
**THE ROLE OF MOTIVATIONAL MEDIATION IN IMPROVING THE
PERFORMANCE OF TRANSPORTATION SECTOR EMPLOYEES: THE
DYNAMICS OF TRAINING AND COMPETENCY**

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the importance of improving the quality of human resources in the transportation sector, particularly at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember, as an effort to achieve optimal operational performance. This research adopts a quantitative approach, a numerical method employing the Partial Least Square (PLS) technique with WarpPLS 8.0 software. The group includes every worker of PT Kereta Api Indonesia. Daop XI Jember, with a sample of 283 respondents selected using probability sampling through proportional random. Information was gathered via surveys and examined utilizing tests for validity and reliability, along with structural model assessment. The findings suggest that both training and skill positively and significantly influence motivation, and that training, skill, and motivation together also positively and significantly impact employee performance. Nonetheless, skill does not greatly influence performance via motivation, indicating that competence directly influences performance without being mediated by motivation. The originality of this research is found in analyzing motivation as an intermediary factor. These results add to theoretical understanding in creating models for human resource performance and offer practical insights for managing human resources within the transportation industry.

Keywords: Training, Competence, Motivation, Performance

INTRODUCTION

In today's global era, every company needs quality management. Optimal management can improve a company's efficiency, thereby strengthening its ability to compete with other companies. As one of the most important factors, human resources hold the key to a company and also determine its achievement since the function of human resources is to organize, execute, and supervise different operational tasks within the company (Iis et al., 2022). Human resources are the unique assets that possess logic, emotions, understanding, abilities, drive, vitality, and effort. The capabilities found in human resources impact the organization's attempts to reach its objectives. With the development of technology, the development of information, the availability of capital and even adequate materials, an organization struggles to meet its objectives without people to support it. The importance of quality human resources is not only applicable to the industrial sector in general, but is also very relevant to the transit industry, which holds a crucial position in promoting movement and national economic growth.

The transportation industry plays a crucial role in the national economy by facilitating connectivity and economic growth. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the Transportation and Warehousing sector experienced the highest growth in the first quarter of 2024, reaching 13.42% year-on-year. The Indonesia Emas 2045 Vision emphasizes the necessity of a robust transportation infrastructure, which requires human resources that are both quantitatively and qualitatively prepared. Organizations must employ adaptable, innovative, and well-trained personnel to drive innovation and achieve organizational objectives. Consequently, organizational success is closely linked to employee performance, with individual competencies serving as a key determinant of optimal outcomes.

Mariane et al., (2020), define employee performance as the ability to apply skills. Soedarsono (2021), describes performance as work results, both quality and quantity, achieved according to assigned responsibilities. Iis et al., (2022), state that ability and motivation interact to affect performance. Ability comes from knowledge and skills; motivation arises from attitude and conditions. In transportation, employee performance is strategic due to high demands for speed, accuracy, safety, and service. Employees with good knowledge, skills, and motivation run operations efficiently, ensure safety, and enhance service. Improving HR performance improves internal productivity and directly supports mobility, customer satisfaction, and national transportation stability.

The development of the Human Resource Performance Index (HRPI) in the Indonesian transportation sector from 2020 to 2024 has demonstrated a gradual increase; however, actual performance continues to lag behind government targets. According to data from the Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia, the HRPI rose from 0.61 in 2020 to 0.66 in 2023, while the government's targets were 0.65 in 2020 and 0.73 in 2023. In 2024, the HRPI increased to 0.69, representing a 0.03-point improvement from 2023, but still falling short of the target of 0.75. The persistent gap, which remains stable or slightly widens each year, highlights ongoing challenges in enhancing human resource competencies. This shortfall suggests persistent issues in competency development, productivity, and service quality within the transportation sector workforce. Addressing these challenges requires systematic competency development, with targeted, relevant, and sustainable training programs

identified as a key strategy. Robbins & Judge (2014), emphasize that employee performance is shaped by factors such as training, competency, and motivation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Performance

The definition of performance according to Susanto et al., (2021) is a collection of actions taken by workers that can either help or hinder the attainment of the goals set by the organization. Performance is also influenced by individual abilities, work motivation, and organizational support, so it can be interpreted that performance does not only depend on individuals, but also on the environment and work systems that facilitate the achievement of targets (Mangkunegara, 2017). Meanwhile, Bernadin & Russell (2013) describe performance as the outcome of six key areas, specifically: quality, quantity, punctuality, cost efficiency, level of oversight required, and influence on relationships. Meanwhile, according to Rivai in Farida (2019), Performance is an overall depiction of a business over a specific timeframe, reflecting the outcomes or accomplishments shaped by the company's operations while utilizing its resources. Performance is deemed positive and successful when the intended objectives are met (Aziz et al., 2021).

Motivation

Nabi et al., (2017), motivation a process that begins with physiological deficiencies or needs that activate motivation, which refers to the supply of motivation that can inspire a person to be eager to collaborate, perform well, and combine all their efforts to attain contentment. Varotsis (2019) adds that motivation is also a desire for a level of responsiveness that directs behavior towards a specific goal or level of performance. Therefore, motivation can be defined as a mechanism that prompts an individual to perform a task, with the purpose of assessing the extent, direction, and willingness of people in their attempts to reach the intended outcome. Hasibuan (2019) explains that, fundamentally, motivation is an effort to convey something that can make a person do what they want (Wijayanto & Riani, 2021).

Training

According to Asriadi (2024), Training involves providing particular knowledge, abilities, and mindsets to employees, enabling them to enhance their skills and perform their duties more effectively, in line with established standards. Meanwhile, Nor (2025) states that training is an investment for staff to enhance their knowledge, talents, and competencies, which can aid in reaching an organization's objectives and improve employee productivity and the standard of services offered to the community. Furthermore, Mariane et al., (2020) define training as a method of instructing employees in knowledge, skills, and behaviors to enhance their abilities and improve how they perform their duties, in line with established standards. In keeping with this perspective, Noe (2020) claims that training is an organized attempt to gain abilities, information, skills, and behaviors that can enhance performance.

Competence

According to Asriadi (2024), Competence refers to the ability to perform a job, incorporating various elements such as understanding, abilities, and work behaviors that align with the company's established criteria. Furthermore, Wijayanto & Riani (2021) Highlight that competence involves the application of expertise and abilities in order to reach

the best possible results. Meanwhile, according to Rusianto & Khasmir (2024), Personal abilities within a company are essential for enhancing the overall effectiveness of the organization. According to Susanto et al., (2021) competency is a key trait that an individual has, allowing them to achieve outstanding performance in a specific job, position, or circumstance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative strategy, utilizing the Partial Least Square (PLS) technique through WarpPLS 8.0 software. The target group for this research consisted of all staff members of PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember, with a total sample of 283 participants, selected using probability sampling (equal likelihood sampling), specifically proportional random sampling. Information was gathered via surveys and examined through checks for validity and reliability, in addition to testing the structural model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The process of hypothesis testing relies on the findings from the PLS SEM model assessment, which includes all the variables that support the hypothesis examination. In the PLS model, when competency variables are included as mediating factors, it is clarified that these additional variables will enhance the understanding of employee performance.

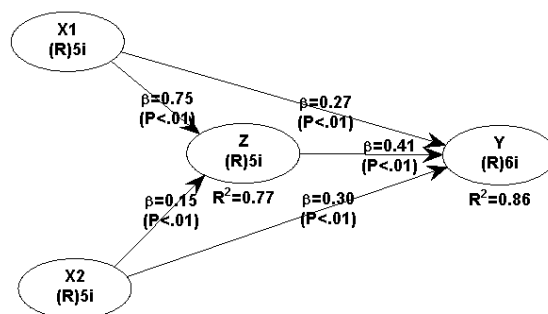


Figure 1.
Path Analysis Results

Calculation of the Direct Influence Path Coefficient

Table 1.

Direct Influence Path Coefficient Values

Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	P Values	Description
X1 → Z	0.752	<0.001	Significant
X2 → Z	0.152	0.005	Significant
X1 → Y	0.273	<0.001	Significant
X2 → Y	0.295	<0.001	Significant
Z → Y	0.409	<0.001	Significant

According to the table above, the influence of X1 on Y yields a path coefficient of 0.752 with a p-value of less than 0.001. Thus, these findings indicate that training (X1) has a notable impact on motivation (Z).

Next, the analysis of path coefficients reveals that the influence of competence (X2) on motivation (Z) results in a path coefficient of 0.152 with a p-value of 0.005. Hence, these results imply that competence (X2) significantly affects motivation (Z).

In addition, the relationship between training (X1) and performance (Y) is marked by a path coefficient of 0.273 and a p-value of less than 0.001. This indicates a significant correlation between competency and performance.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that the influence of competency (X2) on performance (Y) results in a path coefficient of 0.295 with a p-value under 0.001. Since the p-value is below the significance level of α ($0.001 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that competency (X2) has a significant effect on performance (Y).

Lastly, the results indicate that the impact of motivation (Z) on performance (Y) has a path coefficient of 0.409 with a p-value below 0.001. Because the p-value is less than the significance level of α ($0.001 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that motivation (Z) significantly affects performance (Y).

Indirect Influence Path Coefficient Calculation

Table 2.

Indirect Influence Path Coefficient Values

Hypothesis	Indirect and Total Effect	P Values for sums of indirect effect	Description
X1 → Z → Y	0.307	<0.001	Significant
X2 → Z → Y	0.062	0.69	Not Significant

According to the findings from the indirect effect assessment in Table 4.12, the information indicates that the indirect influence of the training variable (X1) on performance (Y) via motivation (Z) resulted in a path coefficient of 0.307 with a p-value of less than 0.001. Given that the p-value is lower than the significance level α ($0.001 < 0.05$), the hypothesis is supported, indicating a significant influence of training (X1) on performance (Y) through motivation (Z).

The indirect influence of the competency variable (X2) on performance (Y) via motivation (Z) yielded a path coefficient of 0.62 with a p-value of 0.69. Since the p-value exceeds α (> 0.05), the hypothesis is rejected, meaning there is no significant influence of competence (X2) on performance (Y) through motivation (Z).

Coefficient of Determination

Table 3

Coefficient of Determination

No	Hypothesis	R-square
1	X1	-
2	X2	-
3	Z	0.774

4

Y

0.857

From the outcomes of the examination regarding the effect of training (X1) and competence (X2) on motivation (Z), a determination coefficient (R^2) of 0.774 was achieved. This figure reveals that the training and competence elements account for 77.4% of the motivation element, whereas the 22.6% left over is attributed to other factors not covered by the research model. According to the criteria for interpretation, this percentage is classified as having a strong influence, meaning that the model effectively explains the changes in the motivation element.

Additionally, the findings from the analysis concerning how training (X1), competence (X2), and motivation (Z) affect performance (Y) reveal a determination coefficient (R^2) of 0.857. This shows that the three factors successfully account for 85.7% of the changes in performance, while 14.3% remains affected by external factors not included in this research. This number is categorized as very strong, suggesting that the model has significant forecasting ability regarding the performance variable.

The Effect of Training on Motivation

The assertion in the initial hypothesis indicates that training influences motivation. Following the examination and assessment of the data, the findings reveal that training considerably impacts the motivation levels of employees at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember, confirming that H1 is supported. This is attributed to factors associated with training that affect the motivation of the employees at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember. The better the training provided to employees, the higher their motivation to work. At PT KAI Daop XI Jember, this can be explained through various training programs that are provided regularly, such as training on work safety, customer service, and improving technical skills in railways. These training programs not only improve technical abilities but also foster a spirit of work because employees feel valued and involved in their personal development, which also enables PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember to achieve its goals.

This research is in line with supporting theories, where the results are in accordance with Locke's Goal Setting Theory (1968), which explains that training can increase motivation through the setting of clear and challenging work goals. In this research, notable resemblances can be found with earlier investigations carried out by (Harahap et al., 2023), (Aziz et al., 2021), (Rusianto & Khasmir, 2024) and (Guterres et al., 2020) stated that there is a significant influence between training and motivation.

The Effect of Competence on Motivation

The claim made in the second hypothesis indicates that competence influences motivation. Upon conducting tests and examining the data, the findings reveal that competence notably impacts the motivation of workers at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember, confirming that H2 is valid. This is a result of factors associated with competence that affect the motivation of employees at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember. These aspects of competence include employee skills, employee knowledge, employee self-concept (attitude), employee characteristics, and employee motives. This indicates that workers who possess strong talents, skills, and understanding are generally more driven in performing their responsibilities.

This research aligns with earlier supportive research, which illustrates that people are likely to be more enthusiastic when they believe they are skilled and able to excel in their tasks. Similarly, this research shares noteworthy connections with prior studies carried out by (Harahap et al., 2023), (Rusianto & Khasmir, 2024), (Parashakti et al., 2020), and (Tarigan & Setiawan, 2020), which state that there is a significant influence between competence and motivation.

The Effect of Training on Performance

The assertion in the third hypothesis indicates that training influences performance. From the outcomes of assessments and data evaluation conducted, it was discovered that training significantly impacts the performance of employees at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember. Therefore, the third hypothesis H3 is validated and acknowledged as accurate. This is also linked to factors associated with training that affect employee performance at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember. These training factors encompass essential content, utilized techniques, trainer expertise, participant involvement, and evaluation of the training.

As stated by Hasan & Chowdhury (2023), training programs are crucial for enhancing employee performance to execute their roles and responsibilities efficiently. Consequently, the training provided by PT Kereta Api Indonesia is capable of boosting performance as intended. This conclusion is reinforced by the findings of descriptive analysis, which indicates that, overall, the respondents expressed agreement or positive feedback regarding employee training at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember.

This research aligns with earlier supportive studies that describe training as an investment in human resources that enhances a person's knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve better performance, confirming the results of earlier researchers who likewise found notable outcomes. Specifically, studies by (Aziz et al., 2021), (Jelatu et al., 2023), (Hasan & Chowdhury, 2023), (Harahap et al., 2023), (Elnaga & Imran, 2013), (Okumu et al., 2018), and (Bhardwaj, 2014) stated that there is a significant influence between training and performance.

The Influence of Competence on Performance

According to the fourth hypothesis, the variable related to competency influences performance. After conducting tests and examining the data, it became clear that competency significantly impacts the performance of employees at PT Kereta Api Indonesia, thus leading to the acceptance of the fourth hypothesis H4. This impact can be understood through various competency factors that directly relate to enhancing performance, such as skills, knowledge, self-perception, character traits, and employee motivation.

Competency is a key factor in boosting performance. As noted by Wijayanto & Riani (2021), competency is defined as the effective use of one's knowledge and skills in the workplace to achieve the best outcomes. This highlights that competency plays a crucial role in enhancing employee performance, further supported by descriptive analysis which indicates that a majority of respondents had positive feedback regarding competency aspects.

This research aligns with concepts that back Goal Setting Theory (Locke, 1968), suggesting that employees with higher competence are more inclined to set and successfully accomplish work-related goals efficiently, corroborating findings from previous studies that have also shown significant outcomes. These include research conducted by (Wijayanto & Riani, 2021), (Rusianto & Khasmir, 2024), (Harahap et al., 2023), (Nurzaman & Fadhlillah,

2023), (Wijayanti & Sari, 2023), (Martini et al., 2024), and (Tarigan & Setiawan, 2020) state that there is a significant influence between competence and performance.

The Influence of Motivation on Performance

According to the fifth hypothesis, the variable of motivation has an impact on the performance variable. After conducting tests, it has been revealed that motivation significantly influences the performance of employees at PT Kereta Api Daop XI Jember, confirming that H5 is accepted. This influence can be attributed to various facets of motivation that relate to employee performance at PT Kereta Api Daop XI Jember. These motivational facets encompass physical requirements, safety requirements, social requirements, esteem requirements, and the desire for achievement.

This research aligns with established theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943), which outlines that motivation develops when people attempt to meet their needs, beginning with basic physiological needs and progressing to self-actualization, which eventually enhances performance. This is consistent with the results from earlier studies that also yielded significant findings, including research conducted by (Nurzaman & Fadhilillah, 2023), (Nabi et al., 2017), (Mwabu & Were, 2019), (Harahap et al., 2023), (Carvalho et al., 2020), and (Wijayanto & Riani, 2021) stating that there is a significant influence between competence and performance.

The Effect of Training on Performance through Motivation

According to the findings from examining the impact of the training variable on the performance variable through motivation, a path coefficient of 0.307 and a p-value of less than 0.001 were found. Since the p-value is below the significance threshold α (0.001 < 0.05), hypothesis H6 is accepted, indicating a notable influence of training on performance mediated by motivation.

This outcome aligns with Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2019), which claims that training assists employees in comprehending their job objectives clearly and enhances their motivation to meet these goals. Additionally, it matches the results from other researchers who reported similar significant findings. Specifically, studies conducted by (Aziz et al., 2021), and (Titinawati et al., 2025) stated that there is a significant effect of training on performance through motivation.

The Influence of Competence on Performance through Motivation

According to the outcomes of evaluating the competence variable's effect on performance via motivation, a path coefficient of 0.062 and a p-value of 0.69 were found. Since the p-value exceeds α (0.001 > 0.05), H7 is dismissed, indicating that there is no considerable effect of competence on performance through motivation.

This research builds on earlier studies that indicate individuals who possess high competence usually exhibit consistent intrinsic motivation, meaning that supplementary external motivation does not consistently lead to a significant enhancement in performance. Research conducted by Rusianto & Khasmir (2024) shows that the competence variable does not affect performance through motivation.

CONCLUSION

According to the research results mentioned earlier, this study concludes that the training at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember positively influences both motivation and performance. However, the skills at PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember do not

impact performance through motivation, suggesting that these skills directly enhance employee performance without relying on motivation as an intermediary.

For PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember, it is essential to keep improving training that aligns with job requirements and advancements in railway technology. Training that is well-structured and specific is anticipated to boost employee skills and cultivate lasting work motivation, which will positively affect performance and customer service. Additionally, PT Kereta Api Indonesia Daop XI Jember should continue enhancing skills through both technical and non-technical training, career advancement programs, and regular performance assessments. By taking these measures, employees are expected to perform in a more professional, disciplined, and efficient manner according to the relevant operational standards, thus aiding in the successful attainment of the company's objectives.

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