

Effect of Competence on Employee Performance with Organizational Commitment as an Intervening Variable in the Subdistrict Offices of Pekanbaru City

Pengaruh Kompetensi terhadap Kinerja Pegawai dengan Komitmen Organisasi sebagai Variabel Intervening di Kantor Kecamatan Kota Pekanbaru

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of competence on employee performance and investigates the mediating role of organizational commitment among employees of subdistrict offices in Pekanbaru City. A quantitative approach using partial least squares structural equation modeling was employed, based on data collected from 151 employees across five subdistrict offices through purposive sampling. The findings indicate that competence has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.954$, $p < .001$) and employee performance ($\beta = 0.758$, $p < .05$). Organizational commitment also has a significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.236$, $p < .05$) and partially mediates the relationship between competence and employee performance (indirect effect = 0.225). These results suggest that competence enhances employee performance both directly and indirectly through organizational commitment. This study contributes to the literature on public sector human resource management by providing empirical evidence that organizational commitment serves as a partial mediator between competence and employee performance. The findings offer practical insights for improving employee performance within local government institutions, particularly at the subdistrict level in Pekanbaru City.

Keywords

Competence; Organizational Commitment; Employee Performance.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh kompetensi terhadap kinerja pegawai serta menguji peran mediasi komitmen organisasi pada pegawai kantor kecamatan di Kota Pekanbaru. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode partial least squares structural equation modeling berdasarkan data yang diperoleh dari 151 responden pada lima kantor kecamatan yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap komitmen organisasi ($\beta = 0,954$; $p < 0,001$) serta kinerja pegawai ($\beta = 0,758$; $p < 0,05$). Komitmen organisasi juga berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja pegawai ($\beta = 0,236$; $p < 0,05$) serta memediasi secara parsial hubungan antara kompetensi dan kinerja pegawai (pengaruh tidak langsung = 0,225). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan kompetensi dapat mendorong kinerja pegawai baik secara langsung maupun melalui penguatan komitmen organisasi. Penelitian ini memperkaya literatur manajemen sumber daya manusia sektor publik dengan memberikan bukti empiris mengenai peran komitmen organisasi sebagai mediator parsial dalam hubungan antara kompetensi dan kinerja pegawai. Secara praktis, hasil penelitian ini dapat menjadi dasar bagi pemerintah daerah dalam merancang strategi peningkatan kompetensi dan komitmen organisasi guna mendukung kinerja pegawai yang lebih optimal di tingkat kecamatan.



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1. Introduction

Bureaucratic reform, mandated through Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 81 Tahun 2010 tentang Grand Design Reformasi Birokrasi 2010–2025 [Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 81 of 2010 on the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform, 2010–2025], has entered its third phase (2020–2024), which emphasizes strengthening performance accountability and improving public service quality. Monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in assessing reform progress and informing continuous improvement strategies in public sector performance.

The civil service plays a pivotal role in achieving these objectives, particularly in the era of Society 5.0, which requires the integration of human-centered values with technological capabilities. Civil servants are expected to possess technical, managerial, and socio-cultural competencies to deliver responsive and accountable public services (Yasa et al., 2021). Nevertheless, despite regulatory frameworks and competency standards, public complaints regarding suboptimal government performance remain widespread.

Within the framework of regional autonomy as stipulated in Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 23 Tahun 2014 tentang Pemerintahan Daerah [Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government], local governments are granted authority to manage governance and enhance public service delivery. At the subdistrict (kecamatan) level, employee performance becomes particularly critical, as it directly affects the implementation of public services and community empowerment initiatives. In Pekanbaru City, subdistrict offices serve as frontline institutions responsible for translating policies into practice.

Despite an upward trend in aggregate performance indicators, operational realities reveal persistent gaps. The civil service professionalism index score of 72.90 remains in the moderate category, suggesting significant room for improvement. Previous studies (Sasmito, 2022; Kiswanto et al., 2018) identify competency gaps and weak career development systems as key determinants of low professionalism. In Pekanbaru's subdistrict offices, internal challenges such as delays in task completion, weak coordination, and limited human resource capacity continue to hinder service delivery. This indicates a persistent performance gap between formal evaluation and actual work outcomes, as also reflected in the Laporan Kinerja Instansi Pemerintah [Government Agency Performance Report] of the subdistrict offices in Pekanbaru City, as presented in Figure 1.

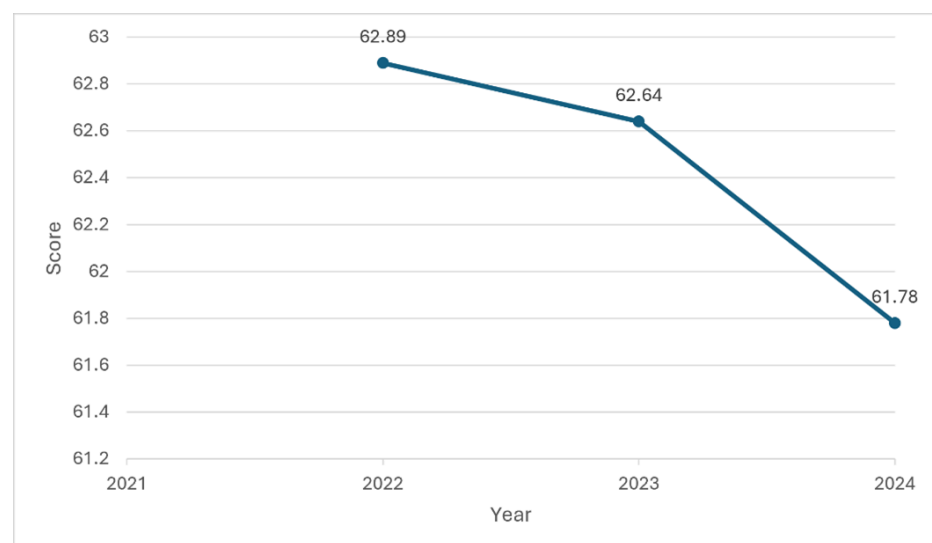


Figure 1. Laporan Kinerja Instansi Pemerintah [Government Agency Performance Report] Scores of Pekanbaru City Subdistrict Offices, 2022–2024

Source: Badan Kepegawaian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Kota Pekanbaru [Pekanbaru City Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency]. (2025)

As shown in Figure 1, these scores exhibit a declining trend, from 62.89 in 2022 to 61.78 in 2024. This pattern reinforces the existence of a performance gap, indicating that improvements in formal accountability indicators have not been consistently translated into sustained employee performance at the operational level.

From a behavioral perspective, this gap suggests that improvements in employee competence alone may not be sufficient to ensure optimal performance outcomes. Preliminary observations and internal reports indicate that employees demonstrate relatively strong normative and value-based attachment to the organization; however, this commitment is not always reflected in timely task completion and work effectiveness. This condition implies that the relationship between competence and performance may operate not only directly but also indirectly through internal psychological mechanisms.

In this context, organizational commitment becomes a critical intervening variable that explains how competence is translated into actual work performance. Competent employees are more likely to develop stronger attachment and responsibility toward their organization, which in turn encourages greater effort and consistency in task execution. However, when this psychological attachment is not effectively activated, competence may not fully translate into performance outcomes.

This study adopts the S-O-B-C (Stimulus, Organism, Behavior, Consequence) framework (Luthans, 2002) as its primary theoretical foundation. Within this framework, competence is conceptualized as a stimulus (S) that influences the internal psychological state of individuals, namely organizational commitment (O). This internal state subsequently shapes work behavior, reflected in employee performance (B), which ultimately leads to organizational outcomes (C).

Based on this framework, several theoretical propositions can be derived. First, competence is expected to positively influence organizational commitment, as employees with higher competence tend to feel more capable and valued in their roles. Second, competence is expected to directly enhance employee performance through more effective task execution. Third, organizational commitment is expected to influence employee performance and act as a mediating mechanism that explains how competence is translated into sustained work performance.

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between competence, organizational commitment, and employee performance in both public and private sector organizations (Amdani et al., 2019; Dewi & Fitrio, 2022; Fadhli et al., 2022; Hamzah et al., 2013; Hariadi & Muafi, 2022). However, several gaps remain. First, empirical findings concerning the effect of competence on employee performance are inconsistent. While some studies report a strong direct relationship, others suggest that the effect of competence operates indirectly through organizational commitment (Bektiarso, 2022; Faisal, 2016; Mauludin & Sulistyorini, 2018). These mixed findings indicate that the behavioral mechanism linking competence to performance has not been fully explained.

Second, most previous studies have focused on ministries, educational institutions, hospitals, and regional government agencies at the provincial or municipal level. Research conducted within subdistrict offices remains relatively limited, despite their strategic role as frontline institutions responsible for delivering public services and implementing government programs.

Third, prior studies generally employ direct-effect models that emphasize the human capital perspective, in which competence is assumed to directly improve performance. Less attention has been paid to the psychological processes through which competence influences employee behavior. Consequently, the role of

organizational commitment as an internal mechanism connecting competence and performance remains insufficiently explored.

This study addresses these gaps by examining organizational commitment as a mediating variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance. Drawing on selected components of the S-O-B-C framework, this study explains how competence, as a stimulus, influences employee performance through organizational commitment as an internal psychological state. Furthermore, this study provides empirical evidence from subdistrict offices in Pekanbaru City, thereby enriching the public administration literature at the local government level.

2. Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative approach to examine the relationships among competence, organizational commitment, and employee performance in local government agencies. This design was appropriate because the study sought to examine the associations among these constructs at a single point in time rather than to establish cause-and-effect relationships.

The population consisted of all employees working in 15 subdistrict offices in Pekanbaru City, totaling 251 employees, based on data from the Badan Kepegawaian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Kota Pekanbaru [Pekanbaru City Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency] (BKPSDM Kota Pekanbaru, 2025). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select five subdistrict offices, namely Sukajadi, Pekanbaru Kota, Senapelan, Limapuluh, and Marpoyan Damai (Sugiyono, 2018). These offices were selected because they represent urban administrative units with relatively high public service intensity, similar organizational structures, complete employee records, and direct responsibility for delivering frontline public services. Such characteristics provide a relevant organizational setting for examining the relationships among competence, organizational commitment, and employee performance.

All employees in the selected subdistrict offices were invited to participate in the study. A total of 151 valid questionnaires were collected, representing a response rate of 60.2%. Respondent characteristics were analyzed descriptively based on gender, age, educational background, and length of service to provide contextual information regarding the study sample. Because purposive sampling was employed, the findings are interpreted within the context of the selected subdistrict offices and are not intended for statistical generalization to all local government institutions.

The study examined three latent constructs: competence as the independent variable, organizational commitment as the mediating variable, and employee performance as the dependent variable. Competence was operationalized through indicators of job knowledge, technical skills, problem-solving ability, initiative, adaptability, teamwork, communication, and integrity (Mangkunegara, 2016). Organizational commitment was measured using indicators of organizational pride, willingness to exert effort, loyalty, acceptance of organizational values, emotional attachment, and responsibility toward the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2012). Employee performance was measured through work quality, work quantity, timeliness, independence, cooperation, initiative, communication, responsibility, problem-solving ability, and compliance with work procedures (Bangun, 2012). All indicators were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1. Research Variables and Indicators

Variable	Indicators
Competence	Job knowledge, technical skills, problem-solving ability, initiative, adaptability, teamwork, communication, integrity
Organizational commitment	Organizational pride, willingness to exert effort, loyalty, acceptance of organizational values, emotional attachment, responsibility
Employee performance	Work quality, work quantity, timeliness, independence, cooperation, initiative, communication, responsibility, problem-solving ability, compliance

Source: Processed by the authors. (2025)

The data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire adapted from validated instruments used in previous studies. Before the main survey, a pilot test was conducted with 30 subdistrict office employees outside the study sample to assess the clarity and relevance of the items. Minor modifications were made based on participant feedback before the questionnaire was administered. The survey was conducted during working hours with the permission of each participating subdistrict office. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0. PLS-SEM was chosen because it offers strong predictive capability, is appropriate for correlational research involving latent constructs, accommodates relatively small sample sizes, and does not require the stringent assumptions of covariance-based multivariate methods (Hair et al., 2019; Ghozali, 2018b). A sample size of 151 respondents was considered sufficient under the ten-times rule, which states that the minimum sample should be at least ten times the largest number of structural paths directed at a latent construct.

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the outer (measurement) model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability to evaluate the validity and reliability of the latent constructs (Ghozali, 2018a). Outer loading values above 0.60, AVE values above 0.50, and reliability indices above 0.70 were considered acceptable.

Second, the inner (structural) model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The hypotheses were tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. Statistical significance was determined based on path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values below .05. The mediating role of organizational commitment was assessed by examining the significance of the indirect effect.

Because the data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, the potential for common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test and full collinearity diagnostics. All respondents participated voluntarily and provided informed consent before data collection began. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were protected throughout the study, and the research followed ethical principles applicable to research in the social sciences.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Assessment of the Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed through convergent validity, based on outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 2, all outer loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating adequate indicator reliability. Although the items X1.7 (0.668) and X1.8 (0.686) showed lower loadings than the other items, they were retained because their removal would not

improve the AVE or composite reliability of the construct. Furthermore, all constructs achieved AVE values above the acceptable threshold of 0.50, indicating that each construct explained more than 50% of the variance in its indicators.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading (>0.60)	Cronbach's Alpha (>0.70)	rho_A (>0.70)	AVE (>0.50)	Composite Reliability (>0.70)
Competence (X1)	X1.1	0.906	0.921	0.929	0.650	0.936
	X1.2	0.866				
	X1.3	0.834				
	X1.4	0.860				
	X1.5	0.796				
	X1.6	0.800				
	X1.7	0.668				
	X1.8	0.686				
Organizational commitment (Y1)	Y1.1	0.718	0.916	0.922	0.706	0.935
	Y1.2	0.900				
	Y1.3	0.885				
	Y1.4	0.862				
	Y1.5	0.810				
	Y1.6	0.855				
Employee performance (Y2)	Y2.1	0.934	0.938	0.945	0.648	0.948
	Y2.2	0.814				
	Y2.3	0.844				
	Y2.4	0.865				
	Y2.5	0.783				
	Y2.6	0.832				
	Y2.7	0.700				
	Y2.8	0.710				
	Y2.9	0.821				
	Y2.10	0.714				

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the authors. (2025)

The reliability assessment further confirmed strong internal consistency across all constructs. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.916 to 0.938, while composite reliability values ranged from 0.935 to 0.948, both exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Similarly, rho_A values were above 0.70 for all constructs, indicating satisfactory construct reliability. These findings demonstrate that the measurement model possesses adequate validity and reliability for subsequent structural model analysis.

Because the study relied on self-reported questionnaires, potential common method bias was also evaluated. Harman's single-factor test showed that the first factor accounted for 38.7% of the total variance, which is below the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. In addition, the full collinearity assessment indicated that the variance inflation factor values ranged from 1.82 to 2.94, remaining below the conservative threshold of 3.30. These results suggest that common method bias and multicollinearity are unlikely to substantially affect the estimation results, thereby supporting the robustness of the measurement model.

3.2. Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the explanatory power of the proposed model. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Organizational commitment (Y1)	0.909	0.906
Employee performance (Y2)	0.971	0.969

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the authors. (2025)

The results indicate that competence is strongly associated with organizational commitment, with an R^2 value of 0.909, suggesting that approximately 90.9% of the variance in organizational commitment is associated with competence. Meanwhile, competence and organizational commitment jointly account for 97.1% of the variance in employee performance ($R^2 = 0.971$), indicating substantial explanatory power within the proposed model.

Nevertheless, the exceptionally high R^2 value for employee performance should be interpreted with caution. In organizational behavior research, explanatory power approaching 100% is relatively uncommon and may reflect the close conceptual relationship among the constructs, the relatively homogeneous characteristics of respondents, or the use of self-reported measures collected from a single source. Although Harman's single-factor test and the full collinearity assessment indicate that common method bias is unlikely to substantially influence the estimation results, these findings should be understood within the specific context of the selected subdistrict offices rather than as evidence of universal relationships.

The high explanatory power observed in this study may also indicate that competence and organizational commitment represent highly relevant factors within frontline public service organizations, where employees perform standardized administrative duties under similar organizational structures and operational procedures. Consequently, the findings provide empirical evidence of strong associations among the examined constructs within the study setting. Future research is encouraged to replicate the model in different organizational contexts, using probability sampling techniques and multiple data sources, to further assess the stability and generalizability of these relationships.

3.3. Direct Effect Analysis

The results of the direct effect analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	t-Statistic (O/STDEV)	p-Value	Result
H1	Competence → Organizational commitment	0.954	75.596	< 0.001	Supported
H2	Competence → Employee performance	0.758	7.594	0.020	Supported
H3	Organizational commitment → Employee performance	0.236	3.260	0.010	Supported

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the authors. (2025)

The findings indicate that competence is positively associated with organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.954$, $p < .001$). This result suggests that employees who possess higher levels of knowledge, technical skills, communication

abilities, adaptability, and problem-solving capabilities tend to demonstrate stronger psychological attachment to their organization. Within the context of subdistrict offices, competent employees are more likely to perceive themselves as capable of fulfilling organizational responsibilities and contributing to public service objectives, thereby strengthening their sense of loyalty and organizational responsibility.

This finding is consistent with the organizational behavior literature, which emphasizes that employees with higher competencies generally exhibit greater confidence and role clarity, both of which are associated with stronger organizational commitment. In the context of local government organizations, competence is therefore associated not only with employees' ability to perform their duties but also with their willingness to align personal efforts with organizational goals.

The results also show that competence is positively associated with employee performance ($\beta = 0.758$, $p < .05$). This finding indicates that employees who possess higher competencies tend to report better work performance in terms of work quality, productivity, timeliness, communication, and problem-solving ability. Competence provides employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform administrative tasks more effectively and respond to public service demands more efficiently.

This finding supports the human capital perspective, which regards employee competence as an important organizational resource associated with improved work outcomes (Mahmudi, 2016). Within subdistrict offices, where employees perform standardized administrative functions and interact directly with the public, competence becomes an essential factor linked to service effectiveness and task accomplishment.

Furthermore, organizational commitment is positively associated with employee performance ($\beta = 0.236$, $p < .05$). Although the magnitude of the relationship is smaller than the direct association between competence and employee performance, the finding suggests that employees who feel emotionally attached to their organization tend to demonstrate greater responsibility, persistence, and willingness to exert additional effort in completing their duties.

The relatively smaller coefficient also indicates that employee performance is associated with multiple organizational and individual factors beyond commitment alone. Consequently, organizational commitment should be viewed as one of several important psychological factors related to employee performance rather than its sole determinant.

Overall, the direct effect analysis demonstrates that competence exhibits the strongest association with both organizational commitment and employee performance, while organizational commitment is also positively associated with employee performance. These findings highlight the importance of considering both employee capability and psychological attachment when examining work performance in public sector organizations.

3.4. Mediation Effect Analysis

The mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether organizational commitment serves as an intervening mechanism in the relationship between competence and employee performance. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Mediation Effect Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect	t-Statistic (O/STDEV)	p-Value	Result
H4	Competence → Organizational commitment → Employee performance	0.225	75.596	< 0.001	Supported (partial mediation)

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the authors. (2025)

The mediation analysis indicates that the indirect relationship between competence and employee performance through organizational commitment is statistically significant. The positive indirect effect ($\beta = 0.225$) suggests that employees with higher levels of competence tend to exhibit stronger organizational commitment, which is in turn associated with better employee performance.

The significance of both the direct relationship between competence and employee performance and the indirect relationship through organizational commitment indicates a partial mediation pattern. This finding suggests that competence is associated with employee performance through two complementary pathways. First, competence is directly related to employees' ability to perform their tasks effectively. Second, competence is indirectly associated with performance by strengthening employees' psychological attachment and sense of responsibility toward the organization.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the proposed behavioral mechanism in which competence functions as an external stimulus associated with an internal psychological state, namely organizational commitment, which subsequently relates to employee behavior reflected in work performance. However, because this study employed a cross-sectional design, these relationships should be interpreted as associative rather than causal. Moreover, because the consequence component of the S-O-B-C framework was not examined, the findings support only the stimulus-organism-behavior sequence rather than the complete framework.

The results also suggest that organizational commitment does not fully account for the relationship between competence and employee performance. The remaining direct association indicates that employee competence is linked to performance beyond psychological attachment alone. Employees who possess adequate knowledge, technical skills, and problem-solving abilities are likely to demonstrate higher performance regardless of variations in organizational commitment, although stronger commitment appears to reinforce this relationship.

Compared with previous studies, the present findings provide additional evidence that organizational commitment represents an important psychological mechanism associated with employee performance in public sector organizations. Nevertheless, the partial mediation pattern indicates that other organizational and individual factors, such as leadership, organizational culture, work motivation, or job satisfaction, may also contribute to explaining employee performance (Haliah & Nirwana, 2019) and should be considered in future research.

Overall, the mediation analysis highlights that competence and organizational commitment should not be viewed as independent factors. Instead, they operate as complementary constructs that are jointly associated with employee performance within the organizational context of subdistrict offices in Pekanbaru City.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between competence, organizational commitment, and employee performance among employees of subdistrict offices in Pekanbaru City. The results showed that competence was positively associated with both organizational commitment and employee performance, while organizational commitment was also positively associated with employee performance. These findings contribute to the literature on public sector human resource management by providing empirical evidence of the role of organizational commitment as a partial mediator in the relationship between competence and employee performance within local government agencies.

Several limitations should be noted when interpreting these results. First, the use of purposive sampling limits the external validity of the findings beyond the selected subdistrict offices. Second, the cross-sectional design does not permit causal

inferences among the variables. Third, the reliance on self-report instruments may introduce common method concerns. Future research could address these limitations by employing probability-based or longitudinal designs and by incorporating additional organizational-behavior variables to provide a more complete understanding of employee performance across different organizational settings.

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We hope this research makes a meaningful contribution to understanding the importance of employee competence and organizational commitment in improving employee performance in local government. The findings are expected to serve as material for reflection, not only for the subdistricts of Pekanbaru City but also for other regions striving to improve the quality of public services. The collaborative approach established in this research demonstrates how openness, participation, and willingness to share experiences can generate valuable insights for the development of better governance.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who sincerely gave their time, information, and support during this research. We hope the results can be useful for the development of knowledge, the improvement of bureaucratic performance, and as a stepping stone for further research.

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