

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND COMPETENCE ON APPARATUS PERFORMANCE: MOTIVATION AS A MEDIATOR IN PNDS, LIQUICA, TIMOR-LESTE

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effects of organizational culture and competence on the performance of officers involved in the implementation of the Program Nasional Dezenvolvimentu Suku (PNDS) in Liquiça Regency, Timor-Leste, both directly and through work motivation as a mediating variable. The study is motivated by the persistence of delays in PNDS project implementation, indicating suboptimal officer performance at the local level. This study adopts a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The population consists of 42 PNDS officers, all of whom were included as respondents using a census sampling technique. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale and analysed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that organizational culture and competence have positive but statistically insignificant effects on officer performance. In addition, work motivation is not found to mediate the relationship between organizational culture and performance, nor between competence and performance. These findings suggest that although organizational culture, competence, and work motivation are theoretically important, they have not been empirically validated as significant determinants of officer performance in the PNDS context, either directly or indirectly. This condition may be attributed to contextual factors, such as limited institutional support, suboptimal coordination, and the complexity of program implementation at the local level, which constrain the effective translation of these factors into improved performance. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context and highlights the need for strengthening institutional support systems and improving organizational conditions to enhance the effectiveness of village development programs in Timor-Leste.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Competence, Work Motivation, Officer Performance, PNDS, Timor-Leste.

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INTRODUCTION

Rural development remains a strategic priority for governments in improving community welfare and reducing regional disparities. In Timor-Leste, the *Programa Nacional Dezenvolvimentu Suku* (PNDS) was introduced as a key policy instrument to promote community-based development through the empowerment of local officers and active community participation.

The effectiveness of this program largely depends on the performance of local-level officers who are directly responsible for planning, implementing, and managing development activities.

However, the implementation of PNDS in Liquica Regency continues to face several challenges, including delays in project execution, suboptimal program management, and uneven development outcomes. These issues indicate that the performance of PNDS officers has not yet reached the expected level, suggesting the need for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing performance in the public sector context.

In public organizations, employee performance is not only determined by formal regulations and administrative

systems but also by internal organizational factors and individual attributes [3]. Organizational culture plays a critical role in shaping behavior, work attitudes, and commitment, as shared values and norms guide how officers perform their duties [1]. A strong organizational culture is generally expected to promote discipline, cooperation, and accountability, which in turn enhance performance.

In addition, competence is widely recognized as a key determinant of performance. It reflects the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform tasks effectively [4]. In the context of PNDS, officers are required to handle complex development processes involving planning, budgeting, coordination, and supervision. Therefore, adequate competence is essential to ensure effective implementation and accountability of development programs.

Furthermore, work motivation represents an important psychological factor that drives individuals to exert effort and sustain performance. Motivation is often associated with internal and external drivers that influence job satisfaction and work outcomes [5]. It is also assumed to strengthen the relationship between organizational factors and performance by encouraging individuals to utilize their capabilities more effectively. In this study, work motivation is proposed as a mediating variable linking organizational culture and competence to officer performance.

However, prior studies generally suggest that organizational culture, competence, and motivation have significant effects on performance [3], [8]. In contrast, empirical findings in specific public sector contexts—particularly in developing countries—may produce different results due to contextual constraints such as limited institutional support, complex administrative procedures, and resource limitations. Therefore, it is important to empirically re-examine these relationships in the context of PNDS implementation.

Despite the growing body of literature on organizational behavior and human resource management, empirical studies that simultaneously examine the roles of organizational culture and competence on

performance, with work motivation as a mediating variable in the context of PNDS and local public sector organizations in Timor-Leste, remain limited. This gap highlights the need for further investigation to better understand the mechanisms underlying performance in local development programs.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the effects of organizational culture and competence on the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency, with work motivation as a mediating variable. Unlike most prior studies, this research also considers the possibility that these relationships may not be statistically significant, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of performance dynamics in real-world public sector settings.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context with potentially non-significant relationships. Practically, the results offer insights for policymakers and local governments in designing more effective strategies to improve the implementation of village development programs in Timor-Leste.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II presents the theoretical background and hypothesis development. Section III describes the research methodology. Section IV presents the results and discussion. Finally, Section V concludes the study and outlines its implications.

THEORETICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical Foundation

This study is grounded in human resource management and organizational behavior perspectives, which emphasize that employee performance is influenced by both organizational and individual factors. In public sector organizations, performance is not solely determined by formal systems, rules, and procedures, but is also shaped by internal organizational conditions and psychological factors [3]. Organizational culture, competence, and work motivation are therefore considered key determinants

that influence how employees perform their roles and responsibilities effectively. These perspectives provide a theoretical basis for understanding how organizational and individual factors interact to influence employee performance in public sector settings.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture refers to a system of shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide the behavior and work patterns of organizational members [1]. It functions as an informal control mechanism that shapes employees' attitudes, discipline, commitment, and responsibility. A strong organizational culture plays a critical role in influencing how employees perceive their roles and perform their tasks.

It creates a shared understanding of acceptable behavior and organizational expectations, which can enhance coordination, reduce uncertainty, and improve work effectiveness. In public sector organizations, organizational culture is particularly important because formal rules and procedures alone are often insufficient to ensure optimal performance.

In the context of the Programa Nacional Dezenvolvimentu Suku (PNDS), organizational culture is expected to support collaboration, accountability, and transparency among officers involved in program implementation. However, the effectiveness of organizational culture in improving performance depends on how well these values are internalized and consistently applied in daily work practices. Without strong leadership support and alignment with organizational systems, cultural values may remain symbolic and fail to produce measurable performance outcomes.

Competence

Competence is defined as an individual characteristic encompassing knowledge, skills, and work attitudes required to perform tasks effectively and efficiently [4]. It reflects an individual's capability to carry

out job responsibilities and adapt to changing work demands. Competence is considered a fundamental determinant of performance because it directly influences how well tasks are executed. Employees with higher competence levels are generally more capable of solving problems, making decisions, and performing tasks with greater accuracy and efficiency. However, competence alone may not guarantee high performance if it is not supported by appropriate organizational conditions.

In the context of PNDS implementation, competence is crucial due to the complexity of tasks, including planning, budgeting, coordination, and supervision. Nevertheless, the impact of competence on performance may be limited by structural constraints such as limited resources, administrative complexity, and weak institutional support. Therefore, competence must be aligned with organizational systems and operational support to effectively contribute to performance outcomes.

Work Motivation

Work motivation refers to internal and external forces that influence the direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's work behavior toward achieving organizational goals [5]. It determines the level of effort employees are willing to exert in performing their duties. Motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing performance because it drives individuals to utilize their abilities more effectively. Highly motivated employees tend to show greater commitment, persistence, and responsibility in completing tasks. In organizational settings, motivation is often influenced by factors such as rewards, recognition, leadership support, and working conditions.

In this study, work motivation is positioned as a mediating variable that explains how organizational culture and competence influence performance. However, in public sector contexts such as PNDS, motivation may also be shaped by external factors such

as government policies, budget allocation, and institutional arrangements. These factors may strengthen or weaken the role of motivation in influencing performance outcomes.

Officer Performance

Officer performance is defined as the level of achievement in carrying out tasks and responsibilities in accordance with predetermined standards and objectives [3]. Performance can be measured through indicators such as work quality, quantity, timeliness, and effectiveness.

In the context of PNDS implementation in Liquiça Regency, officer performance serves as a key indicator of program success. High-performing officers are expected to implement development activities effectively, transparently, and accountably, thereby ensuring the achievement of program objectives. In public sector programs such as PNDS, performance is also closely linked to accountability, transparency, and the effectiveness of service delivery.

Relationship between Variables

Previous studies suggest that organizational culture and competence are important determinants of employee performance [1], [3]. A strong organizational culture creates a conducive work environment that shapes positive work behavior, while competence enables employees to perform tasks professionally and efficiently.

Work motivation is often considered a psychological mechanism that strengthens the relationship between organizational factors and performance [5]. Therefore, motivation is conceptually positioned as a mediating variable linking organizational culture and competence to performance.

However, it is important to note that empirical findings may vary depending on organizational context, particularly in public sector environments characterized by structural constraints and limited resources.

As such, the relationships among these variables require empirical verification. However, in the context of public sector programs such as PNDS, the relationships among these variables may not always produce significant effects due to the presence of structural and institutional constraints. Factors such as limited resources, bureaucratic complexity, and policy restrictions may influence how organizational and individual variables translate into actual performance outcomes. Therefore, empirical testing is necessary to validate these relationships in specific contexts.

Hypothesis Development

Although prior studies generally report significant relationships among these variables, this study also considers the possibility that such relationships may not be statistically significant in the context of PNDS implementation due to contextual limitations. Based on the theoretical framework and prior empirical studies, organizational culture and competence are expected to positively influence employee performance. A supportive organizational culture encourages appropriate work behavior, while competence enables employees to perform their duties effectively and professionally [1], [4].

Furthermore, work motivation is assumed to act as a mediating mechanism that enhances the influence of organizational culture and competence on performance by encouraging individuals to utilize their capabilities more optimally [5]. Based on these arguments, the hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

H1: Organizational culture has a positive effect on the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency.

H2: Competence has a positive effect on the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency.

H3: Work motivation mediates the relationship between organizational culture and the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency.

H4: Work motivation mediates the relationship between competence and the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the effects of organizational culture and competence on the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency, with work motivation as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach is appropriate as it allows for objective and systematic testing of relationships among variables based on empirical data, which is essential for hypothesis testing in social and organizational research [7].

The population of this study consists of all officers involved in the implementation of the *Programa Nacional Dezenvolvimentu Suku* (PNDS) in Liquiça Regency. Given the relatively small population size, a census sampling technique was applied, in which all 42 officers were included as respondents. This approach ensures comprehensive representation of the population and minimizes sampling bias, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the findings.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed directly to the respondents. The instrument utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to

measure perceptions of organizational culture, competence, work motivation, and officer performance. The Likert scale is widely used in behavioral and organizational research due to its ability to capture attitudes and perceptions in a consistent and reliable manner [3].

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method is particularly suitable for analyzing complex relationships among latent variables, including both direct and indirect effects, especially in studies with relatively small sample sizes. PLS-SEM is also widely applied in management and social science research for predictive analysis and theory development [6].

The evaluation of the research model was carried out in two stages: assessment of the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The measurement model evaluation focused on establishing construct validity and reliability, while the structural model assessment examined the relationships among variables and the explanatory power of the model. This procedure ensures the robustness and adequacy of the proposed research model [6].

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1: Respondent identity

S.No	Category	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	30	71,43
		Female	12	28,57
2	Age	< 25 years	1	2,38
		25–35 years	18	42,86
		36–45 years	20	47,62
		> 45 years	3	7,14
3	Length of Service	< 3 years	25	59,52
		3–5 years	3	7,14
		6–10 years	3	7,14
		> 10 years	11	26,19
4	Position	Staff	32	76,19
		Section Head	3	7,14
		Division Head	4	9,52
		Others	3	7,14
5	Education	Hight School/Vocational	16	38,10
		Diploma	5	11,90
		Bachelor's Degree	21	50,00

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents involved in this study. Based on Table 1, the majority of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency are male (71.43%), while female officers account for 28.57%, indicating that program implementation is still predominantly carried out by male personnel. In terms of age distribution, most respondents fall within the 36-45 years age group (47.62%), followed by those aged 25–35 years (42.86%). This suggests that the majority of PNDS officers are in their productive age, which is generally associated with adequate work experience and capacity to perform program-related tasks.

Regarding tenure, most respondents have less than three years of service (59.52%), while a smaller proportion (26.19%) have more than ten years of experience. This indicates that although many officers are

relatively new, there is still a segment with substantial experience contributing to program implementation. From the perspective of organizational position, the majority of respondents are staff members (76.19%), followed by division heads (9.52%), section heads (7.14%), and others (7.14%). This shows that the data primarily reflects the perspectives of operational-level officers directly involved in PNDS implementation.

In terms of educational background, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree (50.00%), followed by high school or vocational education (38.10%) and diploma qualifications (11.90%). Overall, this indicates that PNDS officers possess an adequate educational background to support the implementation of development programs.

Construct Validity and Reliability

Table 2: Construct validity and reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
X1_Organizational Culture	0.768	0.750	0.855	0.603
X2_Competence	0.878	0.898	0.920	0.744
Y_Officer Performance	0.759	0.789	0.843	0.573
Z_Work Motivation	0.815	0.818	0.878	0.643

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and validity assessment of the measurement model. The findings indicate that all constructs have Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values (rho_a and rho_c) exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceed 0.50, indicating that

each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. These results confirm that all variables—organizational culture, competence, work motivation, and officer performance—meet the criteria for reliability and convergent validity. Therefore, the measurement model (outer model) is considered adequate for further structural model analysis [6].

Indicator Loadings

Table 3: Outer loadings

Indicator	X1_Organizational Culture	X2_Competence	Y_Officer Performance	Z_Work Motivation
X1_1	0.830			
X1_2	0.548			
X1_3	0.894			
X1_4	0.789			
X2_1		0.911		
X2_2		0.920		
X2_3		0.655		
X2_4		0.933		
Y_1			0.776	

Y_2			0.717	
Y_3			0.732	
Y_4			0.802	
Z_1				0.812
Z_2				0.814
Z_3				0.828
Z_4				0.753

Table 3 presents the outer loading values of all indicators. The results show that all indicators have loading values above the minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating that they are valid measures of their respective constructs. The organizational culture indicators range from 0.548 to 0.894, with indicator X1_3 having the highest loading, suggesting that it represents the most dominant dimension of the construct. The competence variable exhibits strong loading values ranging from 0.655 to 0.933, indicating that the indicators effectively capture the competencies required for PNDS

implementation. For officer performance, all indicators show loadings above 0.70, ranging from 0.717 to 0.802, reflecting consistent measurement of performance outcomes. Similarly, the work motivation indicators range from 0.753 to 0.828, confirming their validity in representing motivational aspects. Overall, these results indicate that all indicators satisfy convergent validity requirements, and no indicators need to be removed from the model. Therefore, the measurement model is suitable for further analysis [6].

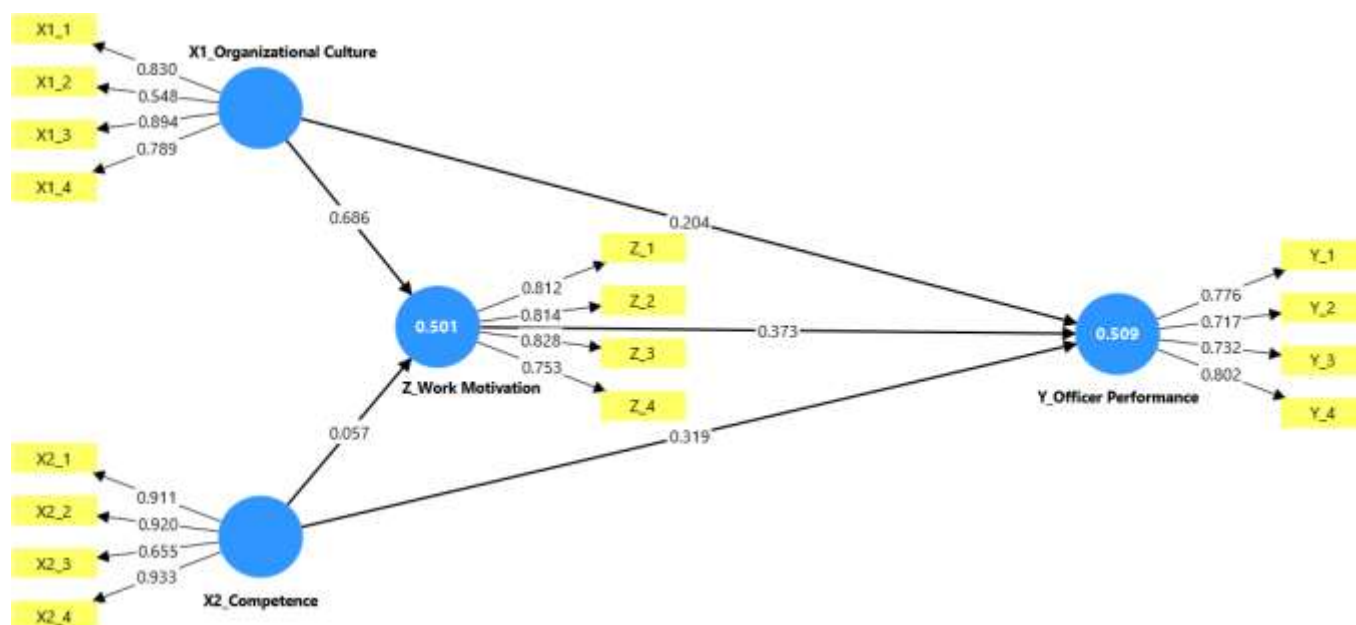


Fig. 1: PLS structural model

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Relationship between Variables	Path Coefficient	P-values	Remark
X1_Organizational Culture -> Y_Officer Performance	0.204	0.444	Not Significant
X2_Competence -> Y_Officer Performance	0.319	0.078	Not Significant

Table 5: Direct effect test results on the mediating variable

Relationship between Variables	Mediating Variable	Path Coefficient	P-values	Remark
X1_Organizational Culture -> Z_Work Motivation	Work Motivation (Z)	0.256	0.188	Not Significant
X2_Competence -> Z_Work Motivation	Work Motivation (Z)	0.021	0.836	Not Significant

Table 6: Results of specific indirect effect testing

Indirect Relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Remark
X1_ Organizational Culture -> Z_Work Motivation -> Y_Officer Performance	0.256	0.251	0.194	1.316	0.188	Not significant
X2_ Competence -> Z_Work Motivation -> Y_Officer Performance	0.021	0.040	0.102	0.207	0.836	Not significant

Total Effect Analysis

The total effect analysis examines the overall influence of organizational culture and competence on officer performance by considering both direct and indirect effects. The results indicate that although organizational culture and competence demonstrate positive total effect values, these effects are not statistically significant. This finding is consistent with the results of both direct and indirect effect analyses, which also show non-significant relationships.

Therefore, it can be concluded that organizational culture and competence do not have a statistically significant overall effect on officer performance, either directly or through work motivation. This finding suggests that the influence of these variables is limited in the context of PNDS implementation in Liquiça Regency.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the effects of organizational culture and competence on the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency, with work motivation as a mediating variable. The discussion integrates empirical findings with theoretical perspectives and the contextual realities of PNDS implementation in the public sector.

Organizational Culture and Officer Performance

The results indicate that organizational culture has a positive but statistically insignificant effect on officer performance. This finding suggests that although shared values, norms, and behavioral patterns exist within the organization, they are not sufficiently strong to directly improve performance outcomes. From a theoretical perspective, organizational culture is expected to shape behavior and enhance performance [1].

However, in the context of PNDS implementation, the influence of culture appears to be constrained by structural and institutional factors. The presence of bureaucratic procedures, limited operational flexibility, and weak enforcement of organizational values may reduce the effectiveness of culture in influencing actual performance outcomes.

This condition indicates that organizational culture in the PNDS context may function more as a symbolic or normative guideline rather than as a practical driver of performance. Therefore, without strong leadership support, clear performance systems, and consistent implementation of organizational values, culture alone is insufficient to produce measurable improvements in officer performance.

This finding differs from many previous studies that report a significant positive relationship between organizational culture and performance [3], [8]. The inconsistency may be explained by contextual differences, particularly in public sector environments where bureaucratic structures and administrative constraints limit the direct influence of cultural values on performance outcomes.

Competence and Officer Performance

The findings reveal that competence has a positive but statistically insignificant effect on officer performance. This indicates that although officers may possess adequate knowledge, skills, and work attitudes, these competencies are not optimally translated into improved performance outcomes.

In theory, competence is a key determinant of performance [4]. However, in this study, the lack of significance suggests the presence of contextual barriers that limit the application of individual competencies.

These barriers may include inadequate infrastructure, limited access to resources, lack of technical support, and challenges in inter-organizational coordination.

Furthermore, the administrative complexity of PNDS implementation may reduce the opportunity for officers to fully utilize their competencies. As a result, competence becomes underutilized, and its potential contribution to performance is not fully realized. This finding highlights the importance of aligning competence development with organizational systems and operational support.

This result is not fully consistent with prior studies, which generally find competence to be a significant predictor of performance [4]. The difference may be attributed to contextual limitations in the PNDS implementation, where structural and operational constraints reduce the ability of individuals to fully utilize their competencies in practice.

The Mediating Role of Work Motivation

The results show that work motivation does not significantly mediate the relationship between organizational culture and performance, nor between competence and performance. This suggests that motivation is not a strong mechanism linking organizational and individual factors to performance in this study.

Although motivation is theoretically considered a key driver of performance [5], its role may be weakened in public sector contexts where external constraints dominate. In the case of PNDS, motivation may be influenced more by structural factors such as policy regulations, budget limitations, and institutional arrangements rather than by internal organizational conditions.

Additionally, the absence of clear incentive systems, limited career development opportunities, and high administrative burdens may reduce the effectiveness of motivation in enhancing performance. Consequently, even when officers are motivated, they may not have sufficient opportunities or resources to translate that motivation into tangible performance outcomes.

This finding contrasts with many studies that highlight the significant mediating role of motivation in enhancing performance [5]. The absence of a mediating effect in this study may indicate that motivation is influenced more by external institutional factors than by internal organizational conditions.

Overall Implications

Overall, the findings indicate that organizational culture, competence, and work motivation, although conceptually important, do not have a statistically significant impact on officer performance in this study.

This suggests that performance in the PNDS context is influenced by a broader and more complex system involving structural, institutional, and environmental factors. These findings reinforce that structural and institutional conditions play a dominant role in shaping performance outcomes, particularly in public sector program implementation.

Therefore, improving officer performance requires a comprehensive and systemic approach. Efforts should not only focus on strengthening internal factors such as organizational culture, competence, and motivation but also on improving external conditions, including governance mechanisms, resource availability, coordination systems, and policy implementation processes.

Furthermore, this study provides an important theoretical implication, namely that the relationships between organizational culture, competence, motivation, and performance are not always linear or direct, especially in public sector environments. The effectiveness of these variables depends heavily on contextual and structural conditions. In the case of PNDS, institutional constraints, limited resources, and administrative complexity appear to weaken both direct and indirect effects of organizational and individual factors on performance.

These finding highlights that, in public sector programs within developing country contexts, performance is not solely driven by internal organizational variables but is

significantly influenced by broader systemic factors. Therefore, future research should consider incorporating additional variables such as leadership, organizational support, and governance quality to provide a more comprehensive understanding of performance dynamics in similar contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of organizational culture and competence on the performance of PNDS officers in Liquiça Regency, with work motivation as a mediating variable.

The findings reveal that organizational culture and competence have positive but statistically insignificant effects on officer performance. In addition, work motivation does not mediate the relationship between organizational culture and performance, nor between competence and performance.

These results indicate that, although organizational culture, competence, and motivation are theoretically important, they have not been empirically proven to significantly influence performance in the context of PNDS implementation.

The findings suggest that officer performance is not solely determined by internal organizational and individual factors but is also influenced by broader contextual conditions, such as institutional support, resource constraints, and operational challenges.

Therefore, improving the performance of PNDS officers requires a more comprehensive approach that not only focuses on strengthening organizational culture, enhancing competence, and fostering motivation but also addresses structural and systemic issues within the organization.

This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context and offers practical insights for policymakers in improving the effectiveness of public sector development programs.

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