

THE EFFECT OF COMPETENCE AND CAREER IMPROVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE WITH OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AS INTERVENING VARIABLES AT PT PLN (PERSERO) UP3 PEMATANGSIANTAR

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of competence and career enhancement with occupational health and safety as an intervening variable at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar. There is no influence of competence on improving employee careers within PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar and improving employee health and safety. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The sample amounted to 130 people consisting of 92 employees scattered in the Customer Service Unit (ULP) and 48 people who were in the Customer Service Unit Office (UP3) Pematang siantar. The data analysis technique uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS). The results showed that there was one hypothesis that was rejected, namely employee competence and career advancement had a positive but insignificant effect on employee performance and occupational health and safety on career advancement through competency improvement and six more hypotheses were accepted. These findings indicate that improving individual competencies is key in career advancement towards performance with OHS as the main objective. Therefore, it is recommended that organizations continue to encourage competency improvement to improve performance so that employee career advancement is also aligned with competency improvement.

Keywords: *Competency, Career Advancement, Performance, Occupational Health and Safety.*

INTRODUCTION

Employees certainly want to improve their performance, where they will always work hard in completing every job given to them or the work they carry out, where the job can be completed if they are able to do the job well. Improved performance will create self-development of employees where the more developed the abilities of employees, the more capable they will be to do something outside the existing competencies and work fields, where the existing work fields can be easily adjusted abilities, in accordance with the work fields and also work procedures made in each work unit and department (Subhan et al, 2023). The more developed the ability, the better the existing work results and can reduce the mistakes made, so that he will be able to increase work productivity, as well as create existing work achievements, where work performance will result in the creation of a good and clear career for employees who work in an agency or company, where a good and clear career will improve the welfare of employees' lives on an ongoing basis (Mallik, 2023).

The relationship between performance and career advancement is very close, as good performance is often a major factor in one's career advancement. High-performing employees are more likely to be promoted to higher positions. Companies tend to give more responsibility to individuals who are proven to be able to perform well who will be able to advance their careers well (Janietz, 2024). Employees who have a brilliant career have latent potential that has been stored, where despite having good potential, consistency is something that must be owned in completing work that must require more ability, where consistency in good performance builds employee reputation to become a professional. Employees who excel and have a good career and behave professionally are often more valued by superiors and management (Gümüştas et al, 2021). Companies are looking for personnel who are able to handle more difficult tasks and have good leadership skills. People who perform well tend to be more attractive to industry leaders,

where they are able to improve the company's *brand* through their abilities and expertise to create good work results that will increase company performance and productivity (Piffari & Claudia, 2024). The process of creating work results tends to be carried out by employees who have good and appropriate competence, and in accordance with their field of work, where good and qualified competence will ensure that existing work can be completed properly without any fatal errors that harm the company as a whole (Diana, 2022). Even good competence does not guarantee errors in existing work results, where errors in work will have an impact on employee health and safety, where employees who have competence must reduce errors so that these employees can be protected from work accidents, so that the work they will carry out can avoid dangerous things that will interfere with their performance (Niebuhr & Fiona, 2022). Employee occupational health and safety is something that needs to be done by the company, where the company always creates real protection for its employees, where employees will always feel comfortable at work without thinking that the job can interfere with occupational health and safety, where these thoughts will interfere with employee performance, so that it will have an impact on the decline in poor work results, which has an impact on the disruption of the career and position of employees who at any time the career they carry will go down because of their plummeting performance (Giorgi & Gabriele, 2020).

Career advancement and performance are strongly influenced by occupational health and safety because safe and healthy workers are more focused, productive, and satisfied with their work, employees will be more enthusiastic and reduce all mistakes in completing work, so that existing work can be easily completed properly, where later with timely completion the management will tend to assess and evaluate, and give awards in the form of salary increases and bonuses, and there are also promotions or positions (Watermann et al, 2023). PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar is one of the customer service implementing units of PT PLN (Persero) UID in the North Sumatra region, where the unit has a total of 140 employees, of which there are various competencies, so that there is a mismatch between competencies and positions currently held, which results in a lot of performance that is not achieved and risks the safety and health of the employees themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Competence

According to Spencer & Spencer, (2021), competence includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to do a job well. Competence is a combination of technical and non-technical abilities that support individuals in achieving the desired goals in the job.

According to Spencer & Spencer (2021), competency indicators can be measured through various aspects as follows :

- 1) Technical Ability
- 2) Interpersonal Ability
- 3) Problem Solving

2. Definition of Career Advancement

According to Widyanti (2020) a career is a direction of professional progress, a word whose use is limited to jobs that have formal hierarchical progress, such as managers and professionals. A career is also defined as a series of work experiences of a person who experiences development. Based on this understanding, work experience in a traditional career path only affects people who enjoy institutional rewards for their success in improving their position in an established organizational structure. In the past, a structural position has always been an employee's dream, so it would be difficult to describe career progression in the absence of a clear title.

According to Pranasari & Saputri (2020) career development is an effort to encourage employees to work better. The consequences of career success and failure are related to self-conception, identity and individual satisfaction. Career is related to individual satisfaction in the organization. Someone who feels guaranteed a career will feel satisfied and work seriously. Career development itself is obtained through the learning process while working. When employees are satisfied with the work they get, it will lead to an intensive to improve the quality of their work to achieve good work performance and improve their work abilities in order to determine career direction and get a place in the organization.

The strategies to improve employee careers (Jyoti, 2021) include:

1. Set career goals
2. Improve skills and knowledge
3. Build *personal branding*
4. Establish good relationships and increase networking with colleagues

The career advancement indicators described by Rahmi (2021) focus on organizational needs and individual qualifications. In addition, it also includes indicators of job satisfaction which include:

1. The work itself
2. Coworkers
3. Supervise
4. Promotion
5. Rewards/payroll
6. Organizational commitment which is divided into affective commitment, continuous commitment, and normative commitment.

3. Employee Performance

According to Aulia et al (2021) performance is a collection of a series of work results in quantity, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of work in achieving goals.

The factors that affect employee performance (Satoh, 2024) are:

1. Work motivation
2. Guaranteed occupational health and safety
3. Training and development
4. Leadership and management.

The strategies to improve employee performance (Akbari, 2022) are:

1. Provide training and development
2. Give awards when the performance is good
3. Encourage creativity and innovation.

Performance indicators according to Aulia et al (2021) are:

1. *Quality of work*

Demonstrate neatness, accuracy, relevance of work results by not ignoring the volume of work. Good work quality can avoid the level of error in completing a job that can be beneficial to the progress of the Company.

2. *Work Quantity*

Indicates the number of types of work performed at one time so that efficiency and effectiveness can be carried out in accordance with the Company's objectives.

3. *Responsibility*

Shows how much the employee accepts and carries out his work, is responsible for the results of the work as well as the facilities and infrastructure used and his work behavior every day.

4. *Cooperation*

The willingness of employees to participate with other employees vertically and horizontally both inside and outside of work so that work results will be better.

5. *Initiative*

Initiative from within company members to do work and solve problems at work without waiting for orders from superiors or showing responsibility in work that is the obligation of an employee.

4. Occupational Safety and Health

According to Hasibuan, et al (2020: 3) the definition of Occupational Safety and Health is to increase and maintain the highest degree of all work both physically, mentally and social welfare in all types of companies, prevent health problems caused by work, protect workers in every job from risks caused by factors that interfere with health, place and maintain workers in a work environment that is in accordance with the physiological and psychological conditions of workers and to create compatibility between work and workers and everyone with their duties.

The role of occupational health and safety for employees working in the company is:

1. Reducing the risk of work accidents.
2. Creating occupational health and safety standards
3. Reducing employee medical costs.

Indicators of Occupational Safety and Health (K3) according to Hasibuan et al (2020) are:

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1. Frequency of Work Accidents.

The number of workplace accidents in a certain period, which indicates the level of safety of the work environment.

2. Accident Severity.

Measured by the number of working days lost due to work accidents. The higher the severity, the greater the impact on productivity.

3. Number of Occupational Diseases.

This indicator reflects workers' health conditions that are directly related to the type of work or work environment.

4. Compliance with OHS Procedures.

The extent to which workers and management comply with standard operating OHS procedures, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

5. Amount of OHS Training Provided.

Measures the level of OHS education and training organized to improve safety awareness and skills.

6. Employee Participation in OHS Program

Active involvement of workers in the activities, reporting, and evaluation of the OHS program.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that can be seen in this study is:

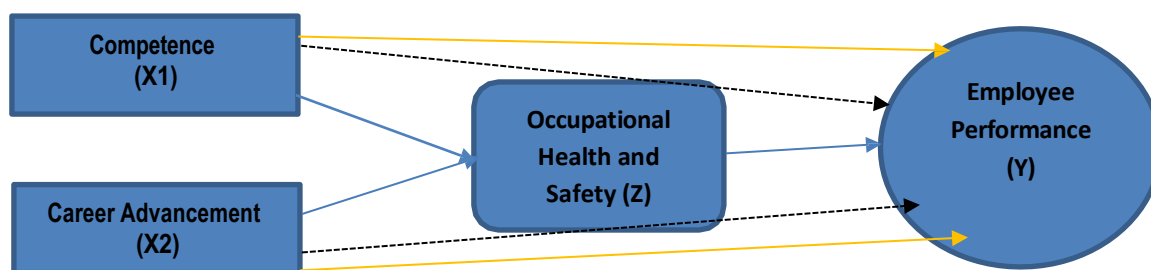


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis

H1 : Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.

H2 : Career advancement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.

H3 : Competence has a positive and significant effect on occupational health and safety at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.

H4 : Career advancement has a positive and significant effect on occupational health and safety at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.

H5 : Occupational health and safety has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.

H6 : Competence has a positive and significant effect on performance through occupational health and safety variables at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.

H7 : Career advancement has a positive and significant effect on performance through occupational health and safety variables at PT PLN UP3 Pematangsiantar.

RESEARCH METHOD

Type of Research

This research method was conducted with a quantitative descriptive method using the structural equation model (SEM) method analysis, where according to (James, 2024) SEM analysis is a data analysis that explains some construct variables have an influence with some other construct variables. The population in this study were 140

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employees at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar, where the sampling method used the saturated sample method, where according to (James, Kaconco, 2024) the saturated sampling method is sampling which is part of the research population. The number of samples that appeared was 140 employees at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar with data collection techniques using observation studies, as well as distributing questionnaires to respondents, namely employees in the work area of PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar. Research Location and Research Time The research location was conducted at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar which is located at Jalan Kapten M.H. Sitorus No.1, Proclamation, Kec. West Siantar Pematangsiantar City, North Sumatra 21117. The research time was carried out for 3 months, from May to July 2025.

Population and Sample The population and sample in this study were all active employees in the work area of PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar. The number of employees in the work area of PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar is 140 employees, with details: 48 employees in the Customer Service Implementation Unit Office and 92 employees spread across 10 Customer Service Units UP3 Pematangsiantar. While the sample in this study was taken using the Slovin formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{140}{1 + 140(0,05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{140}{1,35}$$

$$n = 104$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model Analysis

Outer Model Analysis using *PLS Algorithm*, resulting in:

1) Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings Value

	Occupational Health and Safety (Z)	Employee Performance (Y)	Competency (X1)	Career Advancement (X2)
X1.1			0,794	
X1.2			0,819	
X1.3			0,906	
X2.1				0,867
X2.2				0,850
X2.3				0,870
X2.4				0,844
Y.1		0,892		
Y.2		0,869		
Y.3		0,843		
Y.4		0,868		
Y.5		0,857		
Z.1	0,836			
Z.2	0,850			
Z.3	0,837			
Z.4	0,867			
Z.5	0,852			

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	Occupational Health and Safety (Z)	Employee Performance (Y)	Competency (X1)	Career Advancement (X2)
Z.6	0,864			
Z.7	0,841			

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, it shows the results of testing the outer model through the loading factor / outer loadings value, all indicators on each variable have a loading value ≥ 0.70 . This shows that each indicator is able to represent the measured construct validly and strongly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire have met the criteria for convergent validity and can be used in further analysis. For more details, the above values can also be seen in the following figure.

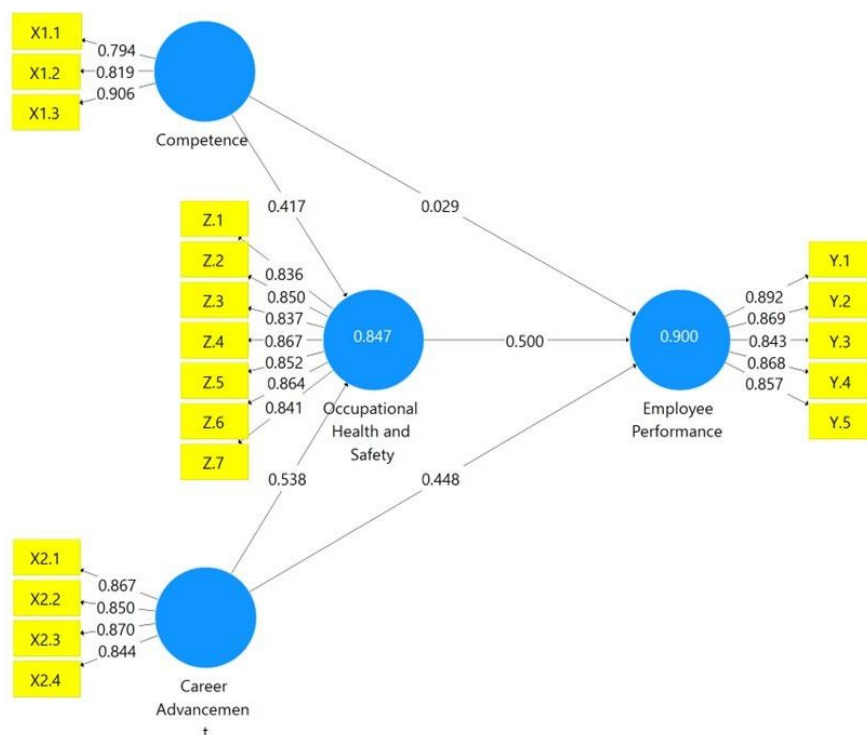


Figure 1. Outer Loudings

In this study there are equations and the equation consists of two substructures for sub structure 1:

$$Z = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e_1$$

$$Z = 0.417 X_1 + 0.538 X_2 + e_1$$

For substructure 2:

$$Y = \beta_{(2)} X_{(1)} + \beta_{(3)} X_2 + \beta_3 Z + e_{(2)}$$

$$Y = 0.029 X_1 + 0.448 X_2 + 0.500 Z + e_{(2)}$$

2) Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Occupational Health and Safety	0,936	0,936	0,948	0,722
Employee Performance	0,917	0,917	0,937	0,750

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Competence	0,792	0,809	0,878	0,707
Career Advancement	0,880	0,882	0,918	0,736

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

From Table 2 above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values on all constructs have values above 0.70. This shows that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable in measuring their respective constructs. Thus, the research instrument is declared reliable and suitable for use in structural model testing.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

Inner model or structural model testing is carried out to see the relationship between constructs, the significance value and R-square of the research model. The structural model is evaluated using R-square for dependent constructs

1) Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

In assessing the model with PLS, it starts by looking at the R-square for each dependent latent variable. The table below shows the results of the Rsquare estimation using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Occupational Health and Safety	0,847	0,845
Employee Performance	0,900	0,898

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

In Table 3 there is an R square value on the two dependent variables for the Occupational Health and Safety variable, there is an R square value of 0.847, meaning that the effect of Competence and Career Improvement is 00.847 or 84.7%, the rest is on other variables outside the model. The R square value of employee performance is 0.900, meaning that Competence, Career Improvement and Occupational Health and Safety are 0.898 or 89.8%, the rest is on other variables outside the model.

2) Hypothesis Testing

a) Direct Influence Between Variables

The direct effect between variables can be seen in the *path coefficients* value. The results of data processing show the value of direct influence can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. Path Coefficients (Direct Influence)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Occupational Health and Safety -> Employee Performance	0,500	6,187	0,000	Accepted
Competency -> Occupational Health and Safety	0,417	5,777	0,000	Accepted
Competency -> Employee Performance	0,029	0,354	0,723	Rejected
Career Advancement -> Occupational Health and Safety	0,538	7,487	0,000	Accepted
Career advancement -> Employee performance	0,448	6,650	0,000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS output, 2025

In the results of Table 4 there is a direct effect value as follows:

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1. Health and Safety has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance with a t-statistic value of 6.187 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that Health and Safety has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance because the significance value is below 0.05 .
2. Competence has a positive and significant effect on Occupational Health and Safety with a t-statistic value of 5.777 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that Occupational Health and Safety has a positive and significant effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05.
3. Competence has a positive but insignificant effect on employee performance with a t-statistic value of 0.354 below 1.96 and a significance of 0.732 above 0.05, meaning that competence has a positive but insignificant effect on employee performance because the significance value is above 0.05. This research is not in line with research conducted by Aulia et al (2021) which states that Competence has a positive and significant effect on performance.
4. Career Improvement has a positive and significant effect on Occupational Health and Safety with a t-statistic value of 7.487 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that Career Improvement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are also in accordance with research conducted by Widyanti, Rahmi (2020) which states that Career Improvement has a positive and significant effect on Occupational Health and Safety.
5. Career Improvement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a t-statistic value of 6.650 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that work ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05. Pranasari & Saputri's research (2020) also states that work ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

b) Indirect Influence Between Variables

The indirect effect between variables can be seen in the *specific indirect effects* value, which can be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Competency -> Occupational Health and Safety -> Employee Performance	0,209	3,831	0,000	Accepted
Career Advancement -> Occupational Health and Safety -> Employee Performance	0,269	5,217	0,000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

In table 5 there is an indirect effect between variables which will be explained as follows:

1. Competence has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance through Occupational Health and Safety with a t-statistic value of 3.831 and a significance value of 0.000, meaning that Occupational Health and Safety acts as an intervening variable between Competence and employee performance.
2. Career Improvement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through Occupational Health and Safety with a t-statistic value of 5.217 and a significance value of 0.000, meaning that job training acts as an intervening variable between Career Improvement and employee performance.

CONCLUSION

1. Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.
2. Career advancement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.
3. Competence has a positive and significant effect on occupational health and safety at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.

4. Career advancement has a positive and significant effect on occupational health and safety at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.
5. Occupational health and safety has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.
6. Competence has a positive but insignificant effect on performance through occupational health and safety variables at PT PLN (Persero) UP3 Pematangsiantar.
7. Career advancement has a positive and significant effect on performance through occupational health and safety variables at PT PLN UP3 Pematangsiantar.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Enhance transparency and objectivity in the promotion process, for example through a measurable performance and competency assessment system. Provide a clear career path to motivate employees to improve their competencies for promotion. Involve work ability evaluation as one of the key indicators in promotion decisions.
2. Conduct regular training needs analysis to ensure that training materials are aligned with the challenges and work requirements of employees. Develop diverse training methods, such as project-based training, case studies, or technology-based learning (e-learning). Evaluate training outcomes to ensure significant improvement in competency and application in the workplace.
3. Focus on balanced development of soft skills and hard skills, such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and technological proficiency. Create a system for regularly monitoring and evaluating employee competencies to map out future development needs. Implement coaching and mentoring systems led by senior employees as a means of knowledge transfer and competency enhancement.
4. Integrate promotion, training, and human resource development programs into a single, sustainable human resource management strategy. Involve unit leaders as active participants in the guidance and development of their subordinates. Use performance and work ability data as the basis for decisions regarding placement, training, and promotion.
5. Establish a robust human resource information system capable of recording and analyzing data on promotion, training, competencies, and performance. Use the results of this analysis for continuous improvement in employee management policies and practices.

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