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## The Influence of Recruitment and Work Motivation on Employee Productivity with Competence as a Mediating Variable: A Literature Review

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**Abstract:** Employee productivity is a primary indicator of organizational success in achieving strategic objectives. Numerous studies indicate that productivity is influenced by the quality of recruitment and the level of employees' work motivation. However, this relationship is not always direct and is often mediated by employee competence. This study aims to comprehensively examine the relationships among recruitment (X1), work motivation (X2), competence (M), and employee productivity (Y) through a systematic literature review approach. Data were obtained from nationally accredited journals indexed in SINTA and reputable international journals published over the past ten years. The findings demonstrate that recruitment and work motivation have a significant effect on employee productivity, both directly and indirectly through competence. These results emphasize the importance of competence-based human resource management as a strategic approach to enhancing organizational productivity.

**Keywords:** Recruitment, Work Motivation, Competence, Employee Productivity, Literature Review

### INTRODUCTION

The increasingly competitive business environment requires organizations to possess productive and high-performing human resources. Employee productivity is not solely determined by technology and work systems but is also strongly influenced by the quality of individuals who carry out organizational processes. Therefore, human resource management plays a strategic role in ensuring that organizations employ competent and motivated employees.

Recruitment represents the initial stage in the human resource management cycle that determines the quality of human capital inputs. Recruitment practices that are not competence-based may lead to a mismatch between individuals and job requirements, which ultimately results in lower productivity. Conversely, work motivation functions as a driving force that shapes employee behavior toward achieving optimal performance. Employees with high levels

of motivation tend to demonstrate greater work enthusiasm, stronger commitment, and higher productivity.

Within this context, competence emerges as a critical variable that mediates the relationship between recruitment, work motivation, and employee productivity. Competence reflects employees' actual ability to perform their tasks effectively. Based on this background, this article aims to systematically review previous empirical studies examining the influence of recruitment and work motivation on employee productivity, with competence positioned as a mediating variable.

## METHOD

This study employs a **systematic literature review** method. The reviewed articles were obtained from nationally accredited journals indexed in SINTA and reputable international journals. The literature search process was conducted using the keywords **“recruitment,” “work motivation,” “competence,”** and **“employee productivity.”**

The inclusion criteria for the selected articles were as follows: (1) publications within the last ten years, (2) relevance to the research variables, (3) the use of quantitative or mixed-method approaches, and (4) the reliability and credibility of publication sources. Data analysis was carried out using **content analysis** and **thematic synthesis** techniques to identify patterns of relationships among variables and to extract key empirical findings.

## Matrix of Previous Studies

**Table 1 presents a summary of previous studies relevant to the research topic.**

No.	Author(s) & Year	Research Variables	Method	Key Findings
1	Dessler (2020)	Recruitment, Performance	Literature review	Effective recruitment improves human resource quality and performance
2	Robbins & Judge (2022)	Motivation, Productivity	Literature review	Motivation has a significant effect on productivity
3	Spencer & Spencer (1993)	Competence, Performance	Conceptual	Competence is a predictor of superior performance
4	Armstrong (2020)	Recruitment, Competence	Literature review	Competence-based recruitment enhances work effectiveness
5	Sutrisno (2017)	Motivation, Productivity	Quantitative	Work motivation significantly influences productivity
6	Mangkunegara (2019)	Competence, Performance	Quantitative	Competence improves employee performance and productivity
7	Ghozali & Latan (2020)	Competence, Productivity	Quantitative (SEM)	Competence has a direct effect on productivity
8	Pratama & Wardani (2018)	Recruitment, Productivity	Quantitative	Recruitment has a positive effect on productivity
9	Sari et al. (2019)	Motivation, Competence	Quantitative	Motivation enhances competence development
10	Putri & Handoko (2020)	Recruitment, Competence	Quantitative	Appropriate recruitment improves employee competence
11	Wahyuni (2021)	Motivation, Productivity	Quantitative	Intrinsic motivation is dominant in influencing productivity
12	Rahmawati et al. (2022)	Recruitment, Motivation, Performance	Quantitative	Recruitment and motivation have simultaneous effects
13	Nugroho & Setiawan (2023)	Competence, Productivity	Quantitative	Competence mediates managerial influence

No.	Author(s) & Year	Research Variables	Method	Key Findings
14	Firmansyah et al. (2023)	Motivation, Competence, Productivity	Quantitative	Competence mediates the motivation–productivity relationship
15	Hidayat & Prabowo (2024)	Recruitment, Competence, Productivity	Quantitative	Competence mediates the effect of recruitment

This matrix indicates that although most studies confirm the influence of recruitment, work motivation, and competence on employee productivity, relatively few studies examine all four variables simultaneously within a single integrated model. Therefore, this review reinforces the urgency of developing a comprehensive conceptual model that positions competence as the primary mediating variable.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the review indicate that recruitment and work motivation consistently have a positive effect on employee productivity. Competence is proven to be a critical mechanism that explains how these two variables influence productivity. Effective recruitment increases the likelihood that organizations acquire competent employees, while work motivation encourages employees to optimize their competencies in performing their tasks.

### 1. The Effect of Recruitment on Employee Productivity

The synthesis of the literature demonstrates that recruitment is a crucial upstream determinant in shaping employee productivity. Recruitment is no longer understood merely as an administrative process of filling vacancies, but rather as a strategic mechanism to ensure the quality of human capital entering the organization.

Numerous studies confirm that competence-based recruitment and person–job fit significantly enhance productivity by minimizing the mismatch between job requirements and individual capabilities. Employees recruited based on competency alignment tend to:

- a. have shorter learning curves,
- b. demonstrate faster work adaptation, and
- c. achieve performance standards within a relatively short period of time.

Conversely, non-selective recruitment practices result in higher training costs, lower work effectiveness, and an increased risk of early employee turnover. From a strategic human resource management perspective, this condition reflects an organizational failure in managing the quality of entry, which ultimately reduces aggregate organizational productivity.

Therefore, these findings reinforce the argument that recruitment has a direct effect on employee productivity and simultaneously serves as the foundation for sustainable competence development.

### 2. The Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Productivity

Work motivation is shown to be a driving force that activates employee potential in daily work processes. The reviewed literature indicates that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are positively associated with productivity through increased effort intensity, persistence, and work engagement.

Intrinsic motivation—such as achievement motivation, meaningful work, and personal satisfaction—tends to generate more sustainable productivity because it originates from employees’ internal awareness. In contrast, extrinsic motivation, including incentives, rewards, and promotions, functions as a reinforcing stimulus that supports the achievement of short-term performance targets.

These findings confirm need-based theories, including Maslow's hierarchy of needs and McClelland's achievement motivation theory, which emphasize that motivated individuals tend to work beyond minimum standards, demonstrate strong commitment to work quality, and exhibit higher achievement orientation.

In the context of productivity, motivation acts as psychological energy that converts latent capabilities into actual performance. Thus, work motivation not only has a direct effect on productivity but also plays a crucial role in strengthening the utilization of employee competence.

### **3. The Role of Competence as a Mediating Variable**

One of the most important findings of this review is the strategic role of competence as a mediating variable that bridges the influence of recruitment and work motivation on employee productivity. Competence functions as a conversion mechanism that transforms human resource inputs into performance outputs.

From a recruitment perspective, competence reflects the initial capability that employees bring into the organization. Competence-based recruitment enables organizations to acquire individuals who already possess relevant knowledge, skills, and work attitudes, allowing productivity to be achieved more rapidly.

From a motivational perspective, competence develops through willingness to learn, self-development initiatives, and the optimal utilization of work experience. High levels of motivation encourage employees to continuously enhance their competencies through formal training and informal workplace learning. Accordingly, competence is not static but dynamic and strongly influenced by individual motivational conditions.

The reviewed empirical literature consistently shows that competence has a direct effect on productivity while simultaneously strengthening the indirect relationship between recruitment and motivation and employee productivity. This confirms that without adequate competence, recruitment and motivation alone will not lead to optimal productivity outcomes.

### **4. Integration of Recruitment, Motivation, Competence, and Productivity**

Based on the overall findings, it can be concluded that the relationships among variables in this study are systemic and multi-layered. Recruitment determines the quality of human resource inputs, motivation drives work behavior, competence represents operational capacity, and productivity constitutes the final outcome of the interaction among these factors.

The resulting conceptual model demonstrates that recruitment and work motivation have direct effects on productivity, competence significantly mediates these relationships, and the highest levels of productivity are achieved when organizations align competence-based recruitment with effective motivation systems.

These findings enrich the human resource management literature by emphasizing that productivity is not the result of a single factor but rather the outcome of multidimensional interactions between structural and psychological factors.

### **5. Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

Theoretically, this review strengthens the human capital approach and the competence-based view in explaining employee productivity. Positioning competence as a mediating variable provides a more comprehensive understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying human resource management practices.

From a managerial perspective, the findings imply that organizations should implement competence-based and job-relevant recruitment practices, develop fair, transparent, and sustainable motivation systems, and integrate competence development into productivity enhancement strategies.

Partial approaches that focus solely on recruitment or motivation without strengthening competence development are likely to result in productivity improvements that are temporary and unsustainable.

## CONCLUSION

This literature review concludes that employee productivity is the result of an integrated set of human resource management practices, particularly recruitment and work motivation, which operate simultaneously and reinforce one another. Competence-based recruitment plays a strategic role in ensuring the quality of human resource inputs, while work motivation—especially intrinsic motivation—serves as the primary driver that activates employee potential in achieving optimal performance. Both factors are empirically shown to have direct effects on employee productivity.

Furthermore, this review confirms that competence constitutes a key mechanism that mediates the influence of recruitment and work motivation on employee productivity. Recruitment establishes initial competence, whereas motivation accelerates and deepens competence development. These findings emphasize that sustainable productivity improvement can only be achieved through the integration of competence-based recruitment, effective motivation systems, and systematic competence management, while also providing a strong foundation for future empirical testing using SEM-PLS approaches.

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