

The Effect Of Education Level On Employee Performance With Competence As An Intervening Variable At The Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Agency

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of education level on employee performance with competence as an intervening variable at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office. This study uses the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with SmartPLS software to analyze data obtained from 71 employees at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office. The results of the analysis show that the level of education has a positive and significant influence on competence (T-Statistic = 40.493, P-Value = 0.000) and employee performance (T-Statistic = 4.456, P-Value = 0.000). In addition, competence is proven to have a significant influence on employee performance with a T-Statistic of 9.668 and a P-Value of 0.000. The resulting model showed an R-Square Adjusted value of 0.739 for the employee performance variable and 0.801 for the competency variable, which showed that 73.9% of the variation in employee performance could be explained by the model that included education level and competence, while 80.1% of the variation in competency could be explained by the level of education. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the increase in education level contributes significantly to the improvement of employee competence and performance at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office. Therefore, it is recommended that the agency improve education and training programs for employees to improve competencies that will have an impact on improving overall performance.

Keywords:

Education Level; Competence; Employee Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Sources The development of public organizations in this era of globalization is inseparable from the improvement of human resources (HR) in it. One of the factors that plays an important role in improving human resources is the level of education. A higher level of education is expected to improve employee competence and performance. At the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Agency, the

relationship between the level of education, competence, and employee performance is an important topic to research.

The level of education has an important role in the development of employee performance. According to (Budd, 2020), formal education provides the foundation of knowledge and skills necessary to carry out tasks in the workplace. Higher education also improves analytical and problem-solving skills, which are indispensable in various fields of work. A study by (Peccei & De Voorde, 2019) shows that employees with a higher level of education tend to have better performance compared to those with a lower level of education. This is due to their ability to understand and implement organizational policies and procedures more effectively. On the other hand, (Ploscaru, et al., 2023) states that education also plays a role in shaping good attitudes and work ethics. Educated employees tend to have a professional and responsible attitude towards their work, which ultimately has a positive impact on their performance. (Budd, 2020) said that the indicators of the quality of human resources are as follows:

1. Completion Rate: The percentage of individuals who complete each level of education, from elementary school to higher education.
2. Academic Qualifications: Certificates, diplomas, or degrees earned at the end of each level of education.
3. Length of Study: The number of years spent completing each level of education.
4. Academic Achievement: Grades or achievements obtained during the educational process at each level.
5. Access to Education: The availability and accessibility of educational institutions at every level in various regions.

In addition, according to Mathis and Jackson in (Osman et al., 2022) states that employee performance is the result or output of work done by an employee in a certain period of time in accordance with organizational standards and goals. Employee performance is also measured by their productivity, which is the amount of output produced in a certain period of time. Productive employees are those who can produce a lot of output with good quality, in an efficient time. Job satisfaction also plays an important role in employee performance. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have high competence, work harder, and show greater commitment to the organization. According to Mathis and Jackson in (Hendrijaya, 2020) The indicators of employee performance are as follows:

1. Effectiveness: Effectiveness refers to the extent to which employees succeed in achieving the goals and targets that have been set. It includes not only the achievement of the final result but also the process used to achieve it. Effective employees can identify top priorities, plan and organize their tasks well, and ensure that they meet or exceed expected standards. In other words, effectiveness measures the alignment between the results achieved and the



desired goals, as well as the employee's ability to adapt and overcome challenges that may arise during the work process.

2. **Efficiency:** Efficiency refers to how well employees use the resources available to them to achieve the desired results. This includes the optimal use of time, energy, and materials to avoid waste and maximize productivity. Efficient employees can complete their tasks quickly and precisely without sacrificing quality. Efficiency also involves the ability of employees to identify and implement better ways to do their jobs, so that overall performance can be improved by using minimal resources.
3. **Quality:** Quality refers to the level of perfection or meticulousness of the work achieved by employees. This includes how well the work is done according to the set standards, including accuracy, consistency, and neatness. Employees who produce high-quality work are able to meet or exceed expectations in terms of detail and precision. Good employee performance shows the employee's commitment to their work and attention to detail, which in turn can increase the trust and satisfaction of customers or service users.
4. **Productivity:** Productivity measures the amount of output produced by employees in a given period of time. It includes how much work can be completed in a given time frame by using the available resources. Productive employees are able to complete many tasks quickly and efficiently, while maintaining or improving the quality of their work. High productivity shows the ability of employees to work effectively and efficiently, as well as manage their time well to achieve maximum results.
5. **Job Satisfaction:** Job satisfaction refers to the level of satisfaction felt by employees with their work and work environment. This includes aspects such as working conditions, relationships with colleagues and employers, awards and recognition, and opportunities for development and growth. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have higher competence, are more productive, and are more loyal to the organization. High job satisfaction can also reduce turnover and absenteeism rates, as well as improve employee morale and competence.

Competence is a combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes possessed by an employee to carry out their duties well. According to (Boyatzis et al., 2022), competence is the main indicator of employee performance. High competence allows employees to work more efficiently and effectively. According to (Boyatzis et al., 2022) states that good competence can be a bridge between the level of education and employee performance. Employees who have higher education but do not have adequate competence may not be able to show good performance. On the other hand, employees with high competence can maximize their potential even if their education level is not too high. According to Mathis and Jackson in (Hendrijaya, 2020) states that employee performance is the result or output of work done by an employee in a certain



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period of time in accordance with organizational standards and goals. According to (Boyatzis et al., 2022), which are indicators of competence are as follows:

1. Knowledge is a deep understanding of a particular field or subject that is relevant to the job.
2. Technical Skills are the ability to perform specific tasks related to the job, such as the use of specific tools or technologies.
3. Interpersonal skills are the ability to communicate, collaborate, and work effectively with others.
4. Analytical skills are the ability to think critically, analyze information, and make informed decisions.
5. Attitude and Values are commitments to work, competence, work ethics, and values that support high performance.

The concept of this research is as illustrated in the following conceptual framework drawing:

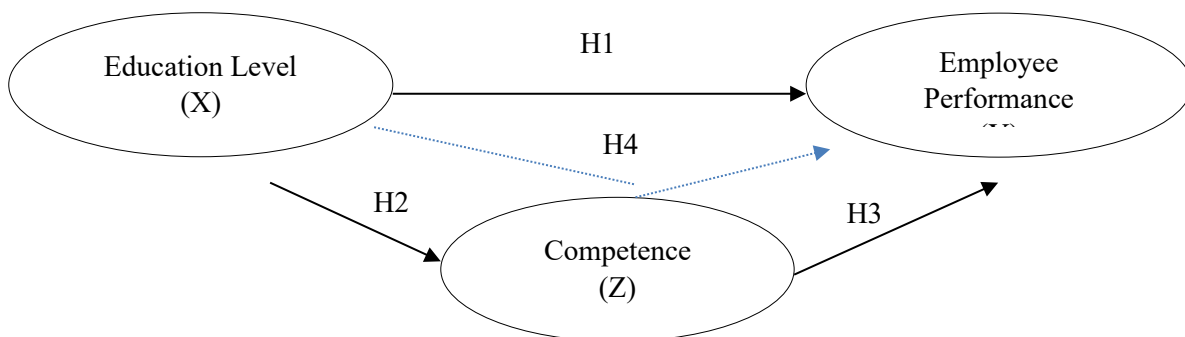


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research is associative quantitative research. This research was carried out at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office. The time of this research was carried out from September to December 2024. According to population is a generalization area consisting of objects/subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics that are determined by the researcher to be studied and then drawn conclusions. The population in this study is the entire number of employees in the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Agency with a total of 71 employees with the following details:

**Table 3.1 Details of the Popolation of the Mandailing Natal Regency
Environmental Agency**



No.	Status	Number (Person)
1.	ASN	16
2.	Honorary	55
Sum		71

Source : Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Agency Dairi
Regency

The sampling technique used in this study is a saturated sample. According to Sugiyono, saturated sampling is a sample selection technique when all members of the population are used as a sample where all populations in this study are used as samples, which is a total of 71 employees

The data that will be used from this study is the data from the results of the questionnaire distributed to respondents consisting of all employees in all divisions. The data analysis technique used in this study is a quantitative data analysis method using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) using SmartPLS 3.0 software.

Meanwhile, the feasibility test that will be used in this study is the outer *model* test in order to obtain *an outer loading* value that meets the requirements of *validity and reliability*. Testing the structural model (Inner model) which includes a determination coefficient test (R^2) to measure how far the model is able to explain the variation of the bound variable. R^2

The Goodness fit test is used to determine the extent to which the observed data is in accordance with the theoretical distribution assumed by the model or hypothesis (Awan, 2020) and the hypothesis test (T-Statistic Test) which consists of a *path coefficients* test to test how the direct influence of each independent variable individually on its bound variables and the indirect influence of intervening variables in influencing the independent variable to the bound variable.

This test is used to determine the direction of the relationship between variables (positive/negative). If the value is 0 to 1, then the direction of the relationship between the variables is declared positive. Meanwhile, if the value is 0 to -1, then the direction of the relationship between the variables is declared negative. A hypothesis is said to be accepted if the statistical t value is greater than the t of the table. According to (Sugiyono, 2021) the criterion of t-value table is 1.96 with a significance level of 5%.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

Outer Model Analysis



The *outer model* test in this study uses algorithm analysis in *SmartPLS software version 3.0*, in order to obtain *outer loading* values that meet the *validity and reliability requirements*.

1) Convergent Validity Test Results

The convergent validity of the measurement model with reflexive indicators can be seen from the correlation between the score of the item/indicator and the construction score. Based on the results for outer loading, it shows that there is an indicator that has a loading below 0.60 and is not significant. The following is presented as the results of the outer loading value in the following table.

Table 2. <i>Outer Loading</i>		
Indicators	Outer Loading	Information
Education Level (X)		
TP1	0,830	Valid
TP2	0,861	Valid
TP3	0,892	Valid
TP4	0,905	Valid
TP5	0,916	Valid
Employee Performance (Y)		
KP1	0,919	Valid
KP2	0,914	Valid
KP3	0,787	Valid
KP4	0,726	Valid
KP5	0,774	Valid
KP6	0,821	Valid
Competence (Z)		
KO1	0,836	Valid
KO2	0,936	Valid
KO3	0,869	Valid
KO4	0,819	Valid

Source : Output Smart PLS, 2024

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that all indicators have a *loading factor* value of > 0.60. According to (Gozali et al., 1973) states that an indicator is declared valid if it has a *loading factor* value of > 0.60. Thus, it can be stated that all indicators in this study are declared valid and can be carried out further research. The following is shown in the form of a structural model as shown in the following image:

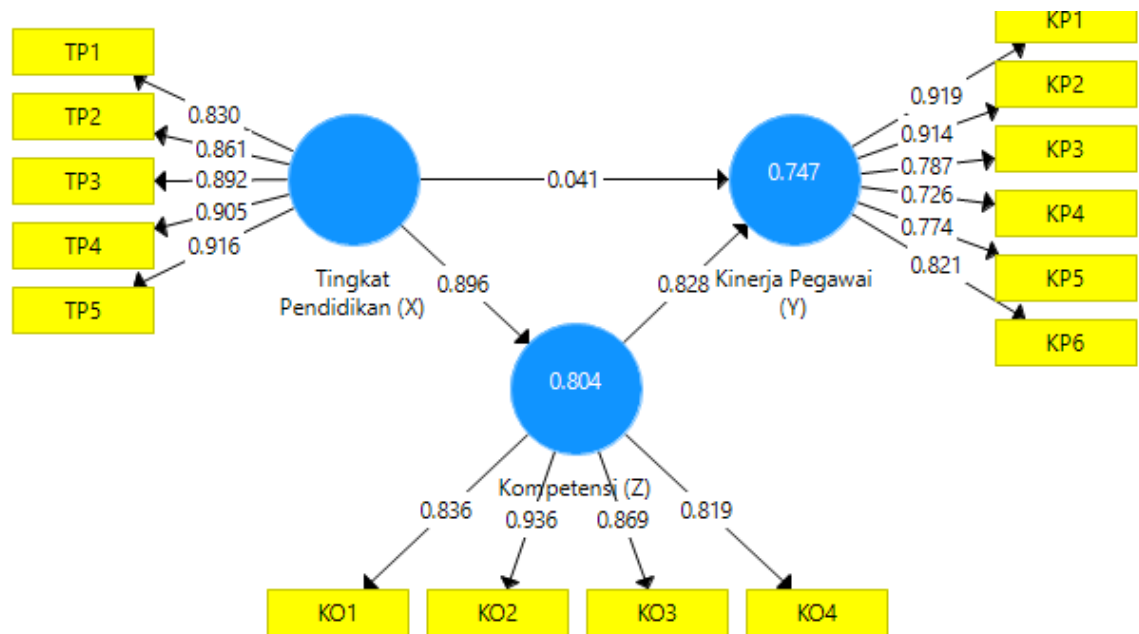


Figure 1. Outer Model Test Results

2) Discriminate Validity Test Results

The next test is to test the validity of discrimination, this test aims to determine whether a reflective indicator is a good measurement for its construction based on the principle that the indicator is highly correlated with its construction. The following are the results of cross loading from the discrimination validity test as shown in the following table:

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variable Indicators	Employee Performance (Y)	Competence (Z)	Education Level (X)
KO1	0,639	0,836	0,695
KO2	0,783	0,936	0,903
KO3	0,726	0,869	0,827
KO4	0,816	0,819	0,660
KP1	0,919	0,790	0,688
KP2	0,914	0,793	0,701
KP3	0,787	0,572	0,547
KP4	0,726	0,669	0,627
KP5	0,774	0,530	0,529
KP6	0,821	0,581	0,455
TP1	0,731	0,882	0,830
TP2	0,763	0,842	0,861
TP3	0,632	0,740	0,892
TP4	0,638	0,702	0,905
TP5	0,653	0,746	0,916

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2024



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Based on table 3, it can be seen that the *cross loading value* in each indicator and variable is greater than other variables and indicators, the cross loading variable of the Education Level variable shows that the cross loading of the variable indicator is greater than the cross loading of other latent variables, the cross loading indicator of the Employee Performance variable shows that the value of the cross loading indicator is greater than other latent variables, *Cross loading* variable Competence also shows a greater cross loading indicator value than the latent variable cross loading. Based on this data, it can be stated discriminatively that the cross loading results are considered valid.

3) Composite reliability test results

The test further determines the reliable value with the *composite reliability* of the indicator block that measures the construction. A construction value that is said to be reliable if the indigo *composite reliability* is above 0.60. In addition to looking at the *composite reliability* value, the reliable value can be seen in the variable construct value with the *alpha cronbachs* of the indicator block that measures the construct. A construct is declared reliable if the *cronbachs alpha value* is above 0.7. The following is a table of loading values for the construct of the research variables resulting from running the Smart PLS program in the following table.

Table 4. Construct Reliability and Validity

Indicators		Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Extracted Variance (AVE)
Employee Performance (Y)		0,906	0,928	0,683
Competence (Z)		0,888	0,923	0,750
Education Level (X)		0,928	0,946	0,777

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2024

Based on Table 4, it can be explained that the AVE value in each variable tested has a value of > 0.5 , which shows that all variables in this study meet the *criteria for discriminant validity*. To determine the reliability in this study, the *composite reliability* value is used. The accepted value for the reliability level is > 0.7 . Based on these criteria, it can be seen that all variables in this study have a $>$ value of 0.70 so that it can be stated that all variables tested meet the reliability of the construct.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Evaluation of the structural model (*inner model*) is carried out to ensure that the structural model built is robust and accurate. The stages of analysis carried out in the evaluation of the structural model are seen from several indicators, namely:

1) Determination Coefficient Test Results (R2)



The determination coefficient (R²) test is used to see the influence of certain independent latent variables on the dependent latent variable whether it has a substantive influence. Based on the data processing that has been carried out using the SmartPLS 3.0 program, the R Square value is obtained as shown in the following table.

Table 5. R Square Results

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Employee Performance (Y)	0,747	0,739
Competence (Z)	0,804	0,801

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2024

Based on table 5, it is known that the R Square Adjusted value of the Employee Performance variable is 0.739 or 73.90%, which means that the influence of Emotional Intelligence and Motivation on Employee Performance is in the high category. This means that the more Emotional Intelligence and Motivation increase, the more Employee Performance will increase. Meanwhile, the R Square value on the Employee Performance variable is 0.747 or 74.70%, which means that the influence of Emotional Intelligence and Motivation on Employee Performance is 74.70%, and the remaining 25.30% is influenced by other variables that have not been studied. Meanwhile, the R Square Adjusted value of the Organizational Commitment variable is 0.801 or 80.10%, which means that Emotional Intelligence and Motivation affect Organizational Commitment by 80.10%, or in a very high category. This shows that Emotional Intelligence and Motivation are significant in increasing employee Organizational Commitment. Furthermore, the R Square value of the Organizational Commitment variable is 0.804 or 80.40%, which means that Emotional Intelligence and Motivation affect Organizational Commitment by 80.40%, with the remaining 19.60% influenced by other factors that were not studied in this study.

2) Goodness of Fit Test Results

The Goodness of Fit test is a statistical method used to evaluate how well the tested model or statistical distribution matches the observed data. The Goodness of Fit test aims to determine the extent to which the observed data corresponds to the theoretical distribution assumed by the model or hypothesis. The goodness of fit model test can be seen from looking at the NFI value on the program. If the NFI value is > SRMR and the closer it is to 1, then the better the model (good fit). Based on the data processing that has been carried out using the SmartPLS 3.0 program, the Fit Model values are obtained as follows.

Table 6. Model Fit

Saturated Model	Estimated Model
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SRMR	0,127	0,127
d_ULS	1,938	1,938
d_G	2.314	2.984
Chi-Square	570.517	539.580
NFI	0.685	0.685

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2024

Based on table 6, it can be seen that the NFI value is $0.685 > 0.098$ so that it can be stated that the model in this study has sufficient *goodness of fit* and is suitable to be used to test the research hypothesis.

Hypothesis Test Results

After conducting an inner model analysis, the next thing is to evaluate the relationship between latent constructs in order to answer the hypothesis in this study. The hypothesis test in this study was carried out by looking at T-Statistics and P-Values. The hypothesis was declared accepted if the *T-Statistics value* > 1.96 and the P-Values < 0.05 . The following are the results of *Path Coefficients* of direct influence between variables as shown in the following table.

Table 7. Path Coefficients

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Value s	Result
Competency (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0,828	0,858	0,086	9,668	0,000	Accepted
Education Level (X) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0,041	0,015	0,089	4,456	0,000	Accepted
Education Level (X) -> Competency (Z)	0,896	0,898	0,022	40,493	0,000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2021

Based on the data in Table 7, it can be stated that there is an influence of the Education Level on Employee Performance. This can be seen from the T-statistical value of $4.456 > 1.96$ with a P-Value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This means that the level of education will be improved and the performance of employees will also increase. This result answers the first hypothesis in this study, namely the rejection of H_0 and acceptance of H_a or the level of education has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Service



Furthermore, on the influence of Education Level on Competence, data on T-Statistical values of $40.493 > 1.96$ with P-Value values of $0.000 < 0.05$ so that it can be stated that Education Level has a positive and significant effect on Competence at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office. This can be interpreted that if the level of education is improved, the Competence will increase. This statement answers the second hypothesis, which is to reject H_0 and accept H_a .

Furthermore, on the influence of Competence on Employee Performance, data was obtained that the T-Statistic value was $9.668 > 1.96$ with a P-Value value of $0.000 < 0.05$ which means rejecting H_0 and accepting H_a or Competency has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance. This indicates that if Competence is improved, employee performance tends to increase significantly. To answer the fourth hypothesis, it can be seen in the indirect influence between variables as shown in the following table.

Table 8. Indirect Effect (Pengaruh Tidak Langsung)

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation n (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Level of Education -> Competency -> Employee Performance	0,382	0,407	0,100	2,896	0,000	Accepted

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2024

Based on table 8, it can be explained that Competence (Z) is able to intervene the influence between Education Level (X) and Employee Performance (Y). This can be seen from the results of the T-Statistical value of $2.896 > 1.96$ with a P-Value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This shows that there is an indirect influence between the Education Level and Employee Performance through Competence. These results provide insight into how the intermediate variable of Competency can intervene the relationship between Education Level and Employee Performance at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office.

3.2 Discussion

The findings in this study can be emphasized by referring to the findings of previous studies that have relevance. In the context of the influence of Education Level on Employee Performance, this finding states that there is an influence of Education Level on Employee Performance. The findings in this study can be strengthened by referring to the findings of previous relevant studies. An employee's level of education is often associated with the ability to optimize their performance in the workplace. Research by Ginting et al. (2018) shows that higher levels of education are positively



related to improved employee performance. This is due to better decision-making, problem-solving, and understanding of more complex tasks that are often faced by employees with higher levels of education. In addition, according to Simamora et al. (2018), employees with higher education tend to have a more proactive attitude and are more adaptable to changes in the work environment, which ultimately improves their performance.

The level of education also plays an important role in developing employee competencies. Research by Kurniawan et al. (2018) revealed that employees with a higher level of education usually have better competence, both in terms of technical and managerial skills. Formal education provides employees with stronger foundational knowledge, which can then be developed into practical skills in the workplace. Another research by Wulandari et al. (2018) states that increasing the level of education will strengthen the competence of employees in carrying out their duties and responsibilities more effectively.

Employee competence is one of the key factors that affect employee performance. Research by Sari et al. (2018) shows that employees who have good competence, both in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, will show higher performance. High competence allows employees to do their jobs more efficiently, reduce errors, and be faster in completing assigned tasks. Furthermore, research by Susanto (2018) explains that competency development through training and education can improve the quality of employee work which ultimately has an impact on improving organizational performance.

Competence often acts as an intervening variable that strengthens the relationship between other variables, such as education level and employee performance. Research by Aditya et al. (2018) found that competence acts as a mediator that strengthens the influence of education on employee performance. This means that even though the level of education of employees has a direct effect on their performance, the competencies possessed by employees can strengthen this influence. Higher competencies allow employees to apply the knowledge gained through education to their work, which ultimately contributes to improved performance.

In the context of government organizations, including the Environment Agency, research by Hartono et al. (2018) shows that the level of education and competence has a very important role in improving employee performance. Employees with higher levels of education and better competence are able to carry out their duties more effectively, which contributes to the improvement of better public services. The study also emphasizes that workplace competency development, through ongoing training and education, is important to ensure employees can meet the demands of increasingly complex jobs. Based on the existing literature, it can be concluded that the level of education has a direct and indirect influence on employee performance through Competence. Therefore, to improve employee performance at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office it is important for management



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to implement a strategy that not only emphasizes the level of education, but also develops strong competencies among employees.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Conclusion

From the results of the data analysis of the research results and discussions described above, it can be concluded that:

1. The level of education has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.

With a T-Statistic value of $4.456 > 1.96$ and a P-Value of $0.000 < 0.05$, this result shows that the increase in the education level of employees will contribute to improving their performance. This means that the higher the level of employee education, the better the performance produced at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Service.

2. The level of education has a positive and significant effect on Competence.

The results of the study show that the level of education has a very significant influence on employee competence, with a T-Statistic value of $40.493 > 1.96$ and a P-Value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This indicates that the increase in the level of education of employees will have a direct impact on improving their competence.

3. Competence has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.

With a T-Statistic value of $9.668 > 1.96$ and a P-Value of $0.000 < 0.05$, this study confirms that employee competence has a significant effect on their performance. This means that increasing competence will encourage direct improvement in employee performance.

4. There is an indirect influence between the Education Level and Employee Performance through Competence.

The indirect influence between the level of education and employee performance through competence proved significant, with a T-Statistic value of $40.493 > 1.96$ and a P-Value of $0.000 < 0.05$. These results show that increasing the level of education of employees can improve their competence, which in turn will improve employee performance. Therefore, the development of employee competency education and training needs to be the main focus to improve performance at the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Service.

4.2 Suggestion

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusions on the research can be suggested to the Mandailing Natal Regency Environment Office and for future researchers as follows:

1. Improvement of Education and Training Programs



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Based on the findings that the level of education has a significant effect on employee competence and performance, it is recommended that the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Service continue to develop and improve training and education programs for employees. This aims to ensure that employees have relevant knowledge and skills, which will support the improvement of their competence and performance. Training programs can be courses, seminars, or further education focused on areas related to the employee's duties and responsibilities.

2. Strengthening Employee Competencies

Considering that competencies are proven to significantly affect employee performance, the Mandailing Natal Regency Environment Agency is advised to identify the core competencies needed in employee work and develop programs to improve these competencies. This can be done by holding technical skills training and soft skills development that can support the work of employees in the service environment. Thus, employee competencies will continue to develop along with increasingly complex job demands.

3. Improvement of Employee Education Level

The results of the study show that there is a positive influence between the level of education and employee performance. Therefore, it is recommended for the Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Office to encourage employees to continue their education, either in the form of further studies or training relevant to their work. Improving formal education, such as continuing education to a higher level, can improve the overall quality of employees, thereby contributing to better performance in the future.

4. Long-Term Development Strategy

The Mandailing Natal Regency Environmental Agency needs to plan a long-term development strategy that integrates improving education levels, developing competencies, and improving employee performance. One step that can be taken is to design a career development program that combines competency-based education and training. In addition, the employee performance appraisal system also needs to be updated to include indicators that are directly related to education and competence, in order to create a clearer relationship between employee development and optimal performance achievement.

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