

THE EFFECT OF COMPETENCE AND WORK DIGITALIZATION ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE, THROUGH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE GENERAL PART OF THE REGIONAL SECRETARIAT OF JEMBER REGENCY



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Abstract

Facing the demands of bureaucratic reform and digital transformation in local government, the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees is the key to achieving excellent public services in the midst of complex administrative dynamics. Employee competency factors and work digitalization are considered to play a strategic role in improving this performance, with the effectiveness of communication as a crucial link. This study aims to analyze the influence of competence and work digitalization on employee performance, with the effectiveness of communication as an intervening variable in the Jember Regency Secretariat. This type of research uses a quantitative method with a descriptive approach, through observation, questionnaires, and literature studies. The research population is all employees of the Jember Regency Secretariat, with a sample of 109 respondents. The data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the direct and indirect relationships between variables. The results of the study show that competence and work digitalization have a positive and significant effect on employee performance, both directly and through communication effectiveness mediation. Competence (knowledge, skills, attitudes, motives, strategic thinking) and digitalization (SiKeren, automation) create effective communication that significantly improves the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees.

Keywords: Employee Competence, Work Digitalization, Communication Effectiveness, Employee Performance

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology and information in the digital era has created major changes in various aspects of human life, including work systems and organizational governance in the government sector. Digital transformation requires every agency to adapt to technological advances in order to provide faster, transparent, and accountable services (Judijanto et al., 2024). In the context of bureaucracy, the digitization of administrative processes, official manuscripts, electronic archives, and information technology-based public service systems are part of the bureaucratic reform that is currently being promoted by the government. This is in line with the direction of national development which emphasizes digital transformation as the main pillar of improving the performance of state apparatus (Hidayat et al., 2025). However, behind these demands, various problems are still found such as low technological literacy among the apparatus, resistance to change, and the gap in skills between employees (Shafira Maharani et al., 2025). This situation often causes the implementation of administrative work to be not optimal, so that the expected efficiency and productivity of the digitalization process have not been fully achieved (Aulia et al., 2021). Thus, it is necessary to integrate between improving the competence of human resources and adapting to work digitalization to achieve maximum employee performance (Baharrudin et al., 2021).

Employee performance has a crucial role in determining the success of an organization, both in the public and private sectors (Arianto et al., 2022). Performance not only reflects an individual's ability to carry out his or her duties and responsibilities, but also describes the effectiveness of an organization in achieving its strategic goals (Sulistya et al., 2023). In government agencies, employee performance is a benchmark for the success of the implementation of programs and public services (Widyastuti et al., 2025). Employees who have good performance are able to work according to targets, understand the needs of the community, and implement policies with high professionalism (Ferawati et al., 2020). The effectiveness of good bureaucratic performance will have direct implications for the level of public trust in the government (Hayati et al., 2024b). On the other hand, low employee performance can hinder the achievement of organizational goals, reduce the quality of public services, and create a negative image of government institutions (Hairudin, 2025). Therefore, improving employee performance must be a sustainable strategic priority through strengthening the quality of human resources and adapting to increasingly complex work environment changes (Pakpahan et al., 2024).

One of the important factors that affect employee performance is competence. Competency reflects a person's ability to carry out work based on a combination of knowledge, skills, and work attitude (Devinta & Santosa, 2022). Employees who have high competence are able to understand their duties well, show accuracy in making decisions, and are able to adapt to changes in work situations (Hygia Altonie et al., 2022). In the context of government, the competencies needed are not limited to administrative or technical skills alone, but also to managerial skills, communication skills, cooperative skills, and integrity in carrying out public service tasks. The government through various training and education programs for state apparatus continues to strive to improve the competence of employees to be in line with technological advances and the demands of bureaucratic reform (Seman et al., 2022). However, there are still many employees who have not shown optimal competence,

either due to limited experience, lack of opportunities for self-development, and low work motivation (Andriyani & Hamid, 2024). This condition often affects decreased productivity, delay in task completion, and lack of innovation in the execution of work (Afandi, 2021).

In addition to the competency factor, work digitalization is also an important factor that affects employee performance in the modern era (Putri & Asmike, 2023). Work digitalization includes the use of information and communication technology in daily work activities such as electronic-based administrative systems, the use of digital office applications, and the implementation of electronic document management systems (Farrel Shidqi et al., 2023). The application of work digitalization is able to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and accuracy in the implementation of tasks (Dewi et al., 2022). Employees can work faster, save filing time, speed up communication between units, and reduce the rate of human error (*Human Error*) (Putri & Asmike, 2023). However, the implementation of digitalization also faces its own challenges. Lack of apparatus readiness, limited technological infrastructure, and low understanding of digital systems are often obstacles in the implementation of optimal work digitalization (Ninditama & Porwani, 2023). Therefore, the success of work digitalization is highly dependent on the readiness of human resources who have adequate skills and knowledge as well as management support to carry out continuous coaching and supervision (Wahyuni, 2025b).

In the relationship between competence, work digitalization, and employee performance, communication effectiveness is an important element that acts as a bridge as well as a mediating variable that connects these three factors (Pratantia, 2023). Effective communication allows information to be conveyed clearly, quickly, and without distortion, so that every employee can understand the direction of the policy, work targets, and their role in the organization (K. Handayani et al., 2024). The effectiveness of communication also helps build good coordination between work units, strengthen relationships between individuals, and reduce conflicts and misunderstandings in the implementation of tasks (Stiawan, 2024). In the context of digitalization, effective communication plays an important role in knowledge transfer, application of new systems, and adaptation to the technology used. Without effective communication, the implementation of digital-based work can actually create information gaps and increase employee workload (Paulus et al., 2022). Therefore, the effectiveness of communication has a strategic role in strengthening the influence of competence and work digitalization on improving employee performance.

A review of previous research shows that there is a *Gap Research* Results (inconsistencies) related to the relationship between competencies, work digitalization, communication effectiveness, and employee performance (Permatasari & Irawati, 2021). Some studies have found that competence and digitalization of work have a significant effect on performance, while other studies show different results, i.e. the absence of a significant influence between these variables (Baharrudin et al., 2021; Permatasari & Irawati, 2021; Sugiyanto & Santoso, 2021). This shows that there is a research gap that needs to be explored more deeply. There are four research gaps that are the basis of this study, namely: first, the need to re-test the influence of competency and work digitalization on employee performance by including the effectiveness of communication as a mediating variable, second, the existence of previous findings that show inconsistent results in each variable so that further research is needed to confirm these results, third, there are still limited measurable instruments to assess the impact of communication effectiveness as a mediating variable on

employee performance and fourth, there is still no identification of other moderation or mediation variables that can strengthen or weaken the relationship between the main variables in the context of local government organizations (Hikmah & Lukito, 2021).

The object of this research is focused on the General Section of the Regional Secretariat (Setda) of Jember Regency which has an important function in the implementation of local government administration, including service planning of official documents, management of office facilities, and facilitation of protocol activities of regional heads.

Table 1. Comparison of Target Performance Achievements in 2022-2025

YEAR	QUARTER I		CHAPTER II		QUARTER III		CHAPTER IV	
	TARGET	REALIZATION	TARGET	REALIZATION	TARGET	REALIZATION	TARGET	REALIZATION
2022	32%	11%	61%	40%	84%	65%	100%	94%
2023	29%	11%	50%	29%	84%	58%	100%	93%
2024	27%	13%	52%	30%	78%	48%	100%	76%
2025	30%	11%	54%	28%	86%	50%	100%	80%

Source : Data of the Jember Regency Regional Secretariat (2025)

Table 1. presents the achievement of the performance of the Jember Regency Regional Secretariat's targets for the 2022-2025 period in the form of a comparison between the target and the realization in each quarter, with a general pattern that the realization is still below the target but shows a gradual increase tendency from year to year, especially in the third and fourth quarters which on average have the highest percentage of realization compared to the first and second quarters. In 2022, the realization in the first quarter to fourth only reached 11%, 40%, 65%, and 94% of the targets of 32%, 61%, 84%, and 100%, respectively, indicating a fairly wide gap in the first quarter to third even though the performance was close to the target in the fourth quarter. 2023 shows a gradual improvement with realizations of 11%, 29%, 58%, and 93% against the targets of 29%, 50%, 84%, and 100%, which indicate an increase in consistency in the second and fourth quarters but still low in the first quarter. In 2024, the realization will rise again to 13%, 30%, 48%, and 76% of the targets of 27%, 52%, 78%, and 100%, but the gap between the target and the realization widened, especially in the third and fourth quarters. thus showing that the rate of increase is not enough to pursue the increasingly high target. Meanwhile, the 2025 projection targets the achievement of 30%, 54%, 86%, and 100% in each quarter, with the realization recorded at only 11%, 28%, 50%, and 80%, confirming that there are still significant challenges in meeting the target, especially in the first – third quarters, so that strengthening employee competencies, accelerating the digitalization of work processes, and improving coordination between divisions remains priorities so that the gap between targets and realization can be narrowed in the following years.

This research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of human resource management in the local government environment. Theoretically, this study expands the literature on the role of communication effectiveness as a mediating variable between competence, work digitalization, and employee performance. This research provides empirical evidence that improving competencies and digitizing work will not provide maximum results without effective communication between employees and leaders. Practically, the results of this research can be used as a basis for the General Section

of the Jember Regency Secretariat in developing a strategy to improve performance through digital competency training, evaluation of organizational communication patterns, and optimization of a more integrated information system. Thus, communication effectiveness has the potential to be a link between individual abilities and successful technology application resulting in continuous performance improvements (Aulia et al., 2021).

The novelty in this study lies in the conceptual integration between competence, work digitalization, and communication effectiveness in one model of influence on employee performance, especially in the local government environment. This study not only examines the direct relationship between variables, but also highlights the mediation mechanism through the effectiveness of communication that plays a role in strengthening these relationships. In addition, this research also focuses on local government agencies that are facing the digital transition and the demands of human resource professionalization simultaneously. Thus, the results of the research are expected to provide a new perspective in an effort to strengthen the capacity of the regional bureaucracy and support digital-based governance reform in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competencies (X1)

Competency is a very important term in the world of work and organizations because it relates to a person's ability to carry out their duties or work professionally, effectively, and efficiently. According to (Adi, 2021) Competence is the ability to do a job that includes the skills, knowledge, and work attitude required by the job. This confirms that competence is a combination of three main aspects that support each other, namely knowledge (*Knowledge*), skills (*Skill*), and attitude (*Attitude*).

Digitization of Work (X2)

Work digitalization is the process of changing traditional ways of working, which are usually manual and analog, to a process based on digital technology. According to (O. A. Putri et al., 2022), digitalization is the process of changing from analog to digital forms that significantly change the traditional way of working to digital. (Jennie Rorensia et al., 2025) Digitalization is viewed as the automation of processes using information technology applied in various sectors, including the work environment.

Communication Effectiveness (Z)

Communication effectiveness is a process of conveying information in an optimal way so that the message can be understood and received correctly by other parties so that the message encourages the right response in accordance with the purpose of the communication. According to (Hasin & M Nasir, 2021), effectiveness is measured as how far communication targets, both in terms of quantity, quality, and time, are successfully achieved. The greater the percentage of target achievement, the higher the level of effectiveness of the communication.

Employee Performance (Y)

Performance is a central concept in human resource and organizational management which refers to the work results and work processes carried out by individuals or groups in achieving organizational goals. (Farrel Shidqi et al., 2023) Define performance as the overall ability of a person to work optimally to achieve work goals with rational sacrifices compared to the results obtained.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative research method with a descriptive approach. The population in this study is 109 employees, namely the Jember Regency Regional Secretariat. Based on this study, because the population is not larger than 109 respondents, the author takes 100% of the total population in Employees, namely the Jember Regency Regional Secretariat section of 109. In this study, the author used the *Probability Sampling* with techniques *saturated sampling*. According to Squirrel, (2016) What is meant *Probability Sampling* is a sampling technique that provides equal opportunities or opportunities for each element or member of the population to become a sample. According to Sugiyono (2016) Technique *saturated sampling* is a sample determination technique when all members of the population are used as samples. In this study, to test the hypothesis, the research uses *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) with statistical tools *SmartPLS*. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an integrated approach between factor analysis, structural modeling, and path analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Loading Test

Table 2.
Outer-Loadings Results

Z		Y		X1		X2	
Z1	0.872	Y1	0.892	X1.1	0.779	X2.1	0.898
Z2	0.834	Y2	0.841	X1.2	0.872	X2.2	0.891
Z3	0.743	Y3	0.921	X1.3	0.857	X2.3	0.893
Z4	0.867	Y4	0.903	X1.4	0.821	X2.4	0.865
Z5	0.798	Y5	0.829	X1.5	0.851	X2.5	0.879

Source: Researcher-processed data (2026)

The criteria for the factor of *Outer-loadings* with a value of more than 0.70 are said to be high, while a value of 0.40 – 0.70 can be considered sufficient. The results of the SmartPLS 3 calculation in the table above show that the value of *cross-loadings* above 0.70 is considered high and 0.40–0.60 is sufficient. Signifies that such factors significantly affect the related variables and meet the *convergent* validity criteria well.

Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 3.
Construct Reliability and Validity Results

	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>rho A</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	<i>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</i>
Z	0.855	0.859	0.785	0.822
Y	0.925	0.929	0.944	0.771
X1	0.893	0.896	0.921	0.700
X2	0.931	0.932	0.948	0.784

Source: Researcher-processed data (2026)

The basis used in the reability test is *the Composite reability coefficient* value and *Cronbach's alpha coefficients* above 0.7. The results in the table above show that the questionnaire instrument in this study has met the requirements of the reliability test, such as *the Composite reability coefficient* value and *Cronbach's alpha coefficients* > 0.70. Meanwhile, the root value of AVE and Rho_A of the same variable has been higher above < 0.70. This shows that the criteria for the discriminatory validity test have been met. Thus the instrument used in this study has met all the requirements of the validity test.

Structural Model Testing (*Inner Model*)

a. Calculation of Direct Influence Path Coefficient

Table 4.
Direct Influence Path Coefficient Value

Hypothesis	T Statistics	P values	Remarks
X1 > Y	2.545	0.001	Positive and Significant Effect
X2 > Y	7.811	0.000	Positive and Significant Effect
Z > Y	0.398	0.003	Positive and Significant Effect
X1 > Z	1.665	0.002	Positive and Significant Effect
X2 > Z	3.786	0.005	Positive and Significant Effect

Source: Researcher-processed data (2026)

Results in Table 4. is the result of PLS analysis which will then be interpreted to answer the hypothesis proposed. The explanation of the results of the hypothesis test can be stated as follows:

- The effect of competency (X1) on performance (Y) the analysis results showed that the T Statistics value was 2.545 and the p-value was 0.001. Because the p-value is lower than the significance level of α ($0.001 < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant positive influence of X1 (competence) on Y (performance).
- The effect of work digitalization (X2) on performance (Y) the analysis results show that the T Statistics value is 7.811 and the p-value is 0.000. Because the p-value is lower than the significance level of α ($0.000 < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant positive influence of X2 (digitization of work) on Y (performance).
- The effect of communication effectiveness (Z) on performance (Y) the results of the analysis showed that the Statistics T value was 0.398 and the p-value was 0.003. Because the p-value is lower than the significance level of α ($0.003 < 0.05$). This indicates that

there is a significant positive influence of Z (communication effectiveness) on Y (performance).

- d. The effect of competency (X1) on communication effectiveness (Z) the analysis results showed that the T Statistics value was 1.665 and the p-value was 0.002. Because the p-value is lower than the significance level of α ($0.002 < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant positive influence of X1 (competence) on communication effectiveness (Z).
- e. The effect of work digitalization (X2) on communication effectiveness (Z) the analysis results show that the T Statistics value is 3.786 and the p-value is 0.005. Because the p-value is lower than the significance level of α ($0.005 < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant positive influence of X2 (digitization of work) on communication effectiveness (Z).

b. Calculation of Indirect Influence Pathways

Table 5.

Indirect Influence Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	T Statistics	P values	Remarks
X1 > Z > Y	0.399	0.003	Significant
X2 > Z > Y	0.419	0.002	Significant

Source: Researcher-processed data (2026)

The results given in table 5. above show the indirect influence of the X1 variable (competence) on the influence of the Y variable (performance) mediated by the effectiveness of communication (Z), then the influence of the X2 variable (work digitalization) on the Y variable (performance) through the communication effectiveness variable (Z) as mediation, as follows:

- a. The indirect influence from X1 (competence) to Y (performance) which was mediated by the variable Z (communication effectiveness) showed that the T Statistics value was 0.399 and the p-value was 0.003. Because the p-value is lower than the significance level of α ($0.003 < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant positive influence of X1 (competence) on Y (performance) mediated by communication effectiveness (Z).
- b. The indirect influence from X2 (work digitalization) to Y (performance) which was mediated by the Z variable (communication effectiveness) the analysis results showed that the T Statistics value was 0.419 and the p-value was 0.002. Because the p-value is lower than the significance level of α ($0.002 < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant positive influence of X2 (digitization of work) on Y (performance) mediated by the effectiveness of communication (Z).

Coefficient of Determination R^2

Table 6.

Adjusted R-squared coefficients

Adjusted R-squared coefficients	
Z	0.637
Y	0.797

Source : Data processed research (2026)

The above determination coefficients are presented in the form of *Adjusted R-squared coefficients* in table 6. Based on the *r-square value* in the table, it is shown that the effectiveness of communication is able to explain performance by 63.7% or categorized as moderate, and the remaining 36.3% is explained by other constraints outside those studied in this study. Meanwhile, performance was able to explain the communication effectiveness variable of 79.7% or categorized as moderate correlation, and the remaining 20.3% was explained by other constraints outside of those studied in this study.

Competence affects the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees

Employee competencies have a crucial role in improving employee performance in the Regional Secretariat (Setda) of Jember Regency, because it includes intellectual, practical, and behavioral abilities that support the achievement of administrative tasks and public services effectively. High competence not only ensures the smooth operation of the organization, but also contributes to work efficiency, proper decision-making, and community satisfaction as service recipients. In the context of dynamic local government bureaucracy, strengthening competencies is a key foundation for facing challenges such as administrative digitalization and transparency demands, as demonstrated by various studies of human resource management in the public sector.

The results of the study show that overall competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Regional Secretariat (Setda) employees. The higher the level of competence of employees, the better their performance in completing daily tasks, achieving organizational targets, and providing quality public services. These findings confirm that competence is a key factor that drives the effectiveness of individual and team work. Competent employees tend to be more productive, innovative, and adaptive to the dynamics of local government policies. Among the indicators studied, knowledge and skills emerged as the dominant aspects that shaped superior performance. Employees with a deep understanding of administrative procedures, regulations, and public service practices are proven to be able to work more accurately and efficiently, while technical and non-technical skills such as digital administrative management, problem-solving, and analytical skills speed up work processes and improve the quality of organizational output.

Work attitudes, motives, and critical and strategic thinking skills also show a significant influence on improving employee performance. A positive attitude reflected through discipline, integrity, and responsibility strengthens a commitment to community duties and services. Internal motives such as the desire to achieve and the spirit of going beyond organizational targets are proven to create a competitive yet collaborative work environment, thus encouraging a results-oriented work culture. Meanwhile, the ability to think critically and strategically allows employees to analyze government issues in depth and make the right decisions, especially in supporting the implementation of bureaucratic reform and public service innovation. Thus, competencies in the dimensions of knowledge, skills, attitudes, motives, and strategic thinking skills play a synergistic role in strengthening institutional competitiveness and improving the performance of the Jember Regency Secretariat in a sustainable manner.

The findings of this study are in line with the research (Permatasari & Irawati, 2021) and (Y. I. Handayani & Dimyati, 2024) which states that the dimensions of competence including knowledge, skills, work attitudes, motives, and critical and strategic thinking have a positive effect on the performance of employees in local government agencies. Research

(Liana et al., 2023), (Radista & Edalmen, 2024), (Wind & Ramadhani, 2022), (Nirmah, 2021) and (Munthe et al., 2024) the regional secretariat in East Java also shows that the better the mastery of competency indicators, the higher the performance of employees in administration and public services. Thus, the results of research at the Jember Regency Secretariat strengthen empirical evidence that competency development is an effective strategy for optimizing employee performance in the bureaucratic sector.

Work digitalization affects the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees

Work digitalization plays a strategic role in improving employee performance at the Jember Regency Regional Secretariat (Setda), by changing manual processes to a more efficient and accurate technology-based system. Digitalization not only speeds up administrative workflows and public services, but also reduces human error and increases data transparency. In the era of digital transformation of local governments, the implementation of digitalization is the key to facing the demands of fast and accountable services, as evidenced by public management studies that show a positive relationship between digitalization and employee productivity.

The results of the study show that the overall digitalization of work has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Regional Secretariat (Setda) employees. The more mature the implementation of digitalization, the higher the performance of employees in completing tasks, managing information, and supporting the achievement of organizational goals through faster, more accurate, and measurable work processes. These findings confirm that digitalization drives bureaucratic operational efficiency, so that employees can shift their focus from routine administrative work to value-added and more strategic activities. In this context, the use of digital technology emerged as the dominant indicator, where the use of applications such as SiKeren as a personnel information system and ASN performance has been proven to help track activities, manage mails, and process documents electronically more transparently. Employees who are proficient in operating digital applications and platforms show an increase in speed and accuracy of work, reduce service processing time, and ultimately contribute to increasing public service satisfaction, so that strengthening digital literacy and competency training is a strategic step that cannot be ignored.

In addition, indicators of work process automation, digital system integration, ease of access to information, and the implementation of digital management systems have also been proven to make significant contributions to improving the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees. Automating manual procedures into digital systems speeds up data processing, reporting, and monitoring, which in turn reduces administrative burden and frees up employees' time to focus on analysis, cross-unit coordination, and service innovation. Integration between administration, financial reporting, and population database applications enables real-time cross-sectional data access, strengthening team coordination and data-driven decision-making. Easy access to information without reliance on manual archives creates a more agile work environment, where employees can respond to the needs of the community more quickly and precisely. On the other hand, the implementation of digital management systems such as electronic document management, project monitoring systems, and performance-based staffing applications increases transparency, accountability, and reporting efficiency, thereby strengthening a professional and results-oriented work culture within the Jember Regency Secretariat.

The findings of this study are in line with the research (Prince, 2024) and (Wahyuni, 2025) which states that the dimension of work digitalization including the use of technology, automation, system integration, ease of access to information, and digital management systems have a positive effect on employee performance in local governments. Research (Hayati et al., 2024), (Putri & Asmike, 2023), (Wahyuni, 2025), (Sugiyanto & Santoso, 2021) and (Yulia et al., 2025) the East Java regional secretariat also showed that the better the digitalization, the higher the productivity and efficiency of employees. Thus, the results of research at the Jember Regency Secretariat strengthen empirical evidence that work digitalization is an effective strategy for improving the performance of bureaucratic employees.

Competence affects the effectiveness of communication of Jember Regency Secretariat employees

Employee competence has a fundamental role in increasing the effectiveness of communication in the Regional Secretariat (Setda) of Jember Regency, because it forms the ability to convey information clearly, precisely, and cooperatively between work units and with the community. Solid competencies ensure internal and external communication flows run smoothly, reduce misunderstandings, and support effective bureaucratic coordination. In the context of complex local government, strengthening competencies is a key strategy for transparent and responsive communication, as confirmed by the study of organizational communication in the public sector.

The results of the study showed that overall competence had a positive and significant effect on the communication effectiveness of Jember Regency Regional Secretariat (Setda) employees. The higher the competence that employees have, the more effective their communication will be in conveying messages, receiving and processing feedback, and building synergy of cooperation in the team. These findings confirm that competence is a key driver for the creation of accurate, clear, and collaborative communication in the administrative work environment, thereby supporting the smooth coordination and completion of government tasks. Among the dimensions of competence studied, knowledge and skills emerged as the dominant aspects in improving communication effectiveness. A strong understanding of procedures, regulations, and work practices allows employees to convey administrative and public service information precisely, credibly, and with minimal ambiguity, while technical (such as the use of digital administration) and non-technical (such as analysis and problem-solving) skills help them package messages that are more systematic, solutive, and easy to understand.

In addition, the results of the study also show that work attitudes, motives, and critical and strategic thinking skills make a significant contribution to the communication effectiveness of Jember Regency Secretariat employees. A positive work attitude, reflected through motivation, ethics, responsibility, and integrity, encourages employees to communicate openly, empathically, and respectfully, so that the quality of interaction with colleagues and with the community becomes more harmonious and productive. The internal motive to excel and provide the best service enriches communication with enthusiasm and consistency, which in turn strengthens mutually supportive working relationships within the organization. Meanwhile, the ability to think critically and strategically allows employees to analyze context, formulate targeted messages, and present evidence-based information, so that the communication carried out is not only informative, but also supports more

appropriate decision-making in the implementation of strategic administration and public services.

The findings of this study are in line with the research (Haq et al., 2023) and (Zanra, 2024) which states that the competency dimension including knowledge, skills, work attitudes, motives, and critical and strategic thinking has a positive effect on the effectiveness of employee communication in government agencies. Research (Farrel Shidqi et al., 2023), (Dewi et al., 2023), (Yusuf et al., 2024) and (Bastian et al., 2025) in the East Java regional secretariat also shows that good competence improves information flow and team collaboration. Thus, the results of research on the Jember Regency Secretariat strengthen empirical evidence that competency development is effective for optimal organizational communication.

Work digitalization affects the effectiveness of communication of Jember Regency Secretariat employees

Work digitalization plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness of employee communication at the Jember Regency Regional Secretariat (Setda), by providing fast, accurate, and integrated information channels between units and with the community. Digitalization is changing communication patterns from conventional to digital, reducing time and distance barriers while improving message clarity. In the transformation of digital bureaucracy, this application is the main tool for collaborative and transparent communication, as evidenced by research on technology-based organizational communication in local governments.

The results of the study show that work digitalization as a whole has a positive and significant effect on the effectiveness of communication between employees of the Regional Secretariat (Setda) of Jember Regency. The more advanced the implementation of digitalization, the more effective employee communication is in sharing information in real-time, collaborating across units, and responding to the needs of organizations or communities quickly and precisely. These findings confirm that digitalization enriches administrative communication flows through digital platforms that support transparent data exchange, reduce miscommunication, and improve overall bureaucratic coordination. The use of digital technology is a dominant indicator, where applications such as SiKeren as a personnel information system and ASN performance facilitate the management of letters, electronic documents, and collaborative activity monitoring, thereby increasing the clarity, speed, and efficiency of information exchange between employees. In addition, automation of work processes and ease of access to information speed up data processing without manual dependence, freeing employees to focus on more quality and proactive strategic communication.

Indicators of digital system integration and the implementation of digital management systems also make a strong contribution to the effectiveness of communication between Jember Regency Secretariat employees. Integration between administration, financial reporting and population database applications enables real-time data sharing across units, strengthening coordinated communication and accurate, evidence-based joint decision-making. Automating manual processes into digital systems minimizes miscommunication due to data delays, while digital management systems such as electronic document management and project monitoring increase transparency in performance reporting, creating more accountable, adaptive interactions and supporting responsive public services. Thus,

digitalization not only simplifies routine communication, but also builds a flexible collaborative work culture in the era of digital bureaucratic transformation.

The findings of this study are in line with the research (Wahyuni, 2025) and (Permatasari & Irawati, 2021) which states that the dimension of work digitalization including the use of technology, automation, system integration, ease of access to information, and digital management systems have a positive effect on the effectiveness of employee communication in the government. Research (Farrel Shidqi et al., 2023), (Jennie Rorensia et al., 2025), (Taufik & Information, 2022), (Wardhani, 2024) and (April, 2022) at the East Java regional secretariat also showed that digitalization accelerates the flow of information and collaboration. Thus, the results of research at the Jember Regency Secretariat strengthen empirical evidence that work digitalization is effective for superior organizational communication.

The effectiveness of communication affects the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees

The effectiveness of communication plays a central role in improving employee performance in the Regional Secretariat (Setda) of Jember Regency, because it ensures a clear, collaborative, and results-oriented flow of information between work units and with the community. Effective communication not only reduces misunderstandings, but also builds motivation and coordination that supports the achievement of administrative targets. In the dynamics of regional bureaucracy, this effectiveness is a key pillar for optimal performance, as evidenced by various studies of organizational communication in the public sector.

The results of the study show that the overall effectiveness of communication has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Regional Secretariat (Setda) employees. The more effective the communication that occurs between employees, leaders, and teams, the higher their performance in carrying out administrative tasks, collaborating across units, and achieving organizational goals in a timely manner. These findings confirm that good communication serves as a key catalyst for bureaucratic productivity and efficiency, by reducing misunderstandings and speeding up workflows. Indicators of understanding have proven to be the dominant aspect in influencing employee performance, where a clear understanding of instructions, information, and procedures minimizes errors in the implementation of tasks and increases accuracy in administrative and public service processes. In addition, the pleasure indicator of warm interaction and informal communication creates a harmonious work environment, thus encouraging more sustainable enthusiasm, creativity, and performance.

Indicators of influence on attitudes, better relationships, and actions also contribute strongly to improving the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees. Effective communication forms positive attitudes such as motivation, enthusiasm, and professionalism that align with the organization's vision, strengthening the commitment of individuals and teams to optimal results. Closer interpersonal relationships through transparent communication build trust and coordination between employees and leaders, thereby facilitating daily collaboration and operational efficiency. Meanwhile, the action indicators confirm that communication messages followed by real implementation accelerate the achievement of measurable work targets, making communication a driver of concrete actions in supporting the implementation of local government.

The findings of this study are in line with the research (Taufik & Information, 2022) and (Paulus et al., 2022) which states that the dimensions of communication effectiveness include understanding, pleasure, influence on attitudes, good relationships, and actions that have a positive effect on the performance of employees in government agencies. Research (Sitinjak et al., 2025), (Bastian et al., 2025), (Anggeraini & Adnyana, 2024) and (Permatasari & Irawati, 2021) the East Java regional secretariat also showed that effective communication increases productivity through coordination and motivation. Thus, the results of research at the Jember Regency Secretariat strengthen empirical evidence that the effectiveness of strategic communication is effective for the performance of bureaucratic employees.

Competence affects the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees, through the effectiveness of communication as an intervening variable

Employee competence affects the performance of employees at the Regional Secretariat (Setda) of Jember Regency indirectly through the effectiveness of communication as an intervening variable, where competence forms a strong communication basis to support administrative productivity. Communication effectiveness serves as a bridge that translates employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes into coherent and efficient work actions. In the context of regional bureaucracy, this mediation is crucial to integrate individual capabilities with organizational goals, as shown by the structural equation modeling (SEM) model in the study of human resource management.

The results of the study revealed that competence had a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees with communication effectiveness as an intervening variable. The path test showed a significant competency path to communication effectiveness coefficient as well as a significant communication to performance effectiveness, with indirect effects evident through the Sobel test. This finding means that improving employee competencies will optimize performance through clearer and collaborative communication.

Employee knowledge and skills as part of competence enrich understanding and action in communication, thereby encouraging accurate administrative performance. A strong work attitude and motive create warm interactions and have a positive effect, building team relationships that support the achievement of targets. Meanwhile, strategic critical thinking ensures communication leads to the right decision, strengthening the mediating effect on overall performance.

The findings of this study are in line with the research (N. P. Dewi et al., 2025) and (Andriyani & Hamid, 2024) who found the effectiveness of communication to mediate the relationship between competence and employee performance in local government agencies. Research (Adat et al., 2024), work (Trimadhana, 2025), (Bastian et al., 2025), (Shidqi et al., 2023) and (Adi, 2021) the East Java secretariat also confirmed the role of communication intervening in the SEM model, where competence improves performance through the mediation. Thus, the results of research at the Jember Regency Secretariat strengthen empirical evidence that competency development through effective communication is an integrative strategy for the performance of bureaucratic employees.

Work digitalization affects the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees, through the effectiveness of communication as an intervening variable

Work digitalization affects the performance of employees at the Regional Secretariat (Setda) of Jember Regency indirectly through the effectiveness of communication as an

intervening variable, where digital technology enriches information flows to support administrative productivity. Communication effectiveness serves as a mediator that converts automation and system integration into efficient and responsive team collaboration. In the era of digital bureaucratic transformation, this mediation is essential to unite technological innovation with organizational work dynamics, as evidenced by *the structural equation modeling* (SEM) model in the study *of e-government* and public management.

The results of the study revealed that work digitalization has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees with communication effectiveness as an intervening variable. The path test showed the coefficient of the digitization path to significant communication effectiveness as well as the communication effectiveness to significant performance, with indirect effects evident through *the Sobel test*. These findings mean that advances in digitalization will optimize performance through faster, transparent, and integrated communication.

The use of digital technology and process automation accelerates understanding and communication actions, driving precise administrative performance. System integration and ease of access to information build strong team relationships and pleasant interactions, while digital management systems ensure communication has an effect on attitudes and goal achievement. This mediation effect strengthens digital transformation into an added value for overall employee performance.

The findings of this study are in line with the research (Yulia et al., 2025) and (Wahyuni, 2025) who found the effectiveness of communication to mediate the relationship between digitalization and employee performance in local government. Research (Handayani et al., 2024), (Anggeraini & Adnyana, 2024), (April, 2022), (Hernita et al., 2024) and (Noor & Ahmadi, 2025) the East Java secretariat also confirmed the role of communication intervention in the SEM model, where digitalization improves performance through the mediation. Thus, the results of research at the Jember Regency Secretariat strengthen empirical evidence that work digitalization through effective communication is a holistic strategy for the performance of bureaucratic employees.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the analysis, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Competence has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees. Indicators of knowledge, skills, work attitudes, motives, and critical and strategic thinking consistently encourage administrative productivity, appropriate decision-making, and the achievement of public service targets.
2. Work digitalization has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees. The use of digital technology such as SiKeren, process automation, system integration, ease of access to information, and digital management systems accelerate work efficiency and reduce operational errors.
3. Competence has a positive and significant effect on the effectiveness of communication of Jember Regency Secretariat employees. In-depth knowledge of procedures, analytical skills, responsible attitudes, achievement motives, and strategic thinking form clear, collaborative, and results-oriented communication.

4. Work digitalization has a positive and significant effect on the effectiveness of communication between Jember Regency Secretariat employees. Administrative applications, reporting automation, database integration, quick information access, and digital management create a transparent and real-time communication flow between work units.
5. The effectiveness of communication has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees. A clear understanding of instructions, the pleasure of interaction, the influence on a positive attitude, strong team relationships, and quick actions are the main drivers of productivity and the achievement of organizational goals.
6. Competence has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees with communication effectiveness as an intervening variable. The mediation test confirmed that communication serves as a crucial bridge that converts the dimension of competence into performance through powerful indirect effects.
7. Work digitalization has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Jember Regency Secretariat employees with communication effectiveness as an intervening variable. Effective communication is a mediation process that translates digital innovation into a significant improvement in administrative performance.

Suggestions

Based on the results of this study, the following suggestions can be proposed:

1. Practical Advice

For Practical Advice for the Jember Regency Secretariat, it is recommended to regularly hold digital-based competency training for all employees, with special emphasis on increasing knowledge of the latest administrative procedures, mastering digital administration skills such as the SiKeren application and similar platforms, as well as developing strategic and critical thinking skills; as well as accelerating the integration of digital systems across all work units, Building an open communication culture through *regular workshops, discussion forums, and user-friendly digital collaboration platforms*, as well as conducting periodic evaluations of employee performance using communication effectiveness mediation indicators, accompanied by providing competitive incentives for outstanding employees in the field of digitalization and communicative competence, so that overall they can strengthen individual and team performance through better communication effective, collaborative, and adaptive to modern bureaucratic dynamics.

2. Theoretical Suggestions

Based on the determination coefficient (*Adjusted R-squared*) in Table 6., communication effectiveness was able to explain the variation in employee performance by 63.7% (moderate category), while performance explained communication effectiveness by 79.7% (moderate correlation), with the rest influenced by external factors outside the research model (36.3% and 20.3%). Therefore, further research is recommended to examine moderation variables such as organizational culture or transformational leadership on competency relationships, digitalization, communication effectiveness, and employee performance in other regional secretariats in East Java, as well as conduct longitudinal studies to test the stability of the mediation effect after the implementation

of full e-government. In addition, it is necessary to expand the sample to other units such as health centers in Jember Regency with *a mixed methods approach* (quantitative SEM and qualitative interviews) to generalize the findings and explore the remaining explanatory factors (36.3% and 20.3%), while adding variables such as intrinsic motivation to uncover obstacles to the implementation of digitalization in the dynamics of field communication.

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