

## **THE ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF EDUCATIONAL STAFF**

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Received Date; 30 Juni 2023  
Revised Date; 12 Juli 2023  
Accepted Date; 27 Juli 2023

***The Keywords:***

Compensation; Leadership;  
Job Satisfaction;  
Performance.

***Kata Kunci:***

Kompensasi; Kepemimpinan;  
Kepuasan Kerja; Kinerja.

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the effect of compensation and leadership on the performance of educational staff with job satisfaction as a mediating variable at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic. The approach used was quantitative with a survey method through questionnaires. A total of 85 educational staff members were selected proportionally and randomly from a total population of 155 employees. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression assisted by SPSS software. The results showed that compensation and leadership had a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. However, compensation and leadership did not directly affect the performance of educational staff. Meanwhile, job satisfaction was found to have a positive and significant effect on performance. The mediation test proved that job satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between compensation and leadership on performance. These findings emphasize the strategic role of job satisfaction in encouraging the improvement of educational staff performance within vocational higher education institutions.

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh kompensasi dan kepemimpinan terhadap kinerja tenaga kependidikan dengan kepuasan kerja sebagai variabel mediasi di Politeknik Negeri Lhokseumawe. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif dengan metode survei melalui kuesioner. Sampel sebanyak 85 tenaga kependidikan diambil secara proporsional acak dari total populasi 155 orang. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan regresi linear berganda berbantuan program SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kompensasi dan kepemimpinan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kepuasan kerja. Sebaliknya, kompensasi dan kepemimpinan tidak berpengaruh langsung terhadap kinerja tenaga kependidikan. Sementara itu, kepuasan kerja ditemukan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja. Uji mediasi membuktikan bahwa kepuasan kerja memediasi secara penuh hubungan antara kompensasi dan kepemimpinan terhadap kinerja. Temuan ini menegaskan peran strategis kepuasan kerja dalam mendorong peningkatan kinerja tenaga kependidikan di lingkungan perguruan tinggi vokasi.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Human resources are one of the important elements that determine the success of an organization, including higher education institutions. In universities, educational staff play a crucial role in supporting the smooth operation of administrative, academic, financial, student affairs, laboratory, and various other services. Good service quality is supported by the performance of educational staff and contributes to achieving institutional goals. According to Mangkunegara (2017), performance is the result of work achieved by individuals both in terms of quality and quantity in accordance with the responsibilities assigned. Therefore, improving the performance of educational staff is essential for universities in realizing professional, efficient, and effective services.

Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic, as one of the vocational higher education institutions in Indonesia, is required to provide quality educational services. In supporting this achievement, educational staff make a major contribution in ensuring the smooth running of administrative and academic services. However, in practice there are still various challenges related to work motivation, job satisfaction, discipline, and employee performance optimization. This condition indicates that the performance of educational staff is influenced not only by individual abilities but also by organizational factors such as compensation and leadership.

Compensation is a form of reward or appreciation given by the organization to employees for their contributions and work in supporting organizational goals. Hasibuan (2019) states that compensation is all income received by employees in the form of money or goods as remuneration provided by the organization. Fair and appropriate compensation can increase work spirit, loyalty, and employee job satisfaction. Research conducted by Putra and Ardana (2016) showed that compensation has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction. This indicates that the better the compensation provided by the organization, the higher the level of employee job satisfaction.

In addition to compensation, leadership is also an important factor in improving employee satisfaction and performance. Robbins and Judge (2017) explain that leadership is the ability of an individual to influence a group toward achieving organizational goals. Leaders who are able to provide direction, motivation, good communication, and create a conducive work environment will encourage employees to work more optimally. Research by Prasetyo and Marlina (2019) found that leadership has a significant effect on employee job satisfaction and performance. Good leadership can build harmonious working relationships so that educational staff feel appreciated and responsible for their work.

Job satisfaction is an important aspect that can explain the relationship between compensation, leadership, and performance. According to Handoko (2018), job satisfaction is a pleasant or unpleasant emotional state experienced by employees regarding their work. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have higher work motivation, loyalty, discipline, and responsibility in carrying out tasks. Research by Sari and Hadijah (2016) showed that job satisfaction positively affects employee performance. Thus, the higher the level of employee job satisfaction, the better the resulting performance.

Research by Mariana and Rahmaniar (2022) also showed that work motivation influences the improvement of individual performance within organizations. These findings indicate that psychological and work environment factors are important aspects in improving employee performance quality. In addition, research by Wibowo and Putri (2021) found that job satisfaction is able to mediate the relationship between compensation and employee performance. The results indicate that good compensation will increase job satisfaction, which in turn improves employee performance.

Although various previous studies have been conducted, there are still differences in findings related to the direct and indirect relationships among compensation, leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance. In addition, research concerning educational staff within vocational higher education institutions, particularly at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic, is still relatively limited. Therefore, this study is important to determine whether job satisfaction can act as a mediating variable in the relationship between compensation and performance as well as between leadership and the performance of educational staff.

This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of human resource management science, particularly regarding job satisfaction as a mediating variable. In addition, this study is also expected to serve as consideration for the management of Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic in improving service quality and educational staff performance through improvements in compensation systems and organizational leadership.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic located on Banda Aceh–Medan Street Km. 280, Buketrata, Blang Mangat District, Lhokseumawe City. The research population consisted of 155 educational staff members, including administrative employees, laboratory assistants, technicians, and other supporting staff based on data from the Legal Affairs, Administration, and Personnel Subdivision in 2023. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate, resulting in 112 respondents.

A proportional random sampling technique was used so that each work unit was proportionally represented. Of all the distributed questionnaires, only 85 were returned and could be processed. This number was considered sufficient for analysis using SPSS version 30.

The variables in this study consisted of compensation (X1), leadership (X2), job satisfaction (Z), and performance (Y). Indicators of compensation included salary, allowances, incentives, and work facilities. Leadership indicators included communication, decision-making, and exemplary behavior. Job satisfaction was measured through satisfaction with the job itself, supervisors, co-workers, and promotions. Meanwhile, performance was measured based on work quality, work quantity, timeliness, and cooperation. Data collection was carried out using a Likert-scale questionnaire. According to Chalirafi et al. (2021), the use of a Likert scale can facilitate researchers in measuring respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward research variables.

A quantitative approach with a survey method was chosen in this study. As explained by Mariana et al. (2018), this approach is able to provide an empirical description of relationships among variables in management and organizational behavior studies. Liza and Mariana (2023) also emphasized that survey methods with structured instruments are highly suitable for testing the influence among variables in the context of public organizations.

Furthermore, the data were analyzed through several stages, namely validity testing, reliability testing, classical assumption testing (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity), multiple linear regression, and the Sobel test to examine mediation effects. According to Anggraini et al. (2022), validity and reliability tests are necessary to ensure the accuracy and consistency of each question item used in the research instrument.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory proposed by Abraham Maslow explains that every individual has hierarchical needs ranging from physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, to self-actualization needs. In the organizational context, fulfilling employee needs through proper compensation, a comfortable work environment, and good leadership can increase job satisfaction and encourage improved employee performance.

This theory is relevant to this study because compensation is viewed as fulfilling employees' economic needs, while leadership plays a role in fulfilling social and esteem needs. When these needs are fulfilled, educational staff will feel more satisfied with their jobs and be encouraged to provide more optimal performance.

### **Performance**

According to Mangkunegara (2017), performance is the quality and quantity of work achieved by an individual in carrying out tasks according to the responsibilities assigned. Performance is an important indicator in assessing employee success in carrying out work and supporting organizational goals. In the university environment, the performance of educational staff is reflected in the ability to provide effective administrative services, work discipline, timeliness, and responsibility toward tasks.

Robbins and Judge (2017) stated that employee performance is influenced by ability, motivation, and the work environment. Employees with high motivation and supportive work environments tend to produce better performance. Therefore, organizations must pay attention to factors that can improve the effectiveness of educational staff.

### **Compensation**

Hasibuan (2019) states that compensation is all income received by employees in the form of money or goods as remuneration provided by the organization for work that has been carried out. Compensation is one of the

important factors in increasing employee motivation and work spirit because it is directly related to organizational appreciation for employee contributions.

Compensation provided fairly and according to workload can increase employee job satisfaction. Conversely, inappropriate compensation can create dissatisfaction and negatively affect performance. In this study, compensation is viewed as a factor capable of increasing job satisfaction and encouraging improved performance of educational staff.

### **Leadership**

Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence other individuals or groups in achieving organizational goals. Leadership plays an important role in creating a comfortable work environment, increasing work motivation, and building harmonious working relationships between leaders and subordinates.

Leaders who are able to provide direction, support, good communication, and appreciation to employees will encourage the creation of job satisfaction. In the context of educational staff, effective leadership can help improve discipline, responsibility, and service quality, thereby impacting employee performance improvement (Robbins & Judge, 2017).

### **Job Satisfaction**

According to Handoko (2018), job satisfaction is a pleasant or unpleasant emotional state experienced by employees toward their work. Employees who have a high level of job satisfaction tend to be more loyal, disciplined, and have better work motivation. On the other hand, employees who are dissatisfied with their work are more likely to experience decreased morale and productivity. Therefore, job satisfaction becomes an important factor influencing the performance of educational staff within organizations.

### **Relationship Among Variables**

Good compensation can increase job satisfaction because employees feel they receive appropriate appreciation for the work performed. In addition, effective leadership can also create a comfortable work atmosphere and improve harmonious working relationships so that employees feel more satisfied at work.

High job satisfaction will encourage employees to work more optimally and responsibly toward their duties. Thus, job satisfaction is suspected to mediate the relationship between compensation and leadership on the performance of educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Results**

#### **1. The Effect of Compensation and Leadership on Job Satisfaction**

Table 1.1 Regression Results on Job Satisfaction

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Coefficient (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>Sig. (p)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Compensation (X1)	0.309	4.168	0.000	Significant

Variable	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. (p)	Description
Leadership (X2)	0.436	5.870	0.000	Significant
Constant	1.239	-	-	-
R <sup>2</sup>	0.673	-	-	-
F-value	84.262	-	0.000	Significant

Source: Processed Data, 2023

Based on the regression test results, the compensation variable has a coefficient of 0.309 with a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating that compensation has a positive and significant effect on the job satisfaction of educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic. The leadership variable also has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction with a coefficient value of 0.436 and significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ .

The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.673 indicates that 67.3% of the variation in job satisfaction can be explained by compensation and leadership, while the remainder is influenced by other variables outside the study. In addition, the simultaneous test results show an F-value of 84.262 with a significance value of 0.000, meaning that compensation and leadership simultaneously have a significant effect on the job satisfaction of educational staff.

## 2. The Effect of Compensation, Leadership, and Job Satisfaction on Performance

**Table 2.1 Regression Results on Performance**

Variable	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. (p)	Description
Compensation (X1)	0.075	0.891	0.377	Not Significant
Leadership (X2)	0.112	1.133	0.262	Not Significant
Job Satisfaction (Z)	0.549	6.093	0.000	Significant
Constant	2.187	-	-	-
R <sup>2</sup>	0.582	-	-	-
F-value	37.638	-	0.000	Significant

Source: Processed Data, 2023

Based on the regression analysis results, the compensation variable shows a significance value of  $0.377 > 0.05$  and leadership shows  $0.262 > 0.05$ , indicating that both variables do not significantly affect the performance of educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic. This shows that compensation and leadership have not been able to improve performance directly.

On the other hand, the job satisfaction variable has a coefficient of 0.549 with a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational staff. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.582 indicates that 58.2% of performance variation can be explained by compensation, leadership, and job satisfaction. In addition, the simultaneous test results show an F-value of 37.638 with a significance value of 0.000, indicating that all variables simultaneously have a significant effect on the performance of educational staff.

## **Discussion**

### **The Effect of Compensation on Job Satisfaction**

The research findings indicate that compensation has a positive and significant effect on the job satisfaction of educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic. This indicates that the better the rewards provided by the institution, the higher the level of job satisfaction among educational staff. Appropriate compensation makes employees feel appreciated for their contributions and efforts, thereby increasing comfort and motivation at work.

These findings are consistent with the theory proposed by Hasibuan (2019), which states that compensation is a form of remuneration provided by organizations to employees for the tasks performed. In addition, the study by Putra and Ardana (2016) also found that compensation positively affects employee job satisfaction. In the context of this study, educational staff believe that adequate compensation can increase their sense of security and satisfaction in carrying out tasks within the university environment.

### **The Effect of Leadership on Job Satisfaction**

The research results indicate that leadership has a positive and significant effect on the job satisfaction of educational staff. This finding demonstrates that effective leadership plays an important role in creating a supportive and comfortable working environment that enhances employee satisfaction. Leaders who are able to provide clear direction, motivation, support, and effective communication can encourage employees to feel more valued and respected within the organization. In addition, leadership that emphasizes fairness, openness, and concern for employee welfare can strengthen the emotional attachment of educational staff to their work and institution.

In the context of higher education institutions, leadership is not only related to managerial authority but also to the ability to build collaboration, trust, and harmonious relationships between leaders and subordinates. Educational staff who receive appreciation, constructive feedback, and guidance from their leaders are more likely to experience higher levels of satisfaction in carrying out their duties. A conducive work atmosphere created by effective leadership can also reduce workplace stress, improve morale, and encourage employees to work more enthusiastically and responsibly.

These findings are consistent with Robbins and Judge (2017), who explain that leadership is the ability to influence individuals or groups in achieving organizational goals. Effective leaders are capable of motivating employees, encouraging teamwork, and creating a positive organizational climate. Likewise, the study conducted by Prasetyo and Marlina (2019) found that leadership has a significant influence on employee job satisfaction and performance. Their findings suggest that employees tend to feel more satisfied when leaders demonstrate supportive behavior and maintain good interpersonal relationships within the workplace.

Furthermore, the results of this study support Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, which explains that individuals have social and esteem needs that

must be fulfilled in the workplace. Leadership that provides recognition, support, and attention to employees can fulfill these needs, thereby increasing job satisfaction. When educational staff feel appreciated and involved in the organization, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their work and demonstrate greater commitment to organizational objectives.

### **The Effect of Job Satisfaction on Performance**

The research findings indicate that job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational staff. This finding suggests that employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to demonstrate better performance in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Job satisfaction encourages employees to work with greater enthusiasm, discipline, responsibility, and commitment toward organizational goals. Employees who feel satisfied with their work environment, compensation, leadership, and relationships with colleagues are generally more motivated to contribute positively to the organization. As a result, higher levels of job satisfaction can improve both the quality and quantity of employee performance.

These findings support the opinion of Handoko (2018), who explains that job satisfaction is an emotional condition that influences employee attitudes and work behavior. Employees who experience positive feelings toward their work are more likely to show loyalty, dedication, and active participation in organizational activities. In addition, research conducted by Sari and Hadijah (2016) also found that job satisfaction has a positive effect on employee performance. Their study indicates that satisfied employees are more capable of completing tasks effectively, maintaining discipline, and achieving organizational targets. Therefore, job satisfaction becomes an important factor that organizations need to consider in improving employee productivity and performance.

In the context of this study, educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic who feel comfortable and satisfied with their work tend to provide more optimal administrative and academic services. They are more responsive in completing tasks, more cooperative with colleagues, and more committed to supporting institutional activities. A positive work atmosphere and supportive organizational conditions also contribute to increasing employee confidence and motivation at work. Consequently, improving job satisfaction can become an effective strategy for higher education institutions in enhancing the performance and professionalism of educational staff.

### **The Effect of Compensation on Performance through Job Satisfaction**

The research findings indicate that compensation does not have a direct significant effect on the performance of educational staff. However, compensation has a significant effect on job satisfaction, while job satisfaction significantly influences employee performance. This condition indicates that job satisfaction is able to mediate the relationship between compensation and the performance of educational staff. In other words, compensation does not immediately improve performance, but first creates a sense of satisfaction among employees, which subsequently encourages better work performance.

This finding suggests that improving compensation alone is not sufficient to directly increase employee performance. Educational staff tend to prioritize how compensation reflects fairness, appreciation, and recognition of their contributions within the organization. When employees perceive that the compensation provided is appropriate and fair, they are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. As a result, employees become more motivated, enthusiastic, and committed to performing their duties effectively. Therefore, job satisfaction serves as an important psychological mechanism that links compensation to employee performance improvement.

These findings support the theory proposed by Hasibuan (2019), which states that compensation is one of the important factors influencing employee motivation and job satisfaction. In addition, the study by Wibowo and Putri (2021) also found that job satisfaction successfully mediates the relationship between compensation and employee performance. In the context of this study, educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic who feel satisfied with the compensation they receive tend to show better discipline, responsibility, and work quality. Consequently, organizations should not only focus on increasing compensation, but also ensure that compensation policies are perceived positively by employees in order to strengthen job satisfaction and ultimately improve performance.

### **The Effect of Leadership on Performance through Job Satisfaction**

The research results indicate that leadership does not directly and significantly affect the performance of educational staff, but leadership significantly affects job satisfaction, and job satisfaction significantly affects performance. These findings indicate that job satisfaction is able to mediate the relationship between leadership and the performance of educational staff.

This shows that good leadership does not directly improve employee performance but first creates a sense of satisfaction at work. When educational staff feel appreciated, cared for, and supported by leaders, employees will feel more comfortable at work, thereby improving the quality of their performance. Thus, job satisfaction becomes an important factor in explaining the relationship between leadership and the performance of educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results, compensation and leadership were proven to have a positive and significant effect on the job satisfaction of educational staff at Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic. This indicates that providing good compensation and implementing effective leadership can increase employee job satisfaction.

However, compensation and leadership did not directly and significantly affect the performance of educational staff. Meanwhile, job satisfaction was proven to have a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational staff. These results indicate that educational staff with a high level of job satisfaction tend to produce better performance.

This study also shows that job satisfaction is able to mediate the relationship between compensation and performance as well as between leadership and the performance of educational staff. Therefore, improving the performance of educational staff can be more effectively achieved through increasing job satisfaction supported by good compensation and effective leadership.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the research findings, the management of Lhokseumawe State Polytechnic is expected to improve a compensation system that is fairer and more aligned with the workload of educational staff in order to increase employee job satisfaction. In addition, leaders should implement a more communicative, supportive, and motivating leadership style so that a comfortable and conducive work environment can be created.

Educational staff are expected to continue improving professionalism, discipline, and responsibility at work so that the quality of services provided can improve further. High job satisfaction should be maintained through good cooperation among employees and harmonious relationships with leaders.

Future researchers are advised to include other variables that may affect the performance of educational staff, such as work motivation, work environment, organizational culture, or work discipline. In addition, future studies may use larger sample sizes or different research objects so that the findings can provide broader insights.

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