluded that all constructs in this model have met the criteria for discriminant validity, so that each construct is stated to be able to measure different aspects appropriately and there is no overlap between constructs.

3.4. Measurement Model Evaluation Results (Inner Model)

R-Square (R²) Value

Table R-square (R²) value

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Employee Performance	0.700	0.687

Source: processed data (2025)

The R-square (R^2) value is used to measure the extent to which the independent variables, namely Competence and Innovation, can explain variations in the dependent variable, namely Employee Performance. Based on the table, the R-square value for Employee Performance is 0.700, which means 70% of the variation in Employee Performance can be explained by Competence and Innovation. Meanwhile, the adjusted R-square value of 0.687 takes into account the number of predictors in the model to avoid overestimation. This value remains quite high, indicating that the model has strong predictive ability. Therefore, it can be concluded that the structural model used is effective in explaining the influence of independent variables on Employee Performance.

F-Square

Table F-value Square

	Employee Performance
Competence	0.700
Innovation	0.112
Innovation x Competence	0.016

Source: processed data (2025)

The F-square (F^2) value is used to measure the effect size of each independent variable on the dependent variable in the structural model. The table shows the contribution of each variable to Employee Performance as the dependent variable. Based on the analysis results, the Competence variable shows a very large F^2 value, namely 0.798, which means it has a large and dominant influence in explaining Employee Performance. Meanwhile, the Innovation variable has an F^2 value of 0.112, which indicates that Innovation has a small to moderate influence on Employee Performance. Variable. Meanwhile, the interaction between Innovation and Competence (innovation moderation) only has an F^2 value of 0.016, which is very small, so its contribution in influencing Employee Performance can be considered weak or practically insignificant.

3.5. Test Path Coefficients

Table Path Analysis

	Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P-Value
Competence→Employee Performance	0.652	7,019	0,000
Innovation→Employee Performance	0.239	2,300	0.021
InnovationXCompetence→Employee Performance	-0.070	0.991	0.322

Source: processed data (2025)

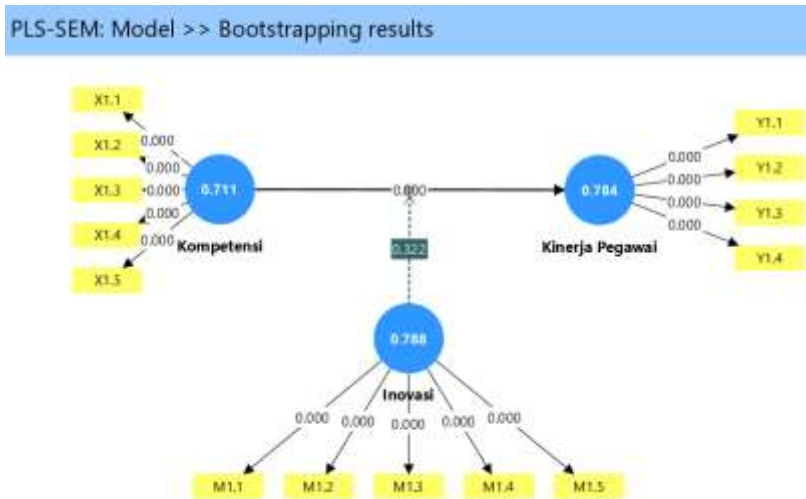


Figure Output Calculate Bootstrapping

Path analysis was conducted to examine the influence between latent variables in the research model. Based on the path estimation results, three relationships were tested:

- The Influence of Competence on Employee Performance. Competence has the strongest and most significant influence on Employee Performance, with a coefficient of 0.652, a t-value of 7.019 > compared to the t-table of 0.1666, and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05, which means it is very significant.
- The Influence of Innovation on Employee Performance. The results show that Innovation has a significant influence on Employee Performance, with a coefficient value of 0.239, a t-value of 2.300 > compared to the t-table of 0.1666, and a p-value of 0.021 (< 0.05), which indicates that the influence is statistically significant.
- The moderating effect of Innovation on the relationship between Competence and Employee Performance. The results show that the interaction between Innovation and Competence does not show a significant effect on Employee Performance, because the coefficient value is negative at -0.070, with a t-value of only 0.991 < compared to the t-table of 0.1666, and a p-value of 0.322 > 0.05.

This study indicates that competence plays the most dominant role in directly influencing employee performance, as indicated by the high coefficient value and strong significance. On the other hand, innovation is also proven to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance, although its contribution is not as large as competence. However, when tested as a moderating variable, innovation does not show a significant ability to strengthen or weaken the relationship between competence and employee performance. In other words, innovation in the context of this study does not act as an effective mediator or moderator, but rather is more appropriately categorized as an additional independent variable that has its own direct influence on performance. This finding suggests that improving employee performance is more influenced by strengthening individual

competence, while innovation functions as a stand-alone supporting element, rather than as a bridge between competence and performance outcomes.

3.6. Model Fit Test

Model fit testing was conducted using the goodness-of-fit index, which aims to assess whether the research model fits the data used and reflects the overall model quality. The analysis using SmartPLS Version 4 yielded the output shown in Table below:

Table Model Fit

Indicator	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Information
SRMR	0.064	0.063	Good (because < 0.08)
d_ULS	0.424	0.423	The value is small and almost the same → stable
d_G	0.367	0.366	The value is small and consistent
Chi-square	162,070	161,799	Relatively small values → support fit (although not a primary indicator in PLS)
NFI	0.832	0.832	Fit is quite good (because > 0.80)

Source: processed data (2025)

Model fit evaluation is conducted to assess the extent to which the constructed structural model fits the data used. Based on the test results:

- a. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) measures the difference between the observed and predicted correlation matrices. The SRMR value for the model is 0.063, which is below the threshold of 0.08. This indicates that the model has a good fit between the observed and predicted data.
- b. Other indicators include d_ULS (Discrepancy Unweighted Least Squares). A value of 423 or less indicates a better model, but there is no standard threshold. It is used as a supplement.
- c. d_G (Geodesic Discrepancy) is similar to d_ULS, the smaller the better. The d_G value is 0.366, which, although it has no standard value, is small and stable between the saturated model and the estimated model, indicating that there are no major deviations in the model.
- d. *Chi-square* A statistical measure of model fit. This value is used to compare models. The chi-square value is also relatively low, at 161.799, which supports the assumption that the model fits the data.
- e. The NIF (Normed Fit Index) measures the improvement in model fit relative to the null model. A value close to 1 indicates good fit, with a common minimum value of 0.80 or 0.90 depending on the context. Furthermore, the NFI value was recorded at 0.832, which is above the minimum value of 0.80, indicating a reasonably good level of fit for the model.

Based on the overall results obtained, the model used in this study demonstrated a good level of fit. Therefore, the model is feasible and can be used for further analysis.

4. Conclusion

The following are conclusions based on the results of the analysis of the relationship between competence, innovation and employee performance: 1. The relationship between competence and employee performance has a significant positive effect. This is in line with several previous studies, namely Erizon et al. (2024); Komalasari et al. (2024); Rozi et al. (2024); and Rahayu (2009). This indicates that the higher the employee's competency level (including knowledge, skills, and work attitudes), the higher the resulting performance. Competence is the dominant factor influencing performance compared to other variables in the model. These results confirm that competence plays a significant role in improving employee work quality (H1, accepted). 2. The relationship between innovation and employee performance has a significant positive effect, this result is in line with previous research by Asensoreta & Permoni (2023); and Matdoan et al. (2024). This indicates that employees' innovative abilities (e.g., in creating new methods, creatively solving problems, and implementing fresh ideas) contribute to their performance. Although its influence is not as strong as competence, innovation still plays a relevant supporting factor in performance. Hypothesis H2 is accepted, meaning that higher innovation leads to higher performance. 3. The influence of innovation as a moderating variable in the relationship between employee competence and performance was not significant, which is in line with research findings. Suharto (2024). This indicates that innovation neither strengthens nor weakens the relationship between competence and performance. In other words, the relationship between competence and performance occurs directly without being influenced by the level of employee innovation. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is rejected, meaning innovation does not act as an effective moderator in this relationship.

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