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## THE INFLUENCE OF COMPETENCY AND PROFESSIONALISM ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH EMPLOYEES' WORK SPIRIT AT THE DPRD SECRETARIAT EAST LUWU DISTRICT

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### Abstract:

Employee competency and professionalism are considered important factors that can improve performance. Apart from that, employee morale also has a significant role in mediating the relationship between competence, professionalism and employee performance. This research aims to examine the influence of competence and professionalism on employee performance with employee morale as an intervening variable at the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat. The research was conducted at the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat. The population in this study included all 85 East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employees as well as the research sample. The data analysis techniques used are quantitative analysis and correlation analysis. Data is collected through a questionnaire and will be processed using the SmartPLS statistical tool. The research results show that employee competency has a positive and significant effect on employee morale and performance. Employee professionalism also shows a positive and significant influence on employee morale and performance. Work morale has a positive effect on employee performance, besides that work morale is able to act as a mediating variable that connects competence and professionalism with employee performance. Competence and professionalism are not only important individually, but also support each other through work enthusiasm to achieve optimal performance in the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat.



## Introduction

Employee performance is one of the key factors that determines the success of an organization in achieving its goals and vision. In the government environment, especially at the Secretariat of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of East Luwu Regency, optimal employee performance is very necessary to support the implementation of the DPRD's complex and diverse duties and functions. Therefore, it is important to identify factors that influence employee performance so that it can be improved continuously.

One factor that is believed to have a significant influence on employee performance is competence. Competency includes the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to carry out tasks well (Willian et al., 2021). Employees who have high competence tend to be more able to complete their tasks effectively and efficiently (Chinnapong et al., 2021). Competency is the work ability of each individual which includes aspects of knowledge, skills and work attitudes that are in accordance with established standards. Competency is a combination of skills, knowledge and behavior that can be observed and applied critically for the success of an organization and the work performance and personal contribution of employees to their organization. (Sukalova et al., 2022).

Apart from competence, professionalism is also considered an important factor influencing performance. Professionalism reflects employee commitment to high standards of ethics, integrity and work quality. Professional employees will be more responsible, disciplined and consistent in carrying out their duties (Mekoth et al., 2023). Professionalism is a match between the capabilities of the bureaucracy and the needs of the task so that it is carried out with high quality, in the right time, carefully, and with procedures that are easy to understand and follow (Iskamto, 2022).

However, competence and professionalism alone are not enough to guarantee optimal performance. Employee morale also plays a crucial role in influencing performance. Work morale describes the enthusiasm, motivation and energy that employees have in carrying out their duties (Srirangarajan & Bhaskar, 2011). Employees who have high work morale tend to be more proactive, creative and oriented towards achieving the best results (Prabhu & Koodamara, 2022).

The results of the performance assessment show whether human resources have met the company's demands, both in terms of quality and quantity (Buil et al., 2019). Information in employee performance appraisals is a reflection of whether the company is developing or not. For organizations, the results of employee performance appraisals have a very important meaning and role in making decisions about various matters, such as identifying the need for recognition programs, placements, promotions, reward systems and various other aspects of the overall process of effective human resource management. (Kazmi & Javaid, 2022).

The performance of employees in the government environment, including at the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat, is one of the main indicators of an organization's success in carrying out its duties and functions. Optimal performance does not only depend on the technical abilities or knowledge possessed by employees, but also on various other factors such as competence, professionalism and work enthusiasm. However, there are several problems that need to be identified and resolved to understand how these factors interact with each other and influence employee performance.

Initial observations and results show that many employees do not have sufficient competence to carry out their duties effectively. This competency gap can be caused by a lack of training, limited work experience, or a mismatch between the skills possessed and job demands. Additionally, the level of professionalism among employees can vary greatly. There are employees who are very dedicated and committed to their work, while others may lack the necessary professional attitude. These differences can affect discipline, work ethics, and responsibility in carrying out assigned tasks. Employee morale often fluctuates due to various internal and external factors. Factors such as working conditions, organizational environment, management policies, and work-life balance can influence employee motivation and enthusiasm at work. Employees with low morale tend to be less productive and do not take initiative.

Each organization has unique dynamics and challenges, including the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat. Existing research is often not contextual enough to address the specific problems faced by these organizations. Therefore, specific research is needed to understand the dynamics and influence of relevant factors on employee performance within the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat. Based on these data and phenomena, it is necessary to carry out research entitled *The Influence of Competency and Professionalism on Performance through Employee Work Morale at the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat*.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Competence***

Competency is a very important concept in human resource management and organizational performance. Competency includes the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes needed to carry out tasks effectively (J Sitepu et al., 2022). Luthan et al., (2019) defines competence as the knowledge, skills and abilities that a person has, which become part of him, so that he can carry out certain cognitive, affectional and psychomotor behavior performances.

Another definition of competency is the fundamental characteristics of an individual that are related to effective or superior performance in a job or situation (Alexandermaramis et al., 2019). From the various views above, it can be concluded that competence is the ability to carry out tasks or work based on knowledge, skills and supported by attitudes that are characteristic of the individual.

Competency is a combination of various elements such as skills, knowledge and personal attributes to achieve superior performance. In its application, competency is very useful for developing human resources, education, and managing organizational performance.

Dimensions and indicators of competency variables help in identifying and measuring important aspects of an individual's ability to carry out certain tasks.

Competencies include five main dimensions: knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and values, and personal characteristics (Klepić, 2022) namely: Knowledge: Information and facts a person knows that are relevant to a particular job or task. This knowledge includes the theoretical and practical understanding necessary to carry out the job well; Skills: The ability to perform specific technical or procedural tasks efficiently and effectively. These skills can be acquired through formal training or practical experience; Ability: The capacity to perform various types of physical or mental activities. These abilities include aspects such as problem solving, creativity, and analytical abilities; Attitudes and Values: Views or feelings that influence how a person approaches a task or job. Positive attitudes and values can increase employee motivation and commitment; Personal Characteristics: Individual aspects such as personality, motivation, and interests that influence work behavior. Appropriate personal characteristics can help individuals adapt well in a dynamic work environment.

Competency is not just about having the right skills, but also about how to use those skills in an effective and efficient way to achieve desired results. This research will use the competency dimensions proposed by Klepić, (2022) which consists of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and personal characteristics.

### ***Professionalism***

Professionalism is an essential concept in various fields of work, referring to a set of values, attitudes and behavior expected from individuals who carry out their profession. According to Sunyoung & Hyojung, (2022), professionalism includes a commitment to high ethical standards, technical competence, and dedication to quality service.

Professionalism not only includes knowledge and skills, but also reflects how individuals carry themselves in the work environment and their interactions with coworkers, clients, and the public. According to Fikri et al., (2021), high professionalism is often associated with emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions as well as understand and influence the emotions of others. Professional employees typically have high emotional intelligence, which allows them to work better in teams, handle conflict effectively, and provide exceptional service to clients.

Apart from that, professionalism is also related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Research shows that employees who feel valued and treated with respect at work are more likely to have high job satisfaction and loyalty to their organizations (Qurtubi, 2023). Thus, professionalism not only impacts individual performance but also the health and stability of the organization as a whole.

Thomas, (2023) describes professionalism as a layered structure, with a basic layer that includes competence and honesty, followed by layers that include ethical values, commitment to service, and continuous development. The top of the pyramid reflects idealism and dedication to advancing the profession. It emphasizes that all aspects of professionalism are interrelated and form the foundation for sustainable professional practice. By adopting this approach, organizations can identify areas that require special attention and design more effective interventions to improve professionalism in the workplace.

Professionalism can be divided into several dimensions that cover various aspects of professional attitudes and behavior. According to Qurtubi, (2023), there are several main dimensions of professionalism that will be used in this research, namely: Technical and Scientific Competence in the form of the ability to apply technical knowledge and skills effectively in relevant work situations; Ethics and Integrity in the form of a commitment to ethical principles, including honesty, fairness and responsibility; Commitment to Service in the form of dedication to provide high quality services oriented to the best interests of clients or patients; Accountability in the form of readiness to be responsible for actions and decisions taken in professional practice; Professional Attitude in the form of behavior that is polite, respectful, and oriented towards collaboration with colleagues and clients.

### ***Spirit At Work***

Work morale is an important variable that influences employee performance and organizational productivity. Work morale can be defined as the level of enthusiasm, dedication and energy possessed by employees in carrying out their duties. Work morale reflects a positive attitude towards work, which is demonstrated through active involvement, high motivation, and the desire to achieve organizational goals. According to Suhery & Nurofik, (2020), work morale is a condition where employees feel motivated and emotionally involved in their work. Employees with high work morale tend to show strong commitment, actively participate in organizational activities, and strive to achieve optimal performance.

Work morale plays an important role in determining employee performance and organizational success. Employees who have high work morale tend to show better performance, high creativity and initiative in completing their tasks. Research by Hadisyah & Aqsa, (2022) shows that high work morale is positively related to job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Apart from that, high work morale also contributes to improving the quality of relationships between employees and a more harmonious work environment. Passionate employees are more likely to support their coworkers, participate in teams, and contribute to the achievement of shared goals. This in turn creates a positive and collaborative work culture, which is critical to the long-term success of an organization.

Work morale can be analyzed through several main dimensions that cover various aspects of employee attitudes and behavior. According to Bagis et al., (2020), work enthusiasm has three main dimensions, namely: Vigor, a high level of energy and mental resilience when working, which is characterized by the willingness to try hard and face challenges at work; Dedication, a strong sense of involvement in work, which is shown through enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and a sense of meaning in the work done; Absorption, a condition where employees are truly focused and immersed in their work so that time seems to pass quickly. This research will use the dimensions proposed by Bagis et al., (2020) which consists of vigor, dedication and absorption which will be used and developed according to the needs of the research to be carried out.

### ***Employee Performance***

Employee performance refers to the level of success of employees in carrying out the duties and responsibilities assigned to them in accordance with the standards set by the organization. Employee performance is the result of work achieved by individuals in an organization related



to the implementation of tasks assigned based on ability, experience and sincerity in work. (Loan, 2020).

According to Aliyyah et al., (2021) Employee performance is the result of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out his duties in accordance with the responsibilities given to him. Employee performance is not only influenced by individual abilities and skills, but also by motivation, job satisfaction, and work environment. Based on the definition above, it can be concluded that employee performance is an accumulation of what an employee produces or does in relation to their duties and responsibilities according to their abilities.

Employee performance is a critical aspect in organizational success, reflecting the extent to which employees can achieve the work standards set. Performance dimensions include quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, initiative, and cooperation, all of which can be measured through various indicators such as productivity, customer satisfaction, attendance, quality of work results, competence, and compliance with procedures (Noorazem et al., 2021).

Employee performance can be analyzed through various dimensions that cover important aspects of work. Several main dimensions that are often used in measuring employee performance include: Work Quality: includes thoroughness, accuracy and perfection of work results; Work Quantity: includes employee work volume and production capacity; Punctuality: includes punctuality in completing daily tasks, projects and other responsibilities; Effectiveness: includes the employee's ability to plan, organize and carry out their duties well; Initiative: includes employees' ability to innovate, solve problems, and make the right decisions without waiting for instructions from superiors; Teamwork: includes effective communication, the ability to collaborate, and building harmonious working relationships (Al-Zoubi et al., 2023). What is used to measure the level of employee performance in this study uses the dimensions of work quality, work quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, initiative, cooperation proposed by Al-Zoubi et al., (2023).

### **Hypothesis Development**

Research conducted by Fatimah et al., (2019) shows that employees who have high competence tend to have better work morale. This is because good competency makes employees feel more confident and able to face work challenges more effectively. High competency also allows employees to complete tasks more quickly and efficiently, thereby reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction. Another study by Lubis et al., (2022) states that adequate competence gives employees the ability to achieve desired work results, which in turn increases work morale. Good competencies also enable employees to contribute more to the organization, which makes them feel more valued and motivated. Based on previous research and variable relationships, a hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

***H1: Competence has a positive and significant effect on work morale***

Study Guliyev et al., (2019) shows that high professionalism tends to increase employee morale. This is because employees who are committed to high professional standards feel more involved and have a greater sense of responsibility for their work. This professional attitude creates a positive and supportive work environment, which ultimately increases work morale. Liasidou et al., (2023) in his research found that high professionalism, which is characterized by integrity and responsibility, is positively related to work morale. Employees who uphold

professional values tend to feel more satisfied and motivated in their work because they feel their work is meaningful and makes a significant contribution. Based on previous research and variable relationships, a hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

***H2: Professionalism has a positive and significant effect on work morale***

Hadisyah & Aqsa, (2022) shows that high work morale has a positive impact on employee performance. Employees who have high work morale tend to be more motivated, more productive, and more creative in completing their tasks. High work morale also increases the level of employee resilience to work pressure and stress, which ultimately improves their performance. Mohamad Mochklas et al., (2023) found that work morale is closely related to employee performance through increased involvement and dedication to work. Employees who are passionate about work show greater commitment to organizational goals and are more willing to put in extra effort to achieve optimal results. Based on previous research and variable relationships, a hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

***H3: Work morale has a positive and significant effect on employee performance***

Research by Fatimah et al., (2019), which examined the relationship between employee competency and employee performance in multinational companies found that employee competency, especially in terms of technical skills, interpersonal skills, and managerial skills, had a significant positive impact on employee performance. These findings indicate that employees who have competencies that are relevant to their work tend to achieve better performance. Another relevant research is research by Sutaguna et al., (2023), which examined the relationship between employee competency and employee performance found that employee competency, including academic skills, managerial skills, and interpersonal abilities, contributed to increased academic performance and organizational effectiveness. Based on previous research and variable relationships, a hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

***H4: Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance***

Several studies show that a high level of professionalism contributes to improving employee performance, and conversely, good performance can also strengthen individual professionalism. Research by Liasidou et al., (2023) found that employees who demonstrate a strong professional attitude tend to perform better. A professional attitude that includes integrity, responsibility, and commitment to ethical and quality standards, helps employees to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. Study Suyatno et al., (2022) shows that employees who internalize professional values tend to be more focused and diligent in carrying out their responsibilities, which directly impacts the quality and quantity of their work results. Based on previous research and variable relationships, a hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

***H5: Professionalism has a positive and significant effect on employee performance***

Research by Ernawan et al., (2021) concluded that high competence can increase work morale, which in turn influences employee performance positively. In addition, research by Dewi & Hoesada, (2020) shows that work morale has an important role in connecting competence with employee performance. Study Sitepu et al., (2022) researching the effect of competence on employee performance through work morale, the results of their research found that competence had a positive effect on work morale, which in turn had a positive effect on employee performance. Based on previous research and variable relationships, a hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

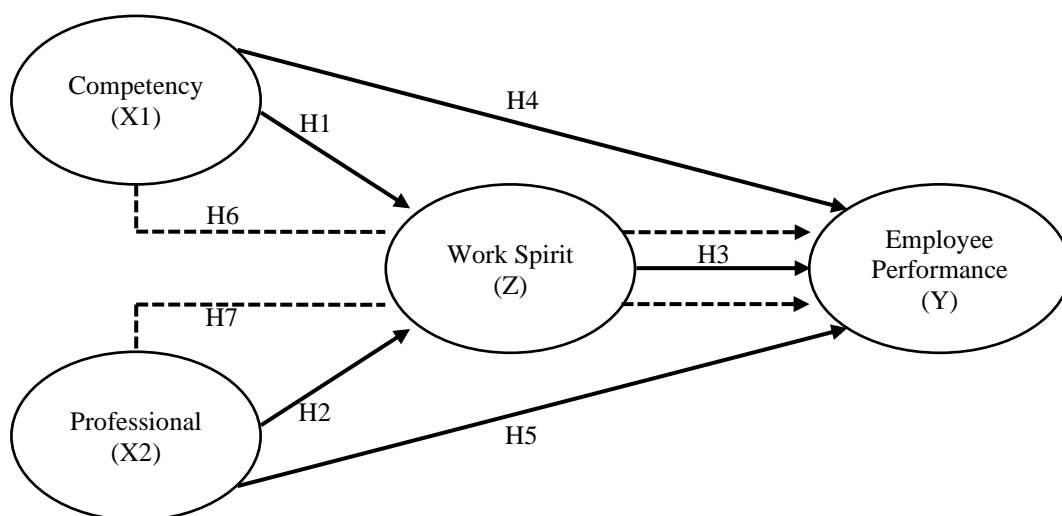
***H6: Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work enthusiasm***

Work morale can function as an intervening variable in the relationship between professionalism and employee performance. Research by Maratis et al., (2022) shows that work morale mediates the relationship between various organizational factors (such as superior support, work environment) and employee performance. When employees feel supported and have a high level of professionalism, their work enthusiasm encourages them to provide better work results. Study by Kaawaase et al., (2020) found that work morale plays an important role in strengthening the relationship between professionalism and employee performance. Employees who feel emotionally involved in their work and feel called to achieve high standards tend to perform better in the long term. Based on previous research and variable relationships, a hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

***H7: Professionalism has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work enthusiasm***

**Conceptual Framework**

The results of previous research and the relationship between research variables mean that the conceptual framework of this research can be described as follows:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**Methodology**

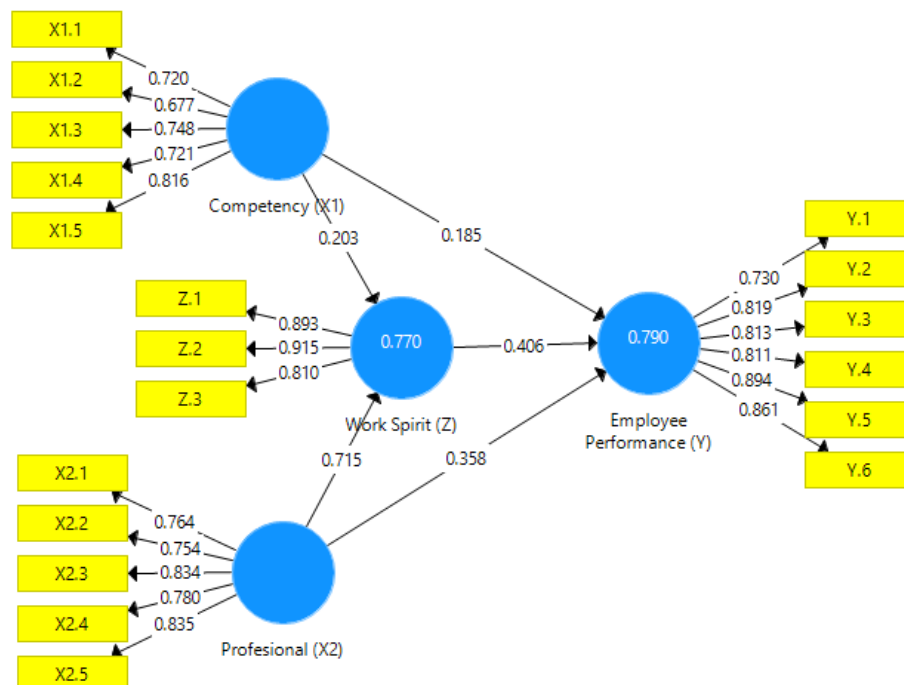
The type of research carried out is explanatory research using a quantitative approach, which uses data in the form of numbers as a tool to analyze information about what you want to know. The population in this study were 85 employees at the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat. The sampling technique in this research used saturated sampling where the entire population was sampled, so the total sample was 85 respondents taken at the DPRD Secretariat of East Luwu Regency.



Data was collected through observations, interviews and distributing questionnaires to respondents. Some of the data processing techniques carried out include, validity and reliability tests, namely to test whether the indicators used are good or not in measuring a variable, descriptive statistical analysis is an analysis that shows the development and growth of a situation and only provides an overview of a particular situation by a way of describing the properties of the research object and correlation analysis is a study discussing the degree of closeness of the relationship between variables which is expressed by the correlation coefficient value. The relationship between these variables can be positive and negative. Data analysis in this research uses correlation analysis through the SmartPLS program.

## Results

The results of data processing on the relationship between employee competency (X1), professionalism (X2), work enthusiasm (Z) and employee performance (Y) variables have been carried out in full in the figure and table below:



**Figure 2: Outer Loading Analysis**

Source: Primary Data is Processed

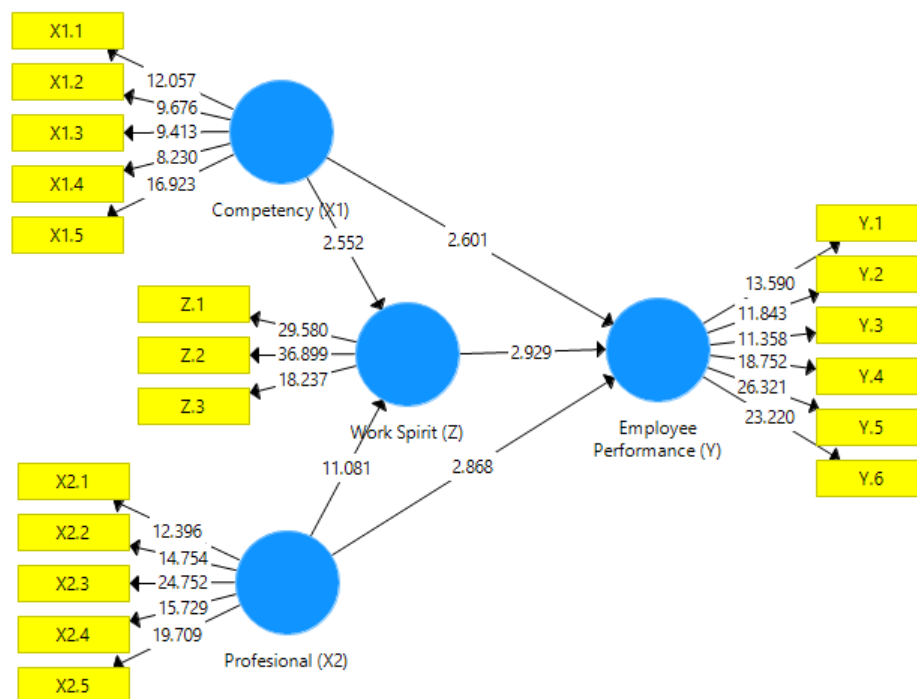
Validity testing uses two methods, namely outer loading and AVE value. In Figure 1 above we can see the factor loading value of each variable, the required factor loading value is  $> 0.6$ . The validity test carried out shows that all outer loading values are in accordance with the requirements. Expected AVE value  $> 0.5$ . The results of the AVE value validity test are shown in table 1 below, showing that the values are in accordance with the requirements.

**Table 1: Construct Validity and Reliability**

	<b>Cronbach Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>AVE</b>
Competency (X1)	0.790	0.856	0.545
Employee Performance (Y)	0.904	0.926	0.677
Professional (X2)	0.853	0.895	0.630
Work Spirit (Z)	0.844	0.906	0.764

Source: Primary Data is Processed

The values used to determine the level of reliability of the SEM model are Composite Reliability and Cronbach Alpha. The standard Cronbach's Alpha value for a variable so that it is declared reliable is  $> 0.6$ , while the standard value for Composite Reliability is  $> 0.7$ . Therefore, based on the table above, it is known that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values and Composite Reliability values have met the requirements so that it can be stated that the SEM model analyzed is reliable. After the model was declared valid, the relationship between the research variables was tested, the complete results of which can be seen in figure 3, table 2 and table 3 below:

**Figure 3: Direct Effect Research Variable**

Source: Primary Data is Processed

**Table 2: Direct Effects**

Direct Effects	T-Stat	T-Table	P-Value	Cut Value
Competency (X1) -> Employee Performance (Y)	2,601	1,663	0.01	0.05
Competency (X1) -> Work Spirit (Z)	2,552	1,663	0.01	0.05
Professional (X2) -> Employee Performance (Y)	2,868	1,663	0.00	0.05
Professional (X2) -> Work Spirit (Z)	11,081	1,663	0.00	0.05
Work Spirit (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	2,929	1,663	0.00	0.05

Source: Primary Data is Processed

- The test results show a positive and significant influence between the competency and work morale variables as indicated by the t-stat value of 2.552 > t-table 1,663 and p-value 0.01 < 0.05. So the first hypothesis of this research is declared accepted.
- The test results show a positive and significant influence between the variables professionalism and work enthusiasm, indicated by the t-stat value of 11.081 > t-table 1,663 and p-value 0.00 < 0.05. So the second hypothesis of this research is declared accepted.
- The test results show a positive and significant influence between the variables of work morale and employee performance as indicated by the t-stat value of 2.929 > t-table 1,663 and p-value 0.06 < 0.05. So the third hypothesis of this research is declared accepted.
- The test results show a positive and significant influence between competency variables and employee performance as indicated by the t-stat value of 2.061 > t-table 1,663 and p-value 0.01 < 0.05. So the fourth hypothesis of this research is declared accepted.
- The test results show a positive and significant influence between the variable professionalism and employee performance, indicated by the t-stat value of 2.868 > t-table 1,663 and p-value 0.00 < 0.05. So the fifth hypothesis of this research is declared accepted.

**Table 3: Indirect Effects**

Indirect Effects	T-Stat	T-Table	P-Value	Cut Value
Competency (X1) -> Work Spirit (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	1,949	1,663	0.04	0.05
Professional (X2) -> Work Spirit (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	2,862	1,663	0.00	0.05

Source: Primary Data is Processed

- The test results show a positive and significant influence between competency variables and employee performance through work enthusiasm as indicated by the t-stat value of 1.949 > t-table 1,663 and p-value 0.04 < 0.05. So the sixth hypothesis of this research is declared accepted.
- The test results show a positive and significant influence between the competency variable and employee performance through work enthusiasm as indicated by the t-stat value of 2.862 > t-table 1,663 and p-value 0.00 < 0.05. So the seventh hypothesis of this research is declared accepted.

## Discussion

***Employee competency has a positive and significant effect on work morale*** to employees of the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat. These results indicate that increasing employee competence will be followed by an increase in their work morale. Competencies here include knowledge, skills and abilities that are relevant to their work. High competency increases employee confidence in completing work tasks. When employees feel capable and competent, they are more motivated and enthusiastic to work well. Employees who have good competencies tend to experience higher job satisfaction because they can complete their tasks more efficiently and effectively, besides this high job satisfaction increases overall work morale. Good competence is often followed by awards and recognition from superiors and colleagues. This award can motivate employees to continue to improve their performance and work morale. The results of this research are still in line with previous research which found that employee competence has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Employees who have high competence tend to be more confident and motivated to work harder and better. High competency helps employees complete their tasks more efficiently and effectively, which in turn increases their job satisfaction and morale (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022).

***Professionalism has a positive and significant influence on work morale*** for East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employees, through mechanisms for increasing competency, work ethics and a positive work environment. Based on research results, work morale among employees of the East Luwu Regency DPRD secretariat shows that when the level of employee professionalism is high, their work morale also increases. This can be due to the emotional maturity and high self-confidence of employees who have good emotional control and are confident in carrying out their duties tend to have higher work morale. Professionalism is also able to create a positive and conducive work environment. Such a work environment increases work morale because employees feel appreciated and motivated to give their best. The results of this research are in line with the findings of research conducted by Wiriawan et al., (2022) shows that there is a relationship between professionalism and work morale. An increase in professionalism, which includes aspects such as work ethics, competence, and professional commitment, can increase employee morale. The results of other research also state that the professionalism variable has a positive effect on organizational performance. This shows that professionalism still has an important role in improving employee performance and morale (Ananga, 2023).

***Work morale has a positive and significant effect on performance*** East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employee. The research results show that sWork spirit is an important thing that needs attention from the leadership of the organization, work spirit is important to pay attention to because to achieve organizational goals as effectively and efficiently as possible, superior human resources are needed who will be able to work well, effectively and efficiently if they have good work spirit. tall. A person can work efficiently if he is capable and skilled and has the enthusiasm to work so that he can obtain maximum results. To achieve high performance, leadership elements in the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat must pay attention to the work spirit of each employee. Work enthusiasm is a mental attitude that can provide encouragement for someone to be able to work harder. High work morale will influence work efficiency and work effectiveness in an organization. These results are in line with previous research which found that high employee morale will influence work efficiency and work

effectiveness within an organization (Bagis et al., 2020). The results of this study agree with related research conducted by Prabhu & Koodamara, (2022), related to the influence of work morale on performance which concludes that there is an influence between work spirit and employee performance.

***Employee competency has a positive and significant effect on performance*** East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employee. The higher the level of competency possessed by employees, the better the performance demonstrated. Good competencies not only improve employees' technical abilities but also strengthen motivation, job satisfaction, and career prospects, all of which contribute to improved performance. The results of research conducted on North Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employees found that competent employees can complete their tasks more quickly and precisely, reduce errors, and increase productivity. High competency also often makes employees feel more confident and satisfied with their work, which in turn increases motivation and performance. In addition, good competence allows employees to think creatively and innovatively in solving problems, which contributes to improving the quality of work. These results are still in line with several previous studies which also show that competence has a positive effect on employee performance. This research confirms that increasing employee competency is in line with increasing the quality of work produced (Lertwannawit et al., 2011). Research by Gema et al., (2023) shows that competency has a significant effect on employee performance in High competency helps employees complete tasks better and improves the overall performance of the organization.

***Professionalism has a positive and significant effect on employee performance*** at the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat. This indicates that the more professional an employee is at work, the more performance they produce, in this case it indicates that the professionalism of work that occurs in the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat greatly influences the employee's performance. Good professionalism will be able to improve performance, with work professionalism it is hoped that employees will be able to overcome every problem faced at work, the more professional employees are in responding to every activity in their work, the employee will be able to improve their performance, increasing performance is very necessary Good mentality from employees, with a good mentality will increase employee professionalism at work. The research results above are in line with research Oloo et al., (2023); Thomas, (2023) which states that employee work professionalism has a positive effect on employee performance.

***Professionalism has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work enthusiasm*** East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employee. These results indicate that the professionalism of East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employees is able to increase employee competency, which allows them to work more effectively and efficiently. Good competencies also increase self-confidence and job satisfaction, which has a positive impact on work morale. Professional employees usually have high intrinsic motivation. They tend to show initiative and creativity in completing tasks, which increases morale and performance. A professionalism attitude also includes a high commitment to duties and responsibilities. Professional employees feel responsible for achieving the best results, which encourages them to work with high enthusiasm and produce good performance. These results are in line with previous research which states that professionalism, which includes knowledge, skills and attitudes at work, can increase employee motivation and morale, which ultimately has an impact on their performance (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022)



***Employee competency has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work enthusiasm***

East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat employee. Competencies possessed by employees include technical abilities, knowledge and skills that are relevant to their work. Adequate competency can increase employee morale and motivation to provide the best performance for the organization. Competent employees are able to complete tasks more efficiently, reduce the time and resources required to complete work, and improve the quality of work results. High competency can also increase employee self-confidence and job satisfaction, which encourages work morale. Employees who feel capable and confident in doing their work tend to have higher motivation to achieve good results. This research also found that having good competencies allows employees to develop their careers, which motivates them to continue to improve their performance. In addition, competent employees are more likely to produce innovative ideas that increase work efficiency and effectiveness. These results are in line with research that discusses the relationship between competence, work enthusiasm and performance which shows that work spirit can be a mediator. Research by Sina & Sunarsi, (2021) found that competence has a significant influence on employee performance with work motivation as an intervening variable.

**Research Implications**

The practical implications of research that can be put forward based on the results of this research are that government agencies, including the DPRD Secretariat of East Luwu Regency, must focus on training and development programs to increase employee competence and professionalism. By improving employee skills and knowledge, it is hoped that their work morale and performance will also increase. The management of the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat needs to create a conducive work environment to increase employee morale. This can be done through rewards, recognition, and policies that support employee welfare. Government agencies, especially the East Luwu Regency DPRD Secretariat, must implement a comprehensive performance evaluation system, which not only measures final results but also work processes and employee morale. This helps in identifying areas that need improvement and designing appropriate interventions.

The theoretical implication of this research is that this research strengthens the theory that competence and professionalism are important factors that influence employee performance through increasing work morale. This adds empirical evidence to the existing literature on the relationship between these variables in the public sector context. This research can be used to develop a more comprehensive performance model by including work morale as a mediating variable between competence, professionalism and employee performance.

**Conclusion**

Employee competency has a positive and significant effect on employee morale and performance. Employees who have high skills and knowledge tend to have better work morale, which ultimately improves their performance. Employee professionalism also shows a positive and significant influence on employee morale and performance. Professional attitudes, including good work ethics, responsibility, and integrity, encourage employees to work harder and more efficiently. Work morale has a positive influence on employee performance, besides that work morale can act as a mediating variable that links competence and professionalism with employee performance. High work morale strengthens the positive impact of competence and professionalism on employee performance.

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