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The Effect of the Implementation of the Merit System And Person-Job Fit on Organizational Performance With Work Effectiveness as a Mediation Variable (Study at the Department of Education and Culture of South Papua Province)

Herman
Faculty of Economic, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung (UNISSULA) Semarang, Indonesia, E-mail: abunisa941@gmail.com

Abstract. *Realizing the strategic targets set by the regional head as outlined in the Regional Development Plan (RPD) and the agency's Strategic Plan (Renstra) requires an agile, professional bureaucracy staffed by personnel with adequate technical expertise. These targets are reflected in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which include increasing the Net Enrollment Rate (NER), eradicating illiteracy among school-aged children in remote areas, accelerating the distribution of teachers to isolated regions, and ensuring accountability in the governance and utilization of the Special Allocation Fund (DAK) both physical and non-physical as well as the School Operational Assistance (BOS) fund. However, the achievement of these KPIs faces a fundamental internal managerial challenge: the management and placement of human resources (civil servants). This study employs a quantitative approach with an associative-causal (explanatory) research design. This approach aims to empirically establish cause-and-effect relationships and test the significance of both direct and indirect influences among variables within the hypothesized model. Data were collected via a cross sectional method using structured questionnaires distributed to respondents. The implementation of a merit-based system has been shown to have a positive and significant impact on employee work effectiveness within the Department of Education and Culture of South Papua Province. A civil service management framework that is objective, transparent, and based on qualifications and a track record of achievement as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2023 proves effective in curbing bureaucratic patronage and fostering psychological certainty in the workplace, thereby encouraging discipline and punctuality among staff in the execution of their official duties. Person-Job Fit has been shown to have a positive and significant impact on employee work effectiveness at the Department of Education and Culture of South Papua Province. The alignment between an individual's academic background, technical educational skills, and professional competencies relative to the demands of their specific role serves as the most dominant factor in driving the department's operational effectiveness.*

Keywords: *Competencies; Bureaucratic; Quantitative; Workplace.*

1. Introduction

The education sector is a fundamental pillar in improving the quality of human life, particularly in the context of the establishment of the New Autonomous Region (DOB) in Papua. The establishment of South Papua Province through Law Number 14 of 2022 carries a significant historical mandate: to accelerate improvements in public welfare, shorten the span of bureaucratic control, and accelerate the lagging Human Development Index (HDI). Amid these high public expectations, the South Papua Provincial Education and Culture Office bears strategic responsibility as the agency responsible for primary and secondary education policies, teacher development, and the preservation of local culture in the four districts covered: Merauke, Asmat, Mappi, and Boven Digoel.

To realize the strategic targets of regional heads as outlined in the Regional Development Plan (RPD) and the Strategic Plan (Renstra) of the Agency, an agile, professional bureaucracy is needed, and staffed with personnel with adequate technical expertise. These targets are reflected in the Key Performance Indicators (IKU), including: increasing the Net Participation Rate (APM), eradicating illiteracy/basic literacy among school-aged children in remote areas, accelerating teacher distribution to remote areas, and accountability for the governance of the utilization of Physical/Non-Physical Special Allocation Funds (DAK) and School Operational Assistance (BOS). However, the realization of these IKU targets faces fundamental internal managerial obstacles, namely the management and placement of Human Resources (HR) of the apparatus.

Legally and normatively, the management of the State Civil Apparatus in Indonesia has been strictly regulated through Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus. Article 1, number 12 of Law No. 20/2023, affirms that the Merit System is a policy and management of ASN based on qualifications, competencies, and performance in a fair and reasonable manner without discrimination. Furthermore, Articles 27 and 46 mandate that the filling of positions Structural and functional arrangements must be aligned with talent pool management, job competency standards, and the principle of person-job fit. This regulation requires the principle of 'the right person in the right place' as an absolute requirement for high-performance governance.

However, empirical reality on the ground shows a stark practical implementation gap between the ideal regulatory norms and the managerial reality at the South Papua Provincial Education and Culture Office. In the early stages of the new autonomous region's institutional transition, the filling of structural positions (administrators, supervisors) and the assignment of technical officials to manage program activities were often not based on alignment of competencies and formal educational qualifications. Many strategic positions managing educational programs were filled by officials with non-educational educational backgrounds and experience without a technical track record in the sector. Position placements were often more influenced by considerations of administrative compromise to quickly fill vacancies, territorial balance, or close bureaucratic patronage relations than by objective competency

test results (assessment centers).

This mismatched placement situation creates a domino effect on organizational effectiveness. Officials and staff placed in positions that do not align with their technical expertise experience fundamental difficulties in interpreting ministry technical instructions (Juknis), are slow in preparing program planning documents, and are hesitant in making emergency decisions in the field. Bureaucratic inefficiencies occur, with productive work time being wasted on adaptation and basic learning. Consequently, education budget absorption is delayed, technical coordination with district-level education offices is hampered, and ultimately, the agency's KPI targets and regional head priority programs fail to be optimally achieved in a modern management perspective, this phenomenon is very relevant to be analyzed using Person-Job Fit Theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) and Job Fit Theory.

Merit System. When job demands far exceed an employee's technical capabilities (abilities fit), individual work effectiveness will plummet, causing work stress and killing unit productivity. Likewise, from a Public Performance Management perspective, achieving agency targets is impossible without the technical capabilities of program implementers at the managerial level. Therefore, this quantitative research is highly pressing and has high managerial urgency to test and empirically prove the extent to which the implementation of a merit system and job fit affect organizational performance through employee work effectiveness at the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province.

2. Research Methods

This research employed a quantitative approach with a causal associative design (explanatory research). This approach aims to empirically demonstrate causal relationships and test the significance of direct and indirect influences between variables in the hypothesized model. Data collection was conducted cross-sectionally by distributing a structured questionnaire to respondents. This research was conducted at the South Papua Provincial Education and Culture Office, located in Merauke. The research period was planned to last four months, encompassing a preliminary study, questionnaire distribution, data processing using SmartPLS software, and the preparation of a thesis report. Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with SmartPLS software. The PLS-SEM method was chosen because it is ideal for management research characterized by limited sample sizes (under 100 respondents) and is able to model complex mediation relationships simultaneously without requiring rigid normal distribution assumptions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Data Description and Respondent Characteristics

1) Data Collection Overview

Primary data collection in this study was conducted within the South Papua Province

Education and Culture Office, located in Merauke. Data collection took place during the active research period by distributing questionnaires to the entire target population of state civil servants (ASN) who were definitively registered as serving. In accordance with the methodological design in Chapter III, the approach applied was a census technique (total sampling), in which the entire population of 88 civil servants served as research respondents. The respondent structure included administrative officials (Echelon III), supervisory officials (Echelon IV), certain functional officials (education and culture), and staff implementing technical activity managers.

Of the 88 questionnaires distributed to all employees, all 100% were returned and declared complete with no missing items (non-response items). All questionnaires met the administrative eligibility and data reliability requirements for inclusion in the tabulation and inferential testing stages of Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The detailed questionnaire return rate (response rate) is presented in Table.

Table Sample Distribution and Questionnaire Return Rate (Response Rate)

No.	Questionnaire Distribution Information	Number of people)	Percentage (%)
1.	Questionnaires distributed to officials	88	**100.00%**
2.	Returned questionnaires	88	**100.00%**
3.	Questionnaire defective/incomplete (drop/incomplete)	0	**0.00%**
4.	**Valid questionnaire analyzed (usable data)**	**88**	**100.00%**

Source: Primary Research Data (Processed Questionnaire), 2026.

2) Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A description of the respondents' demographic characteristics is presented to provide a comprehensive overview of the background of the apparatus who were the subjects of this research at the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province. This demographic characteristic information is mapped based on gender, age group, last level of formal education, current civil service position, and length of service with the apparatus in the South Papua Provincial Government since the formation of the New Autonomous Region (DOB). The distribution of respondent profiles is summarized in Table.

Table Demographic Characteristics Profile of Research Respondents (N = 88)

Respondent Characteristics	Category Classification	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	52	59.09%
	Woman	36	40.91%
Age Group	< 30 Years	14	15.91%
	30 – 40 Years	38	43.18%
	41 – 50 Years	24	27.27%
	> 50 Years	12	13.64%
Last education	Diploma (D3) / Bachelor's Degree (S1)	67	76.14%
	Masters (S2) / Doctoral (S3)	21	23.86%
Current Position	Administrator Officer (Echelon III)	7	7.95%

	Supervisory Officer (Echelon IV)	16	18.18%
	Certain Functional Officials	23	26.14%
	Program Technical Implementer / Manager	42	47.73%
Term of Service at the Provincial Government	< 1 Year	22	25.00%

Based on the data listed in Table above, the demographic characteristics of the research respondents can be interpreted academically as follows:

a. Age Productivity and Gender Composition: First, the gender composition shows a dominance of male civil servants at 59.09% (52 people) compared to female civil servants at 40.91% (36 people). Viewed from the age aspect, the majority of respondents are in the mature productive age range, namely the 30-40 year age group at 43.18% (38 people) and the 41-50 year age group at 27.27% (24 people). This demographic condition indicates that the bureaucratic structure of the South Papua Province Education and Culture Office has adequate energy and physical capital to carry out the workload of acceleration in the expansion region.

b. Formal Educational Qualifications vs. Skill Linearity: Second, from an academic qualification perspective, the majority of civil servants have completed higher education, with 76.14% (67 people) holding a Bachelor's (S1)/D3 degree and 23.86% (21 people) holding a Master's (S2) degree. However, a review of internal personnel documents reveals a degree mismatch. Many civil servants have degrees in social sciences, political science, or non-educational general administration and are then tasked with managing technical areas such as curriculum, school institutional development, and data collection for educators and education personnel.

c. DOB Transitional Assignment Position and Work Period**:** Third, the assignment structure shows that the largest composition is made up of technical program management staff (47.73%) and functional officials (26.14%). The tenure of the South Papua Provincial Government apparatus is concentrated in the transition period, with 55.68% (49 people) serving for only 1–2 years and 25.00% (22 people) serving for less than 1 year. This reflects. The dynamics of the initial phase of the formation of South Papua Province after the enactment of Law Number 14 of 2022. Most of the employees are the result of transfers from the four buffer districts (Merauke, Asmat, Mappi, Boven Digoel) who are still on the learning curve in aligning the provincial-level workflow.

3) Description of Research Variables

Descriptive variable analysis was conducted to determine the tendency of apparatus perceptions towards four research variables, namely the Implementation of the Merit System (X1), Job Suitability / Person-Job Fit (X2), Employee Work Effectiveness (Z), and Organizational Performance / KPI Achievement (Y). Measurements used a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with interpretation interval categories: 1.00–1.80 (Very Low / Very Poor); 1.81–2.60 (Low / Poor); 2.61–3.40 (Sufficient / Moderate); 3.41–4.20 (High / Good); and 4.21–5.00 (Very High / Very Good). The results of the average recapitulation (mean score) are presented in Table 4.3.

Table Statistical Description of Average Score of Research Variables (N = 88)

Symbol	Research Variables	Number of Grains	Mean Value	Achievement Category
X1	Implementation of the Merit System	4 Indicators	3.21	Good Enough , Transitional
X2	Person-Job Fit	4 Indicators	3.14	Moderate Mismatch
Z	Employee Work Effectiveness	4 Indicators	3.38	Quite Effective
Y	Organizational Performance (IKL Achievement)	4 Indicators	3.32	Quite Optimal

Source: Primary Research Data (Processed Questionnaire), 2026.

The data in Table shows that all research variables are in the 'Sufficient' category (score range 3.14 to 3.38). The variable scores for Merit System Implementation of 3.21 and Job Suitability of 3.14 indicate that merit-based personnel governance and competency-based placement have not been fully implemented. Specifically, the indicator item for filling positions is free from patronage influence (X1.2 = 3.02) and mastery of technical educational skills (X2.2 = 3.08) recorded the lowest average score. This descriptive finding confirms the existence of a practical implementation gap in the early stages of civil service restructuring in the new autonomous region of South Papua Province.

3.2. Data Analysis Results (PLS-SEM Method)

Hypothesis testing and structural model verification were conducted using the Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with the SmartPLS program. This approach is considered highly appropriate due to its high statistical robustness in multilevel model testing with an affordable sample size (N = 88) without requiring rigid multivariate normality assumptions. The analysis was conducted in two sequential stages: Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model) and Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model).

1) Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The outer model evaluation aims to test the validity and reliability of all operational indicator items in measuring their respective latent constructs. Outer model testing consists of three main parameters: Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, and Construct Reliability (Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha).

a. Convergent Validity Testing: Convergent validity is assessed based on the outer loading factor value and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. Based on the standard rules of Hair et al. (2022), an instrument is declared to meet convergent validity if the outer loading value is >0.70 and the AVE value exceeds the threshold of 0.50. The results of the convergent validity test are presented in Table.

Table Convergent Validity Test Results (Outer Loading and AVE Value)

Construct Variables	Statement Indicator Code	Outer Loading	AVE value	Evaluation Description
Implementation of the Merit System (X1)	X1.1 (Qualifications & Selection Track Record)	0.782	0.621	Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	X1.2 (Patronage-Free Objective Placement)	0.741		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	X1.3 (Objectivity of Performance Assessment)	0.819		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	X1.4 (Equalization of Technical Training Opportunities)	0.808		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
Job Suitability (X2)	X2.1 (Linearity of Educational Background)	0.764	0.608	Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	X2.2 (Mastery of Operational Technical Skills)	0.795		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	X2.3 (Clarity of Authority & Flow of Duties and Functions)	0.789		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	X2.4 (Ease of Understanding of Technical Instructions)	0.771		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
Employee Work Effectiveness (Z)	Z1 (Timeliness of Administrative Reporting)	0.834	0.652	Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	Z2 (Regulatory Compliance & Activity Technical Guidelines)	0.812		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	Z3 (Smooth Coordination & Team Solidarity)	0.792		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	Z4 (Speed Overcoming Field Obstacles)	0.790		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
Organizational Performance (Y)	Y1 (Achievement of Annual KPI Targets for the Service)	0.827	0.644	Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	Y2 (Accuracy of DAK/BOS Budget Absorption)	0.816		Meet the criteria (Valid)
	Y3 (Equal Distribution of Teachers & Rural Facilities)	0.784		Meets the Criteria (Valid)
	Y4 (Service Accountability & SAKIP Reporting)	0.782		Meets the Criteria (Valid)

Source: Primary Research Data (SmartPLS 4 Output), 2026.

Based on Table, it can be seen that all indicator items have outer loading values ranging from 0.741 to 0.834, which is above the threshold of 0.70. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of the four latent variables range from 0.608 to 0.652 (all above 0.50). This proves that more than 50% of the indicator variance can be explained by each latent construct, so all items are declared to meet the criteria for strong convergent validity.

b. Discriminant Validity Testing: Discriminant validity was tested to ensure that each latent construct was truly unique and capable of capturing phenomena not captured by other constructs. The evaluation was conducted using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of the AVE value of a construct must be higher than the correlation value of that construct with other constructs in the model, and supported by the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) with a threshold value <0.90. The test results are presented in Table.

Table Results of Discriminant Validity Test Using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Latent Construct Variables	Effectiveness Work (Z)	Compliance Position (X2)	Organizational Performance (Y)	Merit System (X1)
Employee Work Effectiveness (Z)	0.807			
Position Suitability / PJ-Fit (X2)	0.642	0.780		
Organizational Performance / KPI (Y)	0.688	0.581	0.802	
Implementation of the Merit System	0.593	0.512	0.534	0.788

Source: Primary Research Data (SmartPLS 4 Output), 2026. (Note: Values on the diagonal in bold are the square roots of AVE).

The test results in Table show that the AVE square root value for each latent construct (shown on the main diagonal: 0.807 for Z; 0.780 for X2; 0.802 for Y; and 0.788 for X1) has a value greater than the correlation coefficient of the construct concerned with other latent variables. The HTMT ratio value is also in the range of 0.612–0.784 (below 0.90). Thus, all constructs are proven to have very satisfactory discriminant validity.

c. Construct Reliability Testing: Construct reliability testing is intended to demonstrate the consistency and accuracy of the measuring instrument. Reliability is assessed through two coefficients: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (rho_c). A construct is considered reliable if both values exceed the critical value of 0.70. The results of the reliability testing are summarized in Table.

Table Construct Reliability Test Results (Cronbach's Alpha & Composite Reliability)

Research Construct Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Threshold Limit	Value Reliability Status
Implementation of the Merit System (X1)	0.796	0.868	> 0.70	Very Reliable
Position Suitability / PJ-Fit (X2)	0.785	0.861	> 0.70	Very Reliable
Employee Work Effectiveness (Z)	0.822	0.882	> 0.70	Very Reliable
Organizational Performance / KPI (Y)	0.816	0.879	> 0.70	Very Reliable

Source: Primary Research Data (SmartPLS 4 Output), 2026.

Based on the data in Table, all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.78 and Composite Reliability values above 0.86. These results confirm that all indicators have highly reliable internal consistency and are free from random measurement error, thus confirming the validity of the measurement model for use in structural model evaluation.

2) Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Structural model evaluation (inner model) was conducted to test the explanatory power of the theoretical model and prove the significance of the hypothesized inter-variable

relationships. The inner model evaluation stages included testing the Coefficient of Determination (R2), Effect Size (f2), Predictive Relevance (Q2), and testing the direct and mediation hypotheses through a bootstrapping procedure of 5,000 subsamples with a significance level of alpha = 0.05.

a. Coefficient of Determination (R2): The coefficient of determination (R2) measures the extent of variance in endogenous variables that can be explained by exogenous variables. Based on the PLS algorithm calculation, the R2 value for the Employee Work Effectiveness (Z) variable is 0.498. This indicates that 49.8% of the variance in employee work effectiveness in the service environment can be explained simultaneously by the Implementation of the Merit System (X1) and Job Suitability (X2), while the remaining 50.2% is influenced by other variables outside the research model (such as leadership climate or the availability of physical infrastructure). Furthermore, the R2 value for the Organizational Performance (Y) variable is 0.532. This proves that 53.2% of the variance in Organizational Performance (achievement of the service KPI) can be explained by the Merit System, Person-Job Fit, and Employee Work Effectiveness variables. The R2 value above 0.50 is classified as a model with moderate to strong explanatory power in the context of public organizations.

b. Effect Size (f2) and Predictive Relevance (Q2): The effect size (f2) evaluation measures the relative contribution of an independent variable to the R2 of the dependent variable. The effect of Job Suitability (X2) on Work Effectiveness (Z) yields f2 = 0.268 (medium/medium influence category), while the Merit System (X1) on Work Effectiveness (Z) yields f2 = 0.172 (medium influence category). Meanwhile, the effect of Work Effectiveness (Z) on Organizational Performance (Y) yields f2 = 0.391 (strong influence category). The predictive relevance (Q2) value calculated through the blindfolding procedure shows a Q2 value for Z of 0.314 and for Y of 0.331. Since all Q2 values are > 0, the structural model is proven to have good predictive relevance.

c. Direct Effects Hypothesis Testing: The direct effect hypothesis was tested by comparing the t-statistic value to the t-table value (the t-table for alpha = 0.05 is 1.96) and the significance value (p-value < 0.05). The estimated path coefficients are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table Results of Direct Effects Hypothesis Testing

Relationship Between Variables	Path Coefficient (β)	Path Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Values	Test Decision
Merit System (X1) -> Work Effectiveness (Z)	0.354	0.095	3,745	0,000	H1 Accepted (Significant)
Job Suitability (X2) -> Work Effectiveness (Z)	0.461	0.094	4,892	0,000	H2 Accepted (Significant)
Work Effectiveness (Z) -> Organizational Performance (Y)	0.518	0.092	5,612	0,000	H3 Accepted (Significant)
Merit System (X1) -> Organizational Performance (Y)	0.328	0.096	3,412	0.001	Significant

Job Suitability (X2) -> Organizational Performance (Y)	-0.248	0.098	2,541	0.011	Significant

Source: Primary Research Data (SmartPLS 4 Bootstrapping Output), 2026.

Based on the summary of the results in Table, the direct proof of the hypothesis is described as follows:

1) Hypothesis Testing 1 (H1): The effect of the implementation of the Merit System (X1) on employee work effectiveness (Z) produces a positive path coefficient of 0.354 with a t-statistic value of 3.745 (exceeding 1.96) and a significance value of p

= 0.000 (<0.05). These results empirically prove that the Implementation of the Merit System has a positive and significant effect on Employee Work Effectiveness at the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province. Thus, Hypothesis 1 (H1) is proven and accepted.

2) Testing Hypothesis 2 (H2): The influence of Job Suitability / Person-Job Fit (X2) on Employee Work Effectiveness (Z) produces a positive path coefficient of 0.461 with a t-statistic value of 4.892 (> 1.96) and a significance value of p

= 0.000 (<0.05). These results prove that Job Suitability has a positive and significant effect on Employee Work Effectiveness. The larger coefficient value of 0.461 confirms that the suitability of an employee's skills to their duties is the strongest determinant in driving the effectiveness of the department's operational work. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 (H2) is proven and accepted.

3) Testing Hypothesis 3 (H3): The influence of Employee Work Effectiveness (Z) on Organizational Performance (Y) produces a positive path coefficient of 0.518 with a t-statistic value of 5.612 (> 1.96) and p = 0.000 (< 0.05). This proves that Employee Work Effectiveness has a positive and significant direct influence on Organizational Performance / Achievement of the service's KPI. Thus, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is proven and accepted.

d. Indirect Effects Hypothesis Testing: The mediation hypothesis test was conducted to test whether Employee Work Effectiveness (Z) significantly mediates the influence of the Merit System (X1) and Job Suitability (X2) on Organizational Performance (Y). The mediation test was calculated based on the Specific Indirect Effects value from the bootstrapping procedure. The analysis results are presented in Table.

Table Results of Mediation Hypothesis Testing (Specific Indirect Effects)

Indirect Influence Path (Mediation)	Indirect Coefficient (β)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Values	The Nature o Mediation	Test Decision

Merit System (X1) -> EffectivenessWork (Z) -> Performance (Y)	0.183	0.058	3,155	0.002	Partial Mediation	H4a Acceptec (Significant)
CompliancePositio n (X2) -> Work Effectiveness (Z) -> Performance (Y)	0.239	0.064	3,734	0,000	Partial Mediation	H4b Acceptec (Significant)

Source: Primary Research Data (SmartPLS 4 Bootstrapping Output), 2026.

Based on Table, the mediation mechanism is described as follows:

1) Testing Hypothesis 4a (H4a): The indirect effect of the Merit System on Organizational Performance through Employee Work Effectiveness is proven to be positive and significant with a beta coefficient of 0.183, a t-statistic of 3.155 (> 1.96), and a p-value of 0.002 (< 0.05). Since its direct effect (X1 -> Y) is also significant (Table 4.7), employee work effectiveness is categorized as a partial mediation. This means that the implementation of the merit system is able to directly increase the achievement of official performance, but its acceleration will be much stronger and more effective when it is first transformed through increasing the effectiveness of the daily work of the apparatus. Therefore, Hypothesis 4a (H4a) is proven and accepted.

2) Testing Hypothesis 4b (H4b): The indirect effect of Job Suitability on Organizational Performance through Employee Work Effectiveness yields a beta coefficient of 0.239, a t-statistic of 3.734 (> 1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). Considering that the direct path (X2 -> Y) remains significant, the role of work effectiveness also has partial mediation status. This proves that the placement of personnel with appropriate competencies (person-job fit) become an essential driving force that improves institutional organizational performance by increasing the effectiveness of service work processes. Thus, Hypothesis 4b (H4b) is proven and accepted.

3.2. Discussion

This discussion section outlines the empirical meaning behind the statistical findings, relates them to underlying public sector human resource management theories, and compares them with relevant previous research in the setting of the transition dynamics of the New Autonomous Region (DOB) of South Papua.

1) The Impact of Implementing a Merit System on Employee Work Effectiveness

The empirical test results prove that the Implementation of the Merit System has a positive and significant effect on the Work Effectiveness of Employees at the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province (beta = 0.354; t = 3.745; p = 0.000). The positive direction of the coefficient proves that the more objective, fair, transparent, and competency-based the

implemented personnel management policy, the more effective the implementation of the apparatus' work in completing official responsibilities will be.

These findings align closely with the juridical-normative principles of Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus, specifically Article 1, point 12, which mandates that the merit system is a civil servant management policy based on qualifications, competencies, and performance in a fair and reasonable manner without discrimination. From the perspective of public bureaucracy theory, the merit system serves to eliminate the practice of bureaucratic patronage (spoils system) or regional collusion that has long been a classic pathology of regional governance. When civil servants perceive that job promotions, activity assignments, and awards are based on objective performance assessments, a sense of organizational justice is created. This certainty spurs intrinsic employee work motivation to comply with regulations and complete administrative documents on time.

However, findings in the field during the transition period of the South Papua Autonomous Region show that the implementation of the merit system is still in the category

'Sufficient' (score 3.21), with the patronage-free position filling indicator scoring the lowest (3.02). This reality confirms that in the early stages of the expansion of new provinces, position filling was often marred by administrative compromises to quickly fill vacancies rather than rigorous competency testing (assessment centers). The absence of talent pool management led to work inefficiencies, with officials appointed without relevant qualifications experiencing a slow adaptation period, ultimately depressing the effectiveness of service units.

The findings of this study reinforce those of Pratama & Handayani (2022), who stated that the dominance of patronage and a suboptimal merit system in regions reduce the effectiveness of institutional governance. This study complements this literature by providing quantitative evidence that in educational institutions in new autonomous regions (DOB), adherence to pure meritocracy after the enactment of Law No. 20 of 2023 is a fundamental requirement for boosting bureaucratic effectiveness.

2) The Influence of Person-Job Fit on Employee Work Effectiveness

The second hypothesis test proves that Person-Job Fit has a positive and significant effect on Employee Work Effectiveness (beta = 0.461; t = 4.892; p = 0.000). The path coefficient value of 0.461, which exceeds the merit system coefficient, indicates that the suitability between employee skill characteristics and their job duties is the main determinant that has the most influence on the formation of employee work effectiveness in the department.

Theoretically, these findings confirm the Person-Job Fit Theory developed by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) and Edwards (1991), particularly in the Demands-Abilities Fit dimension. This dimension emphasizes that work effectiveness is achieved when technical skills, regulatory knowledge, and formal background of civil servants align with the technical demands of the job. In institutions such as the Department of Education and Culture, the position of managing

substantive programs such as the development of local content curricula, accreditation is schools, teacher distribution, and verification of Special Allocation Fund (DAK) reporting require specific educational expertise.

As revealed by the moderate variable score (3.14), the phenomenon of job mismatch within the South Papua Provincial Education Office is clearly occurring. The placement of non-teaching staff to manage technical education programs creates an ability gap. Staff experience fundamental difficulties in understanding and interpreting technical instructions (Juknis) from the central ministry, are slow in operating the basic education database system (Dapodik), and are hesitant in making decisions in the field. Staff work time is drained solely on adaptation processes and self-taught learning, which directly triggers inefficiency and delays the completion of activity reports.

These findings are highly consistent with the conclusions of Kristof-Brown et al. (2018) who stated that Person-Job Fit reduces role ambiguity and work stress in public officials. These results also confirm the empirical research of Suryani & Wijaya (2023), which proved that mastery of technical competencies in education officials makes the greatest contribution to the accuracy of agency work program completion. Therefore, placing the right personnel (the right person in the right place) is a fundamental key to unraveling bureaucratic inefficiencies in the South Papua Autonomous Region.

3) The Influence of Employee Work Effectiveness on Organizational Performance

The third hypothesis test proves that Employee Work Effectiveness has a positive and significant effect on Organizational Performance / Achievement of the Service's KPI (beta = 0.518; t = 5.612; p = 0.000). The coefficient value of 0.518 confirms that the success of achieving the strategic targets of the service institution relies heavily on the quality of the work processes of the apparatus in the operational line.

This finding reinforces the Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) and Gibson et al.'s (2012) Theory of Public Organization Effectiveness. Public sector organizational performance is not an abstract concept in itself, but rather a concrete accumulation of timeliness, output quality, and solidity coordination of the work of its employees. At the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province, the office's performance is measured through Key Performance Indicators (KPI), including: Net Enrollment Rate (APM), acceleration of teacher distribution to remote areas, eradication of illiteracy among children in the interior, and accountability for the absorption of Special Allocation Funds (DAK) and BOS in four districts (Merauke, Asmat, Mappi, Boven Digoel).

Delays in preparing technical documents and verifying the administration of disbursement funds directly trigger a domino effect on agency performance: delayed budget absorption, hampered aid funds for remote schools, delayed renovation of classroom facilities, and missed regional heads' KPI targets. Conversely, when officials work effectively and adhere to the Technical Guidelines (Juknis), priority education programs can be executed precisely on target,

cross-district coordination runs smoothly, and agency performance accountability scores (SAKIP) increase significantly.

4) The Mediating Role of Employee Work Effectiveness

The mediation effect test proves that Employee Work Effectiveness functions as a significant partial mediator in linking Merit System Implementation (beta = 0.183; p = 0.002) and Job Suitability (beta = 0.239; p = 0.000) to Organizational Performance. This evidence produces a crucial new theoretical understanding:

The implementation of a clean merit system and appropriate job placement does not immediately translate into high KPI achievements; rather, it must first be translated into the behavior and effectiveness of daily staff. Meritocracy creates a secure work climate and career equity; while job suitability ensures that employees possess the technical expertise to complete their workload. The combination of these two upstream factors creates effective employee work in the field: documents are completed on time, technical guidelines are adhered to without fatal errors, and geographical constraints in the four districts are addressed quickly. This work effectiveness directly leads to the agency's successful realization of its KPI targets.

These empirical findings confirm and extend Rahman & Setiawan's (2021) research model, which identified the mediating role of work effectiveness in linking employee placement to government agency performance. This research demonstrates that this causal chain mechanism is valid and has exceptional urgency in the institutional context of new autonomous regional bureaucracies.

5) Critical Reflection on the Dynamics of the Transitional Bureaucracy of the South Papua Autonomous Region

The results of this study provide a very sharp empirical portrait of the institutional transition conditions of the New Autonomous Region in Papua, as identified by Leksono & Rumbrar (2023). The establishment of South Papua Province through Law No. 14 of 2022 requires the regional government to quickly establish a regional apparatus organizational structure to prevent a gap in public services.

However, the limited supply of personnel with specific expertise in the new region has triggered a phenomenon of transitional administrative compromise. The placement of structural officials and activity managers is often influenced by considerations of territorial balance from the four original regencies and close patronage relations, rather than objective competency test results (assessment centers). This condition has given rise to a massive structural mismatch within the Education and Culture Office. This research confirms that the tolerance of administrative compromise and the postponement of a pure merit system following Law No. 20 of 2023 poses the greatest threat to accelerating the Human Development Index (HDI) in South Papua Province. Therefore, improvements in upstream

talent management are an absolute necessity and cannot be negotiated.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis, testing of the PLS-SEM structural model, and the comprehensive discussion outlined in the previous chapter, the conclusions of this study are formulated substantively as follows: The Implementation of the Merit System Has Proven to Have a Positive and Significant Impact on Employee Work Effectiveness at the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province. Objective, transparent, and qualification and track record based civil service management as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2023 has been proven to be able to erode bureaucratic patronage practices and create psychological certainty at work, thereby encouraging discipline and punctuality among civil servants in completing official duties. Person-Job Fit Has Proven to Have a Positive and Significant Influence on the Work Effectiveness of Employees at the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province. The alignment between the scientific background, technical educational skills, and competencies of the apparatus with the demands of the job load (demands-abilities fit) is the most dominant determining factor in spurring the effectiveness of the service's work. Apparatus placed according to their expertise has been proven to be able to work more independently, responsive to overcoming operational obstacles, and quickly in understanding the ministry's technical instructions (Juknis) compared to employees who experience mismatched placements. Employee Work Effectiveness Has Proven to Have a Positive and Significant Influence on Organizational Performance (IKU Achievement) at the Education and Culture Office of South Papua Province. The quality of the apparatus' operational task implementation characterized by timely administrative completion, compliance with budget regulations, and solid cross-sector coordination is a direct prerequisite for optimal achievement of the Indicator targets.

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