

Research Article

## Mediated Effect Job Satisfaction on the Relationships between Compensation, Organizational Culture, and Meritocracy on Employee Performance

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**Abstract:** The study empirically examines the influences of compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and their impacts on employee performance. All 155 employees at the District Secretariat of Pidie Jaya, Province of Aceh, Indonesia were taken as the sample of the study, thus using the census sampling technique. To gather the data, questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. Based on the SEM analysis, the study found that compensation and meritocracy affected positively job satisfaction, while organizational culture did not. On the other hand, except for meritocracy, compensation and organizational culture are also found to positively affect employee performance. Finally, job satisfaction is found to mediate significantly the influence of compensation and meritocracy on employee performance, whereas job satisfaction is found to mediate insignificantly the influence of organizational culture on employee performance. These findings showed that to improve employee performance, the emphasis should be given on increasing job satisfaction of employees by providing better compensation and meritocracy systems.

**Keywords:** Compensation, Organizational culture, Meritocracy, Job satisfaction, Employee performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the critical factors affecting employee performance is job satisfaction. Robbins and Coulter (2012) argue that job satisfaction is an individual's general attitude towards his work that contributes towards employee job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a strategic problem because unfulfilling job satisfaction adversely affects employee performance. Employee performance would be declining, low quality, and ultimately the organization's targets might not be realized. If job satisfaction in government agencies is low, it causes low employee performance and organization performance so that public services are not met properly. The employees fail to provide good services to the community; it will also result in stunted organizational progress. Thus, job satisfaction and employee performance are closely connected. This is consistent with the opinion of Putra and Adnyani (2016) which states that job satisfaction has a significant effect on employee performance.

Compensation is something that an employee receives in place of a service contribution to his performance is also proven to affect job satisfaction and,

consequently, employee performance. Compensation is the implementation of human resource management functions that relate to all types of individual pricing. It is a reward received by employees for services that have been provided to an organization (Sedarmayanti, 2011) has been crucial in determining job satisfaction as well as employee performance.

In addition to the compensation, organizational culture is also a factor that has an impact on employee performance. Organizational culture is a shared perception among the members of the organization. Thus, an employee's attitude and behavior to obey and adjust the rules that apply in the organization based on self-awareness of organizational culture or good perception (Robbins and Coulter, 2012). Organizational culture in every organization is expected to be always good because it connected to the success or failure of organizational goals achieved. A good organizational culture contributes positively to the improvement of the performance of its employees (Arianto, 2013).

Furthermore, in terms of improving employee performance in an organization, meritocracy is also

found as one of the contributors. Meritocracy comes from the word merit or benefit. In the context of bureaucracy, it relates to the designation of a form or process of promotion by providing opportunities and rewards to those who excel or have the capability. In short, employees who excel must get priority to get proper rewards and appreciation. Thus, there are requirements to fulfill competencies in utilizing their opportunities and responsibilities. The above process must be fair, free of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) and be adapted to the times.

According to Rivai (2014), a merit system is a rational reward system that is oriented towards creating a sense of justice, so that the income given to employees will be linked to the performance of the employees individually. Thus, employees who work better earn a higher income than other employees whose performance is poor. This is in line with the mandate of Law No. 5 of 2014 concerning the State Civil Apparatus, which states that the merit system is the public employees' policies and management based on qualifications, competencies, and performance fairly and without distinction of political background, race, color, religion, origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability condition. Ungirwalu (2012) finds that the application of meritocracy in the staff promotion has an impact on the performance of employees, so for that, it should be always paid attention to the meritocracy system to promote one's position within the scope of the organization.

Although there have been many previous studies investigated the applications of meritocracy in rewarding employees who have performed better, but the use of this variable in scientific empirical studies in the context of improving regional government organizations in Indonesia has been still very limited. Even if there were researches that discuss this meritocracy, it was mostly done as a basis in the promotion and mutation of employees (Nasarani, 2012). Subagyo (2009) also examines aspects of meritocracy in the study of human resource development in South Korea, but the focus was on recruiting new employees. Therefore, this study includes the meritocracy variable as an independent variable, one of the important novelties of the present study, and its effect on job satisfaction and employee performance of the public organization.

Based on the above theoretical and empirical backgrounds, thus, this study explores and analyzes the effects of compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and their impacts on employees' performance of the District Secretariat Office of Pidie Jaya, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The findings of this study are hoped to provide valuable references for the public organization in designing policy for improving the job satisfaction and performance of the employee through enhancing compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy.

In the next sections, the study proceeds to review the selected relevant literature in Section 2, followed by the discussion on the research method in Section 3. Section 4 provides the findings and their discussion and ended with the concluding remarks in Section 5.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many studies explored the determinants of employee performance. For example, Marsick and Watkins (2003) and Facreza *et al.*, (2018) find that organizational culture determines employee performance. Other study finds the significant effect of compensation on employee performance (Dhermawan *et al.*, 2012). Employee performance is also determined by the meritocracy Ungirwalu (2012). Next, Bin (2015), Fariana *et al.*, (2017), Hariyonyoto (2019) find the close relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance. Thus, this study focuses its analysis on the effect of compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and employee performance.

Compensation to employees is very influential in providing individual job satisfaction for employees. If an employee gets proper compensation for what has been done to the company, then it can be ensured that an employee will also get good job satisfaction. The purpose of providing compensation is as a bond of cooperation, job satisfaction, effective procurement, motivation, employee stability, discipline and the influence of trade unions and government (Ferri and Sandino, 2009). In their study, Dhermawan *et al.*, (2012), Mariadi *et al.*, (2015), Kurniawan *et al.*, (2018), and Hidayat *et al.*, (2019) find that compensation influenced employee performance.

Organizational culture also influences job satisfaction. Triguno (2010) argues that work culture is a philosophy that is based on a view of life as values that become traits, habits and driving forces, which are entrenched in the life of a community or organization, then reflected from attitudes into behavior, trust, ideas, opinions and actions that manifest in work. Successful socialization of work culture will have a positive impact on employee job satisfaction, while failure means a negative impact on employee job satisfaction. A strong organizational culture can create conducive work atmospheres, thus improves work quality, which is the key to success for an organization, where organizational success is an indicator of employee job satisfaction. Thus, organizational culture closely relates to job satisfaction and employee performance (Moeljono, 2010; Majid *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, job satisfaction is closely related to the attitudes of employees towards their work, work situations, cooperation between leaders and fellow employees (Rozanna *et al.*, 2019) Implementation of a

meritocracy system will achieve a criterion for an employee or employee to be promoted to occupy a certain position. Compensation is very important for employees as individuals because wages are a measure of value or their work among the employees themselves, their families and communities. The absolute level of income of employees who will determine their scale of life and their relative income indicates status, dignity, and price (Kreitner and Kanicki, 2014). Therefore, employees will try to get a promotion so that the leadership will pay attention to the compensation given to him. The income generated from promotion by an employee gives satisfaction at work, ultimately impacting on improving their performance.

Compensation is anything that is received by employees as compensation for their work (Tohardi, 2008), referring to all forms of wages or rewards that apply to and arise from their work. Therefore compensation is closely related to employee performance, where compensation is one of the supporting aspects that directly or cannot influence the high or low of a work that is produced by the employee for his organization. The higher the compensation, the higher employee performance will be, and vice versa. Thus, compensation has a positive effect on employee performance (Judges, 2011; Rukayah *et al.*, 2019).

The link between organizational culture and employee performance is documented by Molenaar (2002), that culture has full power, influences individuals and their performance even to the work environment. In addition, organizational culture has a major role in achieving organizational goals including improving employee performance. Arianto (2013) and Sativa *et al.*, (2018) found that there was a significant influence of organizational culture on employee performance.

Furthermore, according to Robbins and Coulter (2012), one of the best ways to increase the capacity of an organization's performance is by linking compensation and rewards to employee growth and development. If all results are strengthened and valued, they will willingly do the work that is their responsibility repeatedly. This approach improves employee performance, involvement, and development. In short, the meritocracy system encourages employees to perform better following their competencies. In the context of local government, a meritocracy refers to income outside the basic salary paid on the merit-based system. Thus, meritocracy is related to employee performance because incentive payments are paid according to the work performance of employees (Nawab and Bhatti, 2011).

Finally, job satisfaction is proved to be one of the most important factors determining employee performance. When an employee feels satisfaction at

work, he strives to perform better with all his ability to obtain the best results in his work. An employee's job satisfaction that is obtained with a good salary, a job that matches his expertise, a good relationship with the employer would finally improve the performance of employees (Avey *et al.*, 2011; Wani *et al.*, 2018).

**Based on the above-reviewed studies, this study intends to examine the following proposed hypotheses:**

1. Compensation affects the job satisfaction
2. Organizational culture affects the job satisfaction
3. Meritocracy affects the job satisfaction
4. Organizational culture affects organizational culture
5. Compensation affects employee performance
6. Meritocracy affects employee performance
7. Job satisfaction affects employee performance
8. Compensation affects employee performance through job satisfaction
9. Organizational culture affects employee performance through job satisfaction
10. Meritocracy affects employee performance through job satisfaction

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Population and sample

The sample of this study is all 155 government employees at the District Secretariat Office of Pidie Jaya, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Thus, this study uses census technique to determine the respondents of the study. The number of samples of this study fulfills the minimum requirement of a sample. According to Hair *et al.*, (2014), a minimum sample for a study is at least equal to the number of indicators of all variables multiplied by five. Since our study uses 30 indicators to measure five variables, thus the minimum sample size required is 125. Thus, our sample of a study of 155 is more than sufficient to provide reliable findings.

### Method of analysis

155 questionnaires are distributed to all civil servants at the District Secretariat Office of Pidie Jaya, Aceh, Indonesia to gather the data for measuring and analyzing the effect of compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and their impacts on employee performance. However, before the measurement and analysis are conducted, the confirmatory factor analysis and the goodness of fit indices tests are firstly conducted. The former test is meant for ensuring the validity and reliability of data, while the latter test is purposed to ensure the proper specification of the estimated model.

Finally, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is estimated to test the influence of compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and their impacts on employee performance. The study uses the SEM analysis due to its ability to confirm the dimensions of a concept or factor

and to measure the influence of existing theoretical relationships. Thus, the following estimated SEM

$$JS = \gamma_{11}CP + \gamma_{12}OC + \gamma_{13}MR + \zeta_1 \quad (1)$$

$$EP = \gamma_{21}CP + \gamma_{22}OC + \gamma_{23}MR + \gamma_{24}JS + \zeta_2 \quad (2)$$

Where JS is the job satisfaction, CP is the compensation, OC is the organizational culture, MR is the meritocracy, EP is the employee performance,  $\gamma_{ii}$  are the estimated coefficients for the respected exogenous variables, and  $\zeta_i$  is the structural error term.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of 155 civil servants working at the District Secretariat Office of Pidie Jaya, Aceh Province, Indonesia investigated in the study, 62% of them were male and only 38% were female respondents. In terms of age, 8% respondents aged below 25 years old, 22% were in the group of 26-30 years old, 43% respondents were in the group of 31-45 years old, 25% respondents were in the group of 46-50 years old, and 3% respondents were in the age of more than 51 years old. In the view of marital status, 31% of respondents were unmarried and the rest 69% were married. In the view of education level, 14% of respondents graduated High School, 28% of respondents had a Diploma degree, 55% of respondents had a Bachelor's degree, and 3% of them had a Master's degree. Finally, in terms of year of service, 11% of the employees have served the office of fewer than 2 years, 53% have served for 4-7 years, 34% have served for 8-11 years, and only 2% have served the office for more than 12 years.

equations are proposed for the analysis.

The validity and reliability of data were then tested to ensure the accuracy and consistency of indicators in measuring variables. The study found all 30 indicators to measure five variables in the study were valid and reliable, thus all indicators could be used for further data analysis. Subsequently, the study tests the proper specification of the estimated SEM, using the goodness of fit indices (GoIs). The findings of the GoIs are reported in Table 1.

As illustrated in Table 1, the study found that, except for X<sup>2</sup>-Chi-square Statistics, Augmented Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) that were found to be marginal fit, all other goodness of fit indices such as CMIN/DF, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), and so on were found to be fit. This is simply due to their estimated values of the goodness of fit indices was above the cut-off values. Our findings indicate that our overall estimated SEM models were fit to provide the answer to reliable findings.

**Table 1:** Findings of Goodness of Fit Indices

GoIs	Cut-off value	Finding	Remark
X <sup>2</sup> Chi-Square	Expected to be small	454.334	Marginal fit
CMIN/DF	<2.00	1.611	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.907	Fit
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.885	Marginal fit
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.973	Fit
CFI	Close to 1	0.678	Marginal fit
PNFI	0 – 1	0.436	Fit
RMSEA	<0.08	0.043	Fit

Next, the findings of the effects of compensation, organization culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and their impacts on employee performance of the District Secretariat Office of Pidie Jaya, Aceh Province, Indonesia are now reported in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Findings of the estimated SEM – Interactions between variables

Interactions between variables	Estimate	P-value	Remark
Compensation affects the job satisfaction	0.234***	0.000	Direct effect
Organizational culture affects the job satisfaction	0.074	0.290	No direct effect
Meritocracy affects the job satisfaction	0.218***	0.000	Direct effect
Organizational culture affects employee performance	0.179***	0.007	Direct effect
Compensation affects employee performance	0.137***	0.000	Direct effect
Meritocracy affects employee performance	-0.040	0.516	No direct effect
Job satisfaction affects employee performance	0.412***	0.000	Direct effect
Compensation affects employee performance through job satisfaction	0.096***	0.001	Partial mediation
Organizational culture affects employee performance through job satisfaction	0.030	0.278	No mediation
Meritocracy affects employee performance through job satisfaction	0.090***	0.001	Full mediation



As observed in Table 3, the study found that compensation and meritocracy affected positively job satisfaction at the 1% level of significance, while organizational culture did not. Particularly, as the compensation and meritocracy respectively improved by a 1 unit, the job satisfaction would increase by 0.234 and 0.218 units on the Likert scale. These findings show the dominant importance of compensation in enhancing job satisfaction of the employee.

On the other hand, except for meritocracy, compensation and organizational culture are also found to positively affect employee performance at 1% level of significance. Specifically, as the compensation and organizational culture respectively improved by a 1 unit, the employee performance would increase by 0.137 and 0.179 units on the Likert scale. Our findings also showed the significant effect of job satisfaction on employee performance. This finding shows the dominant importance role of organizational culture in enhancing job satisfaction of the employee, and job satisfaction are one of the crucial determinants of employee performance.

Our findings are in line with empirical evidences of previous studies such as Marsick and Watkins (2003) who found positive effect of organizational culture on employee performance; the significant effect of compensation on employee performance (Dhermawan *et al.*, (2012); employee performance is determined by the meritocracy (Ungirwalu, 2012); positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance (Bin, 2015).

Finally, job satisfaction is found to mediate significantly the influence of compensation and meritocracy on employee performance at the 1% level of significance. Meanwhile, job satisfaction is found to mediate insignificantly the influence of organizational culture on employee performance. Since the study found the significant direct effects of compensation and meritocracy on employee performance and the significant indirect effects of compensation and meritocracy on employee performance, respectively, through job satisfaction, thus the job satisfaction acted as the partial mediator. These findings imply that to enhance employee performance, human resources management needs to emphasize improving job satisfaction of employees by improving their compensation and meritocracy system.

## CONCLUSION

This study empirically examined the influences of compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and their impacts on employee performance. All 155 employees at the District Secretariat of Pidie Jaya, Province of Aceh, Indonesia were taken as the sample of the study, thus using the census sampling technique. To gather the data, questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and

analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique.

Based on the SEM analysis, the study found that compensation and meritocracy affected positively job satisfaction, while organizational culture did not. On the other hand, except for meritocracy, compensation and organizational culture are also found to positively affect employee performance. Finally, job satisfaction is found to mediate significantly the influence of compensation and meritocracy on employee performance, whereas job satisfaction is found to mediate insignificantly the influence of organizational culture on employee performance. These findings showed that to improve employee performance, the emphasis should be given on increasing job satisfaction of employees by providing better compensation and meritocracy systems.

Upcoming studies on this issue could offer more reliable and comprehensive empirical findings by considering more variables into the model of estimation. Moreover, covering more public organizations into the analysis would also enrich the existing empirical evidence on influences of compensation, organizational culture, and meritocracy on job satisfaction and employee performance. Lastly, comparing the private and public organizations of the investigated issues would also enrich the existing literatures.

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