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Competency, Workload, and Organizational Culture as Determinants of Public Sector Employee Performance in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT
Accelerating bureaucratic reform in Indonesia has placed civil servant performance at the center of national public administration transformation, yet empirical evidence on the simultaneous determinants of performance in central government directorates remains sparse. Prior studies report mixed findings — particularly regarding workload's direct effect — and rarely examine these three predictors within a single integrated model in strategic higher-education governance units. This study examines the direct and simultaneous effects of competency, workload, and organizational culture on employee performance at the Directorate of Learning and Student Affairs (Belmawa), Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology. Adopting a quantitative census design encompassing all active employees, data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS. The results demonstrate that competency exerts the strongest positive and significant effect on performance, followed by organizational culture as a meaningful secondary contributor, while workload does not produce a statistically significant direct effect. Collectively, the three predictors account for a substantial proportion of variance in employee performance. Theoretically, the findings advance multi-predictor performance models in public administration; practically, they provide evidence-based guidance for HR policymakers seeking to reverse performance decline amid programmatic expansion.

Keywords: Employee performance; Competency; Organizational culture; Workload; Public sector human resource management;

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of accelerating bureaucratic transformation, governments worldwide face mounting pressure to modernize public service delivery, ensuring that it is adaptive, transparent, and outcome-oriented (OECD, 2020). In Indonesia, this imperative has intensified significantly following the enactment of the grand design for bureaucratic reform, which places human resource (HR) performance at the center of state apparatus renewal. The government has explicitly framed civil servant (Aparatur Sipil Negara — ASN) performance as a strategic priority, operationalized through Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019 concerning the Assessment of Civil Servant Performance (PP No. 30 Tahun 2019). This regulatory architecture requires every public institution to adopt performance-based management, replacing input-oriented systems with results-based accountability. Consequently, public organizations are expected to reorient their human resource strategies and operational processes to remain both legitimate and effective in delivering public mandates.

These macro-level imperatives translate directly to firm-level challenges for strategic governmental units. The Directorate of Learning and Student Affairs (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan — Belmawa), operating under the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (Kemdiktisaintek), exemplifies this challenge. Belmawa is mandated to formulate and implement national policies on curriculum, learning innovation, and student development programs — including the landmark Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative — which serves over 201,599 student participants as of 2024, representing a 49% expansion from 109,467 in 2022.

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This dramatic programmatic growth has coincided with a significant decline in the Budget Performance Score (Nilai Kinerja Anggaran) from 95.30 in 2023 to 81.70 in 2024 — a paradox that signals underlying human resource performance constraints. Employee performance (kinerja pegawai), defined as the level of achievement by individuals in completing tasks according to established standards and responsibilities (Mangkunegara, 2017), thus becomes a critical and closely monitored organizational outcome. Understanding the strategic levers that drive this outcome is essential. This study proposes that three core HR management dimensions — competency (CT), workload (WL), and organizational culture (OC) — are the primary determinants of employee performance in this high-intensity governmental context.

Competency (CT) refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, work attitudes, social abilities, and managerial capabilities that enable an employee to perform effectively (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Wibowo, 2016). Through the mechanisms of task-role alignment and cognitive problem-solving capacity, competency is expected to influence performance by enabling employees to meet dynamic task demands with precision and professionalism. Workload (WL) refers to the quantity and qualitative complexity of tasks assigned to employees within a specified timeframe (Tarwaka, 2015). Through dual mechanisms of motivational activation (when proportionate) and cognitive overload (when excessive), workload is expected to shape performance outcomes in ways that are highly context-contingent. Organizational culture (OC) refers to the values, beliefs, and behavioral norms shared within an institution that guide how employees approach their work (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Through mechanisms of value internalization and behavioral reinforcement, a strong organizational culture — such as the BerAKHLAK core values mandated for Indonesian ASN — is expected to sustain commitment and performance even under conditions of high task pressure.

The effect of these three variables on employee performance, however, cannot be assumed to operate uniformly across all organizational contexts. The nature of the employing institution — its structural characteristics, program complexity, and strategic intensity — shapes the conditions under which competency can be deployed, workload can be managed, and cultural values can be internalized. At Belmawa, which operates at the intersection of national policy formulation, complex multi-stakeholder program management, and rapid digital transformation, these boundary conditions are particularly pronounced. Without an organizational environment that adequately supports employees' technical and managerial capacity, the relationships between these predictors and performance may prove inconsistent or contingent.

Indeed, prior research reveals mixed and sometimes contradictory findings regarding these relationships. Regarding the competency–performance link, Andili et al. (2025), Rahmah et al. (2024), and Dewi (2023) report positive significant effects, whereas Yaqin et al. (2025) find that this relationship is mediated through motivational factors, suggesting conditionality on individual motivational readiness. Regarding workload–performance, findings are particularly divergent: Suwandi et al. (2023) document a positive indirect effect through organizational commitment, while Islami et al. (2023) report a significant negative direct effect in the health sector, and Suyuthi et al. (2025) find workload to influence job satisfaction but not performance directly. Regarding organizational culture–performance, Umasangaji et al., Yikwa et al., and Ekaningsih et al. (2020) consistently report positive significant effects, yet the magnitude and mechanism differ across sector and organizational maturity. These inconsistencies suggest that industry-specific context, measurement approach, and organizational characteristics act as important boundary conditions that moderate how these predictor variables translate into actual performance outcomes — conditions that prior

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studies have not systematically addressed in the context of central government institutions engaged in higher education administration.

The present study advances the existing literature along three dimensions. Theoretically, it integrates competency, workload, and organizational culture within a unified explanatory model of public sector employee performance, grounded in the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), and the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), providing a multi-theoretic lens for understanding performance determinants in complex governmental organizations. Methodologically, unlike prior studies relying on single-sector data or limited samples, this study employs a census design encompassing all 93 active employees of Belmawa, with measurement instruments developed based on validated multi-dimensional indicators (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Wibowo, 2016; Tarwaka, 2015; Robbins & Judge, 2017), analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Contextually, this study generates evidence from a strategic central government directorate in the Indonesian higher education sector — an institutional context that remains substantially underrepresented in both national and international public sector management literature.

The urgency of this inquiry is further underscored by the empirical performance paradox observed at Belmawa: a 49% expansion in program scope accompanied by a significant decline in budget performance scores, occurring precisely within a period of intensified demands on employee competency, workload capacity, and cultural cohesion. Generating rigorous empirical evidence on the relative contribution of each HR factor thus has immediate practical relevance.

This study pursues two primary research objectives: (1) to examine the direct and simultaneous effects of competency (CT), workload (WL), and organizational culture (OC) on employee performance (EP) at the Directorate of Learning and Student Affairs, Kemdiktisaintek; and (2) to identify which factors exert the strongest empirical influence on performance, thereby informing strategic HR interventions.

This study makes three substantive contributions. Theoretically, it extends the empirical base on multi-predictor performance models in the Indonesian public sector, offering a more nuanced account of how human capital and organizational factors interact in a high-complexity governmental setting. Practically, the findings provide directorate leadership with an evidence-based foundation for prioritizing HR development initiatives — particularly in competency enhancement and workload distribution — to reverse the observed performance decline. From a policy perspective, the results offer regulators and standard-setters insights into how PP No. 30/2019's performance assessment framework may be operationalized more effectively through targeted competency and cultural development programs in strategic central government units.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

This study draws on three complementary theoretical frameworks — Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), and Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 2010) — to explain how competency (CT), workload (WL), and organizational culture (OC) collectively shape employee performance (EP). Human Capital Theory posits that knowledge, skills, and individual capabilities constitute a form of productive capital; accordingly, investment in employee competency directly augments individual capacity to generate superior work outcomes (Becker, 1964). The JD-R Model distinguishes between job demands — characterized by volume, complexity, and time pressure — and job resources; when demands are proportionate to available resources and capacity, they activate motivational processes that enhance performance, whereas excessive

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demands deplete cognitive reserves and impair output (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Organizational Culture Theory foregrounds shared values, norms, and behavioral assumptions as the institutional architecture that guides how employees interpret and respond to task demands (Schein, 2010); strong organizational cultures reinforce role clarity, collaborative behavior, and goal alignment, thereby amplifying individual and collective performance outcomes. Together, these three lenses converge on a coherent explanatory logic: the combination of individual capability endowment (Human Capital Theory), task demand calibration (JD-R Model), and normative behavioral infrastructure (Organizational Culture Theory) constitutes the key multi-level determinants of employee performance in complex governmental organizations. Based on this theoretical reasoning, the following hypotheses are developed.

2.2 Competency and Employee Performance

Competency refers to the integrated set of knowledge, skills, work attitudes, social abilities, and managerial capabilities that enable an individual to perform assigned tasks effectively and consistently (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Wibowo, 2016). In the context of Indonesian civil servants (ASN), competency encompasses three regulatory dimensions: technical competency specific to occupational function, managerial competency governing planning and decision-making, and socio-cultural competency governing collaborative and service-oriented behavior (PP No. 11 Tahun 2017). Through two primary mechanisms, competency influences performance: first, cognitive task-role alignment — whereby higher competency reduces task completion error and accelerates problem resolution; and second, adaptive capacity — whereby competent employees adjust more effectively to dynamic policy demands and cross-functional coordination requirements. Grounded in Human Capital Theory, the proposition is clear: employees who possess superior human capital perform at higher levels because their skill endowments translate directly into productive output.

Prior empirical work strongly corroborates this direction. Andili et al. (2025) find that competency exerts a significant positive effect on civil servant performance, with technical and managerial dimensions contributing most substantially. Similarly, Rahmah et al. (2024) demonstrate that competency, in combination with motivational factors, produces consistent performance gains in public sector contexts. Aminah et al. (2024) further confirm that competency is a dominant predictor of employee performance even when controlling for career development and job satisfaction. A partial qualification is offered by Yaqin et al. (2025), who find that the competency–performance relationship is partially mediated by work motivation, suggesting that the effect is not purely direct but is channeled through motivational readiness — a condition that, nonetheless, does not negate the positive directional claim. Based on this theoretical grounding and empirical synthesis:

H1: Competency has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

2.3 Workload and Employee Performance

Workload refers to the quantity and qualitative complexity of tasks assigned to employees within a defined operational timeframe, encompassing both cognitive and physical demands (Tarwaka, 2015). Robbins and Judge (2017) distinguish two opposing workload regimes: proportionate workload, which activates motivational arousal and sustains productive engagement, and excessive workload, which exceeds individual cognitive capacity and triggers stress responses that degrade performance accuracy and timeliness. Within the JD-R framework, workload operates as a job demand variable whose performance consequences depend critically on whether corresponding job resources — supervisor support, task clarity, skill fit — are available to buffer demand intensity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Two mechanisms are most salient in the public sector context: first, a stimulation mechanism,

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whereby manageable workload maintains task engagement and reduces idle capacity; and second, a cognitive depletion mechanism, whereby unmitigated overload impairs decision quality and generates burnout risk over time.

Empirical evidence is notably mixed, confirming the context-sensitive nature of this relationship. Suwandi et al. (2023) report a positive indirect effect of workload on performance mediated by organizational commitment, suggesting that under supportive conditions, workload exposure strengthens responsibility ownership. In contrast, Islami et al. (2023) document a significant negative direct effect in the healthcare sector, where extreme workload concentrations erode performance quality without compensatory buffering. Suyuthi et al. (2025) find that workload significantly affects job satisfaction but does not translate directly into performance differences, implying that satisfaction is an intermediate variable whose presence or absence determines directional outcomes. Haryanto (2023) establishes that workload, when integrated with competency and job analysis, does contribute positively to ASN performance in regional government contexts. Given that proportionate workload — as is the design aspiration at Belmawa — is hypothesized to sustain performance rather than undermine it, and recognizing that the relationship is inherently directional in the absence of extreme overload conditions:

H2: Workload has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

2.4 Organizational Culture and Employee Performance

Organizational culture is defined as the system of shared values, beliefs, behavioral norms, and underlying assumptions that members of an organization hold in common and that guide collective behavior and decision-making (Schein, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2017). In the Indonesian public sector, this construct is institutionalized through the BerAKHLAK core values — berorientasi pelayanan, akuntabel, kompeten, harmonis, loyal, adaptif, dan kolaboratif — which are mandated for all ASN as the normative foundation of professional conduct (Kemdiktisaintek, 2024). Theoretically, organizational culture influences performance through two reinforcing mechanisms: first, value internalization, whereby shared norms reduce behavioral ambiguity and align individual effort with organizational objectives; and second, social cohesion, whereby strong cultural bonds facilitate coordination, knowledge-sharing, and collective accountability. A culture emphasizing innovation, result orientation, and collaborative teamwork — as characterized by Robbins and Judge's (2017) multi-dimensional framework — constitutes a resource that is simultaneously rare, non-substitutable, and organizationally embedded, consistent with the logic of resource-based theorizing (Barney, 1991).

Empirical evidence consistently supports a positive culture–performance relationship. Usmar et al. (2022) demonstrate that organizational culture, alongside leadership and workload, exerts a significant simultaneous effect on ASN performance. Yikwa et al. (2025) confirm that organizational culture is a significant positive predictor of employee performance in regional government settings. Ekaningsih et al. (2020) similarly find a direct positive effect of organizational culture on performance, even when controlling for physical work environment conditions. The one qualifying finding comes from research contexts where cultural implementation remains largely symbolic rather than behaviorally embedded: under such conditions, the culture–performance link weakens considerably (Schein, 2010). At Belmawa, where BerAKHLAK values are systematically reinforced through formal assessment and performance appraisal mechanisms (PP No. 30 Tahun 2019), behavioral embeddedness is assumed to be sufficiently established to generate performance effects. Accordingly:

H3: Organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

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2.5 Simultaneous Effect of Competency, Workload, and Organizational Culture on Employee Performance

Beyond their individual direct effects, competency, workload, and organizational culture are theoretically argued to operate as a mutually reinforcing system within the performance production function of a complex governmental organization. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) establishes competency as the foundational capability input; the JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) positions workload as the demand context that activates or depletes that capital; and Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 2010) frames the normative environment as the amplifying or dampening condition that determines how effectively capability inputs are mobilized in the face of task demands. When these three forces operate conjointly — high competency, manageable workload, and a strong supportive culture — they are expected to produce stronger and more consistent performance outcomes than any single factor could achieve in isolation. This is consistent with prior multi-predictor models in public administration: Usmar et al. (2022) confirm a significant simultaneous effect of culture, workload, and leadership on ASN performance; and Andili et al. (2025) demonstrate that competency and workload together explain a substantial proportion of performance variance in civil servant settings. The simultaneous hypothesis therefore reflects the systemic nature of the performance production process:

H4: Competency (CT), Workload (WL), and Organizational Culture (OC) simultaneously exert a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (EP).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework underpinning this study. Competency (CT), Workload (WL), and Organizational Culture (OC) are positioned as independent variables hypothesized to exert direct positive effects on Employee Performance (EP), both individually (H1–H3) and simultaneously (H4). The model is grounded in a multi-theoretic architecture spanning Human Capital Theory, the JD-R Model, and Organizational Culture Theory. Employee tenure and educational attainment are incorporated as control variables to partial out background individual-level variance in EP, ensuring the cleanliness of the focal structural paths. The directional logic of the framework moves from individual capability endowment (CT) through task demand calibration (WL) to normative behavioral reinforcement (OC), culminating in observable employee performance outcomes as defined by quality, quantity, timeliness, cooperation, initiative, and public service orientation (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; PP No. 30 Tahun 2019).

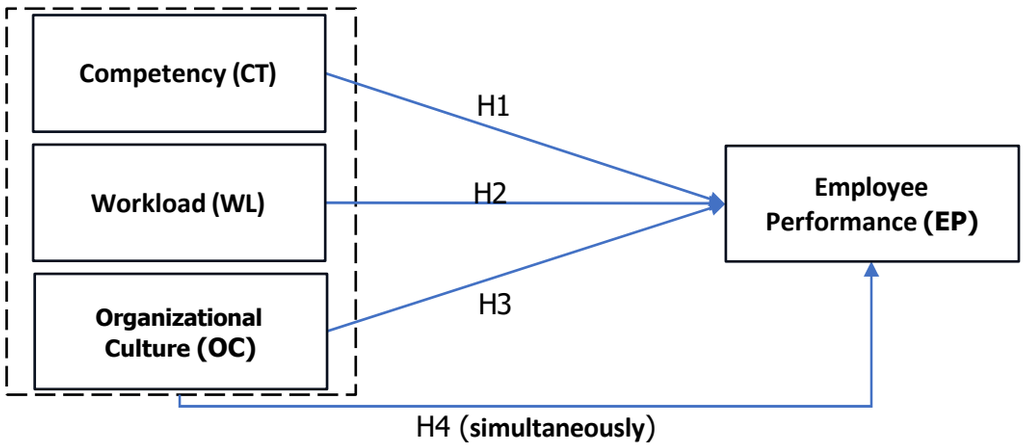


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

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3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to test the hypothesized relationships among competency (CT), workload (WL), organizational culture (OC), and employee performance (EP). The positivist epistemological stance adopted here is appropriate when the aim is to empirically estimate the strength, direction, and statistical significance of theoretically grounded structural relationships using primary numerical data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The unit of analysis is the individual civil servant (Aparatur Sipil Negara — ASN), and data were collected at a single point in time during the 2025–2026 fiscal period. The analytical strategy is designed to evaluate both the direct effects of CT, WL, and OC on EP and the simultaneous explanatory power of the integrated three-predictor model, while controlling for respondent-level demographic covariates including tenure and educational attainment.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises all active employees of the Directorate of Learning and Student Affairs (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan — Belmawa), Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (Kemdiktisaintek), Republic of Indonesia. Given the bounded and enumerable nature of this population (N = 93), a census approach was adopted whereby all members of the population served as respondents. This eliminates sampling error and selection bias, ensures full external validity within the organizational boundary, and maximizes the precision of parameter estimates in the structural model — a methodological choice recognized as optimal when population size permits total enumeration (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Data from all 93 respondents were retained after applying eligibility criteria: (1) active employment status at the time of data collection, (2) complete questionnaire responses with no missing items, and (3) data passing psychometric screening for outliers via Z-score and Mahalanobis distance diagnostics.

3.3 Data Collection and Instrument Quality

Data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire distributed to all 93 employees. The instrument employs a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree) to capture perceptual assessments of each construct. Before full deployment, the instrument was pre-tested and item wording was refined in consultation with HR practitioners within the directorate to ensure contextual clarity and face validity.

Measurement quality was rigorously evaluated through two sequential procedures. First, convergent validity was assessed using indicator loading factors (threshold ≥ 0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE ≥ 0.50) (Hair et al., 2017). Indicators failing to meet the loading factor threshold — specifically CT_4 ($\lambda = 0.654$), CT_11 ($\lambda = 0.670$), CT_16 ($\lambda = 0.643$), EP_6 ($\lambda = 0.657$), and EP_10 ($\lambda = 0.579$) — were eliminated from the model at Stage 1, and the measurement model was re-specified and re-estimated at Stage 2. Second, discriminant validity was confirmed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with all inter-construct values falling well below the 0.90 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability was assessed via Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$) and Composite Reliability (CR ≥ 0.70), both rho_a and rho_c variants (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

3.4 Variable Definition and Measurement

All constructs in this study are operationalized as latent reflective variables, measured through multi-item indicators developed from validated theoretical frameworks. Table 1

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summarizes the conceptual and operational definitions, indicator dimensions, number of items retained post-purification, and primary measurement references for each construct.

Table 1. Variable Definitions, Dimensions, and Measurement

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Dimensions	Items (Final)	Reference
Competency (CT)	The integrated individual capacity encompassing knowledge, technical skills, work attitudes, social ability, and managerial capability to execute tasks effectively	(1) Task knowledge; (2) Technical & digital skills; (3) Work attitude; (4) Social ability; (5) Managerial capability	15 (of 18 initial)	Spencer & Spencer (1993); Wibowo (2016)
Workload (WL)	The quantity and qualitative complexity of tasks assigned to employees within a defined operational period, including time pressure and capacity fit	(1) Task volume; (2) Task complexity; (3) Time pressure; (4) Capacity fit; (5) Workload impact	10	Tarwaka (2015); Robbins & Judge (2017)
Organizational Culture (OC)	The system of shared values, norms, and behavioral assumptions guiding collective employee conduct within the organization	(1) Innovation; (2) Attention to detail; (3) Result orientation; (4) People orientation; (5) Teamwork; (6) Organizational stability	12	Schein (2010); Robbins & Judge (2017)
Employee Performance (EP)	The level of work output attained by employees against established standards, responsibilities, and expectations	(1) Work quality; (2) Work quantity; (3) Timeliness; (4) Cooperation; (5) Initiative; (6) Public service orientation	10 (of 12 initial)	Spencer & Spencer (1993); PP No. 30/2019

Source: adapted from various journals

Each indicator was scored on a 1–5 continuum. Composite construct scores for path model estimation were computed as latent variable scores derived from PLS-SEM outer weights, with no manual index computation required (Hair et al., 2017).

3.5 Analytical Method

Hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), executed in SmartPLS 4.0 (Ringle et al., 2022). PLS-SEM was selected over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) on three grounds: (1) the relatively small sample size (N = 93) renders the distributional assumptions of CB-SEM more fragile; (2) the research objective is predictive — estimating the relative explanatory contribution of multiple latent predictors on a criterion variable — which aligns with PLS-SEM's optimization logic; and (3) the model contains reflective-reflective constructs without higher-order complexity, which is the canonical PLS-SEM application domain (Hair et al., 2017; Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

The analytical procedure followed the two-stage protocol recommended by Hair et al. (2017). In Stage 1 (outer model evaluation), measurement quality was established through convergent validity (loading factors, AVE), discriminant validity (HTMT), and construct reliability (Cronbach's α, Composite Reliability rho_a and rho_c). In Stage 2 (inner model evaluation), structural path coefficients (β), t-statistics derived from bootstrapping with 5,000 sub-samples, and p-values were examined to evaluate directional hypotheses (H1–H3) and the simultaneous model (H4). Model fit was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect size (f^2), interpreted against Cohen's (1988) benchmarks of 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large).

The structural model estimated takes the following general form:

$$\mathbf{EP = \beta_1 CT + \beta_2 WL + \beta_3 OC + \zeta}$$

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Where EP = Employee Performance; β_1, β_2, β_3 = standardized path coefficients for Competency, Workload, and Organizational Culture, respectively; and ζ = residual (unexplained variance). Path significance was evaluated at the conventional $\alpha = 0.05$ threshold (two-tailed, t-critical > 1.96).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

The study applies a census design, covering all 93 active employees of the Directorate of Learning and Student Affairs (Belmawa), Kemdiktisaintek. After applying eligibility screening — complete questionnaire responses and passing outlier diagnostics via Z-score and Mahalanobis distance procedures — all 93 observations were retained as valid. Respondent composition is predominantly male (60.2%), aged between 30 and 40 years (62.4%), holding bachelor's degrees (47.3%), classified as functional staff (78.5%), and with 5–10 years of organizational tenure (51.6%).

Table 1 reports construct-level descriptive statistics. All variables are measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree), with construct scores aggregated from their respective multi-item indicators.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Employee Performance (EP)	93	1.00	5.00	3.009	1.190
Competency (CT)	93	1.00	5.00	2.999	1.207
Workload (WL)	93	1.00	5.00	3.017	1.164
Organizational Culture (OC)	93	1.00	5.00	2.998	1.161

Note: EP = Employee Performance; CT = Competency; WL = Workload; OC = Organizational Culture. All constructs measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Construct means and standard deviations are computed as averages of their respective valid indicators post-purification. Source: Primary data processed (SmartPLS 4.0, 2026).

The descriptive results indicate that all standard deviations are smaller than their corresponding construct means across all variables, which confirms that response distributions are relatively homogeneous and that the dataset does not suffer from extreme dispersion or multimodal clustering (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). All constructs cluster narrowly around a mean of approximately 3.0, suggesting that respondents perceive competency, workload, organizational culture, and performance levels as moderate — neither strongly positive nor negative — on average. This pattern is consistent with a bureaucratic context transitioning toward performance-based management, where baseline conditions are established but substantial room for improvement remains.

4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Before testing structural hypotheses, the measurement model was evaluated to confirm construct validity and reliability. Table 2 reports the measurement model results.

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	rho_a	Composite Reliability (ρc)	AVE	√AVE
Competency (CT)	0.967	0.968	0.970	0.686	0.828
Workload (WL)	0.936	0.970	0.942	0.621	0.788
Organizational Culture (OC)	0.951	0.954	0.957	0.650	0.806
Employee Performance (EP)	0.947	0.952	0.955	0.659	0.812

Note: $\alpha \geq 0.70$ = acceptable reliability; AVE ≥ 0.50 = acceptable convergent validity; $\rho c \geq 0.70$ = acceptable composite reliability. Source: Primary data processed (SmartPLS 4.0, 2026).

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All Cronbach's Alpha values exceed 0.90 (range: 0.936–0.967), substantially surpassing the 0.700 threshold. Composite Reliability values (rho_a and rho_c) similarly exceed 0.90 across all constructs, confirming very high internal consistency. Convergent validity is established for all four constructs, with AVE values ranging from 0.621 (WL) to 0.686 (CT), all exceeding the 0.500 benchmark (Hair et al., 2017; Ghozali & Latan, 2015). Indicator loading factors at Stage 2 — following elimination of five under-loading indicators (CT_4: $\lambda = 0.654$; CT_11: $\lambda = 0.670$; CT_16: $\lambda = 0.643$; EP_6: $\lambda = 0.657$; EP_10: $\lambda = 0.579$) — range from 0.736 to 0.891 across all constructs, confirming that all retained indicators adequately represent their respective latent variables.

4.3 Discriminant Validity

Table 3 presents the Fornell-Larcker criterion matrix, with square roots of AVE on the diagonal, and Table 4 the HTMT ratios.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	CT	WL	OC	EP
Competency (CT)	**0.828**			
Workload (WL)	—	**0.788**		
Organizational Culture (OC)	—	—	**0.806**	
Employee Performance (EP)	—	—	—	**0.812**

Note: Diagonal elements (bold) = square root of AVE. Off-diagonal inter-construct correlations are reported in Table 4 (HTMT). Source: Primary data processed (SmartPLS 4.0, 2026).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

	CT	WL	OC	EP
Competency (CT)	—			
Workload (WL)	0.123	—		
Organizational Culture (OC)	0.544	0.214	—	
Employee Performance (EP)	0.760	0.195	0.647	—

Note: All HTMT values < 0.90 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015). Source: Primary data processed (SmartPLS 4.0, 2026).

The √AVE for each construct exceeds its highest inter-construct correlation, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All HTMT ratios fall well below the conservative 0.90 threshold, with the highest recorded between Competency and Employee Performance (HTMT = 0.760). These results collectively confirm that all four constructs are empirically distinct and that discriminant validity is established. Collinearity at the structural model level was also assessed; all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for paths directed at EP were below 3.300 (Hair et al., 2017), confirming the absence of lateral collinearity among predictors.

4.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model demonstrates robust explanatory power. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for Employee Performance (EP) is **0.626** (adjusted $R^2 = 0.613$), indicating that Competency, Workload, and Organizational Culture jointly explain 62.6% of the variance in employee performance — a strong result by social science standards (Hair et al., 2017). The Stone-Geisser predictive relevance statistic (Q^2predict = 0.594) substantially exceeds zero, confirming meaningful predictive accuracy beyond a naïve benchmark. Table 5 reports the full hypothesis testing results derived from bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples at a significance threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$ (t-critical > 1.96, two-tailed).

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Table 5. Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Path	Predicted Direction	Coef. (β)	Std. Dev.	t-stat	p-value	f²	Result
CT → EP	Positive	0.565	0.068	8.367	0.000***	0.616	H1 Supported
WL → EP	Positive	0.105	0.075	1.394	0.163	0.028	H2 Not Supported
OC → EP	Positive	0.301	0.070	4.314	0.000***	0.167	H3 Supported
CT+WL+OC → EP	Simultaneous	R^2 = 0.626	—	—	—	—	H4 Supported
R^2 = 0.626	Adj. R^2 = 0.613	Q^2predict = 0.594	Bootstrap samples = 5,000				

*Note: ***p ≤ 0.01. Coefficient (β) = standardized path coefficient from PLS-SEM; f² interpreted per Cohen (1988): small ≥ 0.02, medium ≥ 0.15, large ≥ 0.35. EP = Employee Performance; CT = Competency; WL = Workload; OC = Organizational Culture. Source: Primary data processed (SmartPLS 4.0, 2026).*

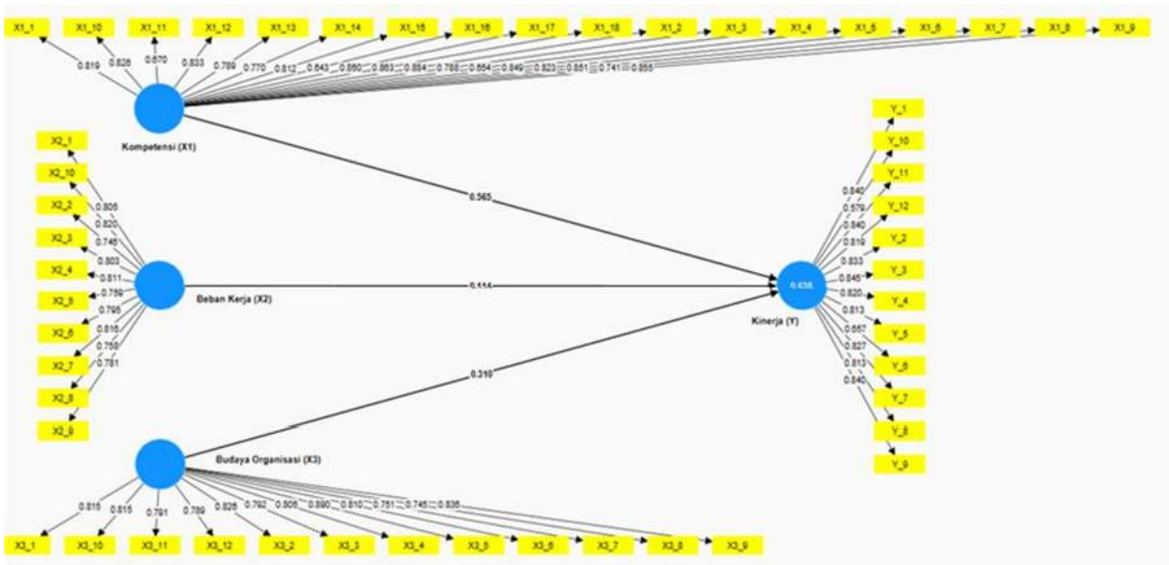


Figure 2 — PLS-SEM Path Coefficient Model

The results indicate that competency has a positive and highly significant effect on employee performance (β = 0.565, t = 8.367, p < 0.01), supporting H1. The effect size is large (f^2 = 0.616), making competency by far the strongest individual predictor in the model. This finding affirms that employees who possess superior task knowledge, technical-digital skills, work attitude, social capability, and managerial proficiency generate substantially higher performance outcomes — a result consistent with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) and aligned with prior findings by Andili et al. (2025) and Rahmah et al. (2024).

Workload does not exert a statistically significant direct effect on employee performance (β = 0.105, t = 1.394, p = 0.163), failing to support H2 at the conventional 5% threshold. The effect size is negligible (f^2 = 0.028). Although the coefficient direction is positive, the non-significance indicates that workload variation within the observed range does not translate into meaningfully differentiated performance outcomes among Belmawa employees. This finding aligns with Suyuthi et al. (2025), who similarly find that workload affects job satisfaction but not performance directly, and with the broader mixed evidence documented in the literature (Islami et al., 2023), suggesting that workload's performance consequences are mediated by intervening factors — such as organizational support and motivation — that lie outside the current model's scope.

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Organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (β = 0.301, t = 4.314, p < 0.01), supporting H3. The effect size is medium (f^2 = 0.167), indicating a meaningful and substantive contribution. This finding confirms that the internalization of shared values, collaborative behavioral norms, and a results-oriented work ethos — operationalized through the BerAKHLAK framework dimensions — shapes performance consistency in a complex governmental environment, consistent with Yikwa et al. (2025) and Usmar et al. (2022).

The simultaneous model — integrating competency, workload, and organizational culture — explains 62.6% of variance in employee performance (R^2 = 0.626; adjusted R^2 = 0.613), with strong predictive relevance (Q^2predict = 0.594). This confirms H4: taken together, the three predictors constitute a coherent and powerful explanatory framework for employee performance in this governmental context, notwithstanding workload's non-significant individual path.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study set out to examine how competency, workload, and organizational culture — individually and in combination — determine employee performance in a strategically important central government directorate. The results reveal a clear and theoretically coherent hierarchy of effects. Competency emerges as the dominant performance driver, followed by organizational culture as a meaningful secondary contributor, while workload does not exert a statistically significant direct effect on performance within this organizational context. Taken together, however, the three predictors account for a substantial proportion of variance in employee performance, confirming that the model as a whole constitutes a strong explanatory framework for performance in this setting.

5.2 Mechanisms Explained Through Theoretical Lenses

The primacy of competency in shaping employee performance is precisely what Human Capital Theory would predict. Becker's (1964) foundational argument — that knowledge, skills, and individual capability constitute productive capital whose accumulation directly translates into superior output — is unambiguously supported here. At Belmawa, where the programmatic scope has expanded dramatically and tasks require increasingly sophisticated policy analysis, cross-institutional coordination, and digital management capability, the cognitive alignment between individual competency endowment and task-role demands is particularly critical. Employees who possess the technical knowledge, managerial acumen, and professional commitment required by complex program administration navigate task demands more efficiently, produce higher-quality outputs, and sustain performance even under conditions of institutional pressure. This mechanism of task-role fit — reducing cognitive friction and enabling discretionary effort — explains why competency's contribution to performance is not merely additive but substantially dominant in this context.

The positive and meaningful contribution of organizational culture is equally well-grounded theoretically. Schein's (2010) Organizational Culture Theory foregrounds the normative and cognitive architecture that shapes how employees interpret their responsibilities and structure their daily behavior. At Belmawa, the institutionalization of the BerAKHLAK core values — emphasizing service orientation, accountability, competence, harmony, loyalty, adaptability, and collaboration — creates a shared behavioral infrastructure that guides professional conduct across all levels of the directorate. When these norms are genuinely internalized rather than merely formally endorsed, they reduce behavioral ambiguity, strengthen team cohesion, and align individual effort with organizational objectives — conditions that consistently translate into higher and more stable performance outcomes (Robbins & Judge,

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2017). The culture-performance pathway thus operates through a reinforcement mechanism: clear norms make it easier for competent employees to channel their capabilities productively. Workload's non-significant direct effect is best understood through the Job Demands-Resources framework. The JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) distinguishes between two competing dynamics: a motivational process activated by adequate demands, and a health-impairing process triggered by excessive demands without sufficient resources. The non-significance observed here does not imply that workload is irrelevant to performance; rather, it suggests that within the workload range experienced by Belmawa employees, variation in task volume and complexity does not, in isolation, translate into meaningfully differentiated performance outcomes. The more plausible interpretation is that workload's influence on performance is indirect — mediated through job satisfaction, motivational states, or organizational commitment — rather than direct, consistent with the mediated pathways identified by Suyuthi et al. (2025) and the contingency logic proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007).

5.3 Comparison with Prior Studies

The present findings both reinforce and qualify the existing empirical record. On competency, the results are consistent with the convergent findings of Andili et al. (2025), Rahmah et al. (2024), and Dewi (2023), all of whom report a positive and significant competency-performance relationship in Indonesian public sector settings. The consistency across these studies — and in the current findings — suggests that competency's role as the primary driver of ASN performance is not context-specific to any single institution, but reflects a broader and robust empirical regularity in government human capital management.

On organizational culture, the findings align closely with Usmar et al. (2022), Yikwa et al. (2025), and Ekaningsih et al. (2020), all of whom document a positive and significant culture-performance relationship in Indonesian public sector organizations. What the current study adds is a more precise institutional context: the directorate-level unit of analysis in central government, which has distinct cultural dynamics from the regional government agencies and state-owned enterprises studied by prior work.

The workload finding is where the present results are most informative with respect to the literature. Suyuthi et al. (2025) and Andili et al. (2025) both report non-significant or weak direct workload-performance effects, while Suwandi et al. (2023) find a positive indirect effect routed through organizational commitment. The current non-significant result converges with these mediated-effect findings and directly contrasts with the negative significant effect reported by Islami et al. (2023) in the healthcare sector. This comparison is instructive: the healthcare context involves extreme workload concentrations and life-critical task consequences, whereas Belmawa's administrative and coordination-intensive functions involve more manageable and variable demand structures that may not reach the cognitive depletion threshold required to impair performance directly.

5.4 Explaining Divergence: Context, Measurement, and Organizational Maturity

Several boundary conditions help explain why the current findings differ from some prior studies. First, the organizational context at Belmawa is distinctive: as a central government unit with a mandate spanning national curriculum policy, student competency programs, and the MBKM initiative, the directorate operates in a high-complexity, high-accountability environment where individual competency is structurally decisive in ways that regional government or private sector settings may not demand. Second, the cross-sectional census design captures a single temporal window, which cannot account for the potential emergence of workload effects over time — effects that may only materialize as chronic accumulation across months or years. Third, measurement choices matter: workload in this study is

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operationalized from the employee's perceptual perspective, which may underestimate objective task overload if respondents normalize heavy workloads as routine rather than exceptional.

Furthermore, the moderate average scores observed across all constructs — clustering near the midpoint of the measurement scale — suggest that Belmawa's employees operate in a developmental phase of organizational change: competency and culture are perceived as functional but not yet fully optimized, while workload pressures, though present, have not reached levels that objectively impair performance. This maturity-level interpretation is consistent with the broader recognition in the public sector HR literature that performance determinants shift in relative importance as organizations mature along their reform trajectories (Wright et al., 1994).

5.5 Why This Study Matters

The simultaneous explanatory power of competency, workload, and organizational culture — demonstrating that performance is best understood as a systemic outcome of converging individual, task-level, and cultural forces — carries a central practical message: piecemeal HR interventions targeting only one dimension are unlikely to sustain performance gains in complex governmental organizations. The paradox at Belmawa — dramatic programmatic growth accompanied by declining budget performance scores — cannot be resolved by training programs alone, nor by workload redistribution in isolation. What this study establishes, empirically and through theoretically grounded mechanisms, is that competency development and cultural reinforcement must be pursued as co-dependent investments, designed to interact and amplify each other. In doing so, this study provides the evidentiary foundation for a systems-based approach to HR management in Indonesia's higher education bureaucracy — and, by extension, in similarly structured public organizations undergoing accelerated programmatic transformation.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusions

This study investigated the determinants of employee performance at the Directorate of Learning and Student Affairs (Belmawa), Kemdiktisaintek, by testing the effects of competency, workload, and organizational culture using PLS-SEM on a census of all active employees. Three principal conclusions emerge.

First, competency is the strongest and most decisive determinant of employee performance. Employees who demonstrate superior task knowledge, technical and digital skills, professional work attitude, and managerial capability perform at materially higher levels. This finding establishes competency as the foundational human capital input that drives performance in this complex governmental organization.

Second, organizational culture exerts a meaningful and significant positive influence on employee performance. The internalization of shared values, collaborative norms, result orientation, and service ethics — as operationalized through the BerAKHLAK framework — shapes behavioral consistency and sustains performance quality in ways that individual capability alone cannot guarantee.

Third, workload does not exert a statistically significant direct effect on employee performance within the observed range. This does not imply that workload management is unimportant; rather, it suggests that workload's consequences for performance are likely indirect — mediated through intervening states such as job satisfaction or organizational commitment — and that its influence may only become performance-impairing under conditions of sustained extreme overload, a threshold not systematically crossed in the current sample.

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Taken collectively, the three-predictor model provides a strong and coherent explanation of variance in employee performance, affirming that performance management in public sector organizations requires a systemic, multi-dimensional approach rather than targeted single-variable interventions.

6.2 Implications

6.2.1 Theoretical Implications.

This study advances the theoretical literature on public sector HR management by demonstrating the concurrent and differentiated roles of human capital, task-demand, and organizational culture mechanisms within a single integrated model. It provides empirical support for Human Capital Theory's claim about individual capability endowment as a performance driver, the JD-R Model's contingency logic regarding workload effects, and Organizational Culture Theory's emphasis on normative behavioral infrastructure — not in isolation, but as a system of complementary explanatory forces. The study also contributes to the growing body of evidence on the context-specificity of the workload-performance relationship, establishing that non-significant direct effects should be theorized as boundary conditions rather than refutations of workload's relevance.

6.2.2 Methodological Implications.

By applying a full-census PLS-SEM design — eliminating sampling error while utilizing a validated reflective multi-indicator measurement framework with rigorous two-stage outer model purification — this study offers a methodological template for small-population institutional research in public administration. The use of convergent validity (loading factors, AVE), discriminant validity (HTMT), and construct reliability (Cronbach's α, Composite Reliability) as integrated quality gates, rather than classical OLS diagnostics, demonstrates how PLS-SEM can be applied rigorously in governmental HR research contexts where population boundaries are well-defined and total enumeration is feasible.

6.2.3 Practical Implications.

For directorate leadership and HR policymakers at Kemdiktisaintek, the priority implication is clear: competency development deserves the highest investment priority in the HR management portfolio. Specifically, training programs should target policy analysis capability, digital literacy, and cross-functional coordination skills — the precise competency gaps most exposed by the rapid expansion of national programs such as MBKM. Beyond training, the findings underscore that competency investments yield higher returns when embedded within a strong organizational culture. Accordingly, cultural reinforcement initiatives — leadership role-modeling of BerAKHLAK values, team-based accountability structures, recognition systems tied to collaborative outcomes — should be designed as complementary and simultaneous levers, not sequential afterthoughts. Although workload did not significantly affect performance directly, workload distribution deserves ongoing monitoring: disproportionate task concentration risks generating job dissatisfaction and burnout over time, which may eventually translate into performance consequences not captured in a cross-sectional window. Regulators and standard-setters designing the PP No. 30/2019 assessment framework may also draw on these findings to calibrate performance appraisal criteria toward competency and cultural dimensions with demonstrated predictive validity.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations bound the generalizability and interpretive scope of this study. First, the cross-sectional design captures a single temporal snapshot, precluding causal inference and

rendering invisible the dynamic processes through which workload may accumulate into performance consequences over time. Longitudinal research tracking the same cohort of employees across multiple performance cycles would more precisely illuminate the temporal dimensions of these relationships.

Second, the scope is limited to a single directorate within one ministry, which — while producing high internal validity — constrains external generalizability to other central government units, regional agencies, or public universities. Comparative studies across multiple institutional contexts within Indonesia's higher education governance structure, or cross-country comparisons with analogous ministries in Southeast Asia, would substantially extend the theoretical reach of these findings.

Third, the current model explains a strong but incomplete proportion of variance in employee performance, leaving scope for additional explanatory variables. Future research should consider extending the model with theoretically motivated mediators — such as job satisfaction, work motivation, or organizational commitment — that may clarify the indirect pathways through which workload ultimately shapes performance. The inclusion of potential moderators, such as leadership style, work-life balance, or digital infrastructure quality, could further elucidate the boundary conditions under which competency and cultural investments produce their strongest performance returns.

Fourth, non-linear relationships between workload and performance — consistent with the inverted-U hypothesis derived from the JD-R framework — warrant explicit testing through polynomial regression or response surface analysis, techniques that the current PLS-SEM design does not accommodate. Future studies adopting methods sensitive to non-linearity may reveal threshold effects invisible in standard path-analytic frameworks.

Finally, a mixed-methods extension incorporating in-depth interviews with directorate managers and employees could enrich the quantitative findings with process-level evidence about how competency gaps are experienced, how cultural values are actually enacted in daily work routines, and why workload pressures have not yet translated into visible performance deterioration — questions that remain necessarily unanswered within the boundaries of the present study design.

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