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Research Article

The Relationship between Employee Competency and the Quality of Office Administration Services in Ambon City Government Agencies

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Abstract. The low competence of apparatus in various regions, especially in the aspect of information technology and mastery of service procedure standards, is one of the main factors that cause the quality of administrative services to be not optimal and has not fully met the expectations of the public as service users. This study aims to analyze and describe the relationship between employee competence and the quality of office administration services in Ambon City government agencies. Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire distributed to State Civil Apparatus (ASN) employees who are directly in charge of the office administration service unit, with purposive sampling techniques using the Slovin formula. Employee competency variables are measured through three main dimensions, namely technical, managerial, and socio-cultural competencies, while service quality is measured using the ServQual model which includes five dimensions, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The results of the study showed that the overall level of employee competence was in the high category with an average score of 3.86 out of a maximum scale of 5, while the quality of office administration services was also in the high category with an average score of 3.80. The results of the correlation test showed a value of the Spearman Rank correlation coefficient of 0.712 with a significance value of p = 0.000, which was smaller than the significance level of 0.05, thus proving the existence of a positive, strong, and significant relationship between employee competence and the quality of office administration services.

Keywords: Ambon City Government; Employee Competence; Office Administration; Quality of Service; State Civil Apparatus.

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1. Introduction

Office administration services in government agencies are one of the spearheads in realizing a clean and responsive government to the needs of the community. In the context of implementing *good governance*, the quality of service cannot be separated from the level of competence possessed by every employee who is in charge of serving the public. The State Civil Apparatus (ASN) plays a very strategic role as a public policy implementer as well as a direct service provider to the community, so that professionalism in carrying out duties is a non-negotiable necessity (Arifin, Solihin, & Murni, 2024). But in reality, there are still many local government agencies that have not been able to provide satisfactory services, one of which is due to the low competence of employees in carrying out office administrative functions.

Employee competencies include the dimensions of knowledge, technical skills, and work attitudes that are interrelated and supportive of each other. A number of empirical studies prove that the higher the level of competence that employees have, the better the quality of services they provide to the community (Yulianti & Annisa, 2024). This is in line with the findings that the competence of ASN has been proven to have a positive and

significant relationship with the effectiveness and quality of public services, where competent employees tend to be faster, more accurate, and more communicative in serving (Altonie et al., 2022). In other words, competence is not just an administrative requirement in office appointment, but a determining factor that directly affects the quality of services received by the public as service users.

On the other hand, the problem of employee competence in the local government environment is still an unfinished homework. The government is still faced with the problem of low technical competence of employees, weak mastery of information technology, and lack of understanding of ethics and public service standards, so that the services provided are often not able to meet the expectations of the community (Arifin et al., 2024). This condition is exacerbated by the uneven competency development programs in the regions, including in the eastern region of Indonesia which geographically and infrastructure still face various limitations. This has a direct impact on the quality of office administration services which are the first face of the government's interaction with its citizens.

The city of Ambon as the capital of Maluku Province is improving the quality of its public services. Based on the assessment of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, the Ambon City Government in 2023 managed to achieve the Green Zone position with a score of 89.03, after previously in 2022 it was still in the Yellow Zone or medium category (Ambon City Government, 2024). This achievement is a positive signal, but on the other hand it also raises critical questions about the extent to which employee competency factors contribute to the increase, especially in office administration services which are the operational backbone of every government agency.

Various previous studies on employee competence and quality of public services have been conducted, but the majority still focus on large urban areas on the islands of Java and Kalimantan. Studies that specifically examine the relationship between employee competence and the quality of office administration services in government agencies in the Maluku region, especially Ambon City, are still very limited in the existing scientific literature (Dwi Putri & Mursyidah, 2022). Previous research also tended to examine employee performance in general without focusing specifically on the dimension of office administration as a variable studied (Aprilianti et al., 2025). This is what becomes *Research gap* as well as the fundamental reason why this research needs to be conducted.

Novelty or the novelty of this research lies in the focus of its analysis which combines employee competency variables that include technical, managerial, and socio-cultural competencies with the quality of office administration services specifically within Ambon City government agencies. This approach has not been widely found in previous studies and is expected to be able to make a real empirical contribution to the development of public administration science. Research that combines competency variables with the quality of administrative services at the level of regional agencies has proven to have high relevance as the basis for policy recommendations for the development of apparatus resources (Utina et al., 2024).

Based on the above background description, the formulation of the problem in this study is: is there a significant relationship between employee competence and the quality of office administration services in Ambon City government agencies? In line with the formulation of the problem, the purpose of this study is to analyze and describe the relationship between employee competence and the quality of office administration services in Ambon City government agencies, so that the results can be a reference for more targeted policy-making in the field of development of apparatus resources in the region.

2. Literature Review

Employee Competencies

Employee competence is a comprehensive combination of knowledge (*Knowledge*), skills (*Skill*), ability (*Ability*), and work behavior that is applied in real terms in the implementation of the duties and functions of the position carried out by an apparatus. In the context of public

services at the local government level, competence is not just an administrative prerequisite, but is the main determinant of how well an employee is able to meet the needs of the community in a responsive and professional manner. Andriyana et al. (2025) emphasized that the apparatus who serve at the forefront of public services, especially in the general government and sub-district service units, still often show a low level of knowledge of service standards, so that supervision from superiors and colleagues is a crucial component in encouraging continuous competency improvement. This indicates that competencies are dynamic and need to be developed systematically through structured training mechanisms, performance evaluation, and coaching.

Furthermore, employee competency development cannot be seen as an incidental activity or only carried out when performance problems occur. Instead, competency improvement should be positioned as a continuous and systematically planned process within the framework of modern apparatus resource management. In practice, competency development can be carried out through various mechanisms, ranging from formal education and training, *coaching* and *mentoring* by direct superiors, position rotation, to the use of digital learning platforms that are increasingly accessible. Each of these mechanisms has its own advantages and should ideally be combined proportionally according to the real needs of the organization and the characteristics of the employees concerned.

In addition, it is important to understand that employee competence does not stand alone as the sole determinant of service performance. Competencies interact dynamically with other factors such as work motivation, organizational culture, superior leadership, and the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, efforts to improve competence will provide more optimal results when accompanied by strengthening a conducive organizational climate, a fair and transparent reward system, and a strong leadership commitment in encouraging each employee to continue to grow and develop professionally for the sake of better public services.

Quality of Office Administration Services

The quality of office administration services in government agencies is generally measured based on the extent to which the apparatus is able to provide services that meet the dimensions of the *Tangible* (physical evidence), *Reliability* (reliability), *Responsiveness* (responsiveness), *Insurance* (guaranteed), and *Empathy* (empathy) known as models *ServQual*. These five dimensions are the most commonly used benchmarks in assessing the quality of services provided by government agencies to the public as service users. Revelation (2026) In his research at the Banjarmasin City Public Housing and Settlement Area Office, it proves that employee competence has a positive and significant effect on service quality, where the better the level of competence that employees have, the quality of services provided to the community will increase. These findings strengthen the argument that the quality of administrative services is not determined by the completeness of infrastructure alone, but rather highly depends on the capacity of human resources who run it. A

In the context of office administration in government agencies, the quality of service is not only measured by the final results received by the community, but also includes the entire process of interaction that occurs between officers and service users from the first time they come until their administrative needs are handled. The interaction process involves various technical and non-technical elements that are interrelated, ranging from the clarity of the service flow, the speed of document completion, the accuracy of the information provided, to the attitude and behavior of officers in serving. When all these elements run in harmony and standardized, the public's perception of service quality will increase significantly and lead to the formation of public trust in government institutions.

More than that, standardization of operational procedures through the establishment of *clear and measurable Standard Operating Procedures* (SOP) is one of the most effective instruments in maintaining the consistency of the quality of office administration services. With SOPs that are consistently implemented, each employee has uniform work guidelines so that variations in service quality between officers can be minimized. This also facilitates the process of evaluation and supervision by the leadership on the performance of the services provided, because the benchmark becomes more objective and measurable. In the end, this

consistency is the foundation for the formation of a positive image of government agencies in the eyes of the public as the main service user.

The Relationship between Employee Competence and Service Quality

Various empirical studies consistently show that there is a close relationship between the level of employee competence and the quality of services produced in the context of local government. Yulianti & Annisa (2024) through its literature study, it confirms that the competence of ASN has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on the quality of public services, with indications that competent employees are able to provide services that are faster, more accurate, and more in line with public expectations. On the other hand, Utina et al. (2024) In his quantitative research in Kota Selatan District, Gorontalo City, it was found that employee competence contributed 64.5% to the variation in service quality received by the community, which means that more than half of the quality of service is directly determined by the competence factor of the apparatus. The combination of findings from various regions strengthens the relevance of research in the context of Ambon City, where the development of employee competencies strategically needs to be made a policy priority to realize high-quality office administration services oriented to community satisfaction.

Understanding the relationship between employee competencies and service quality also needs to be placed in a broader theoretical framework, namely competency-based human resource management theory or known as *Competency-Based Human Resource Management*. Within the framework of this theory, each position in the organization has its own competency profile which is the minimum standard that must be met by the position holder. When an employee succeeds in meeting or exceeding the set competency standards, he will be able to carry out his duties more effectively, efficiently, and innovatively, which is ultimately reflected in the quality of services provided to the community.

The implications of such relationships in the context of public policy are quite substantial. Local governments need to design a system of recruitment, placement, and employee development that is truly based on fulfilling the competency profile of the position, not solely on considerations of seniority or availability of formations. With this more strategic and planned approach, each office administration service unit will be filled by employees who really have the capacity to suit the demands of their work. In turn, this will create a more professional, accountable, and able public service ecosystem to consistently meet public expectations over time.

3. Materials and Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational research design, which aims to measure and analyze the strength and direction of the relationship between employee competency variables as independent *variables* and office administration service quality as dependent *variables*). This approach was chosen because it is able to produce statistically measurable data so that the conclusions produced are objective and can be generalized to a wider population. The location of the research was carried out at the Ambon City government agency, with the consideration that Ambon City is the capital of Maluku Province which is actively improving its public service standards based on the assessment of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in 2023.

The population in this study is all ASN employees who are in charge of office administration service units within Ambon City government agencies. The sampling technique used is *purposive sampling*, which is the selection of respondents based on certain criteria, namely employees who are directly involved in the process of providing administrative services to the community. The number of samples was determined using the Slovin formula with an error tolerance level of 5%, so that a representative and adequate sample number was obtained for statistical analysis purposes.

The data collection instrument used was a questionnaire (*Questionnaire*) structured based on the indicators of each variable. Employee competency variables are measured using indicators that include technical, managerial, and socio-cultural competencies, while office

administration service quality variables are measured based on dimensions *Tangible*, *Reliability*, *Responsiveness*, *Insurance*, and *Empathy* adapted from the model *ServQual*. Each item of a statement in the questionnaire is measured using a scale *Likert* with a score range of 1 to 5. Before use, the instrument is first tested for validity and reliability using a test *Pearson Product Moment* and test *Cronbach's Alpha* to ensure that questionnaires are feasible and consistent as a research measurement tool (Aprilianti et al., 2025).

The data analysis techniques applied in this study include descriptive statistical analysis to describe the characteristics of the data distribution of each variable, followed by a normality test using *the Kolmogorov-Smirnov* test as a prerequisite for analysis. Furthermore, to test the hypothesis of the relationship between the two variables, *the Spearman Rank* correlation test is used if the data is not normally distributed, or *the Pearson* correlation test if the data is normally distributed. The entire statistical analysis process was carried out with the help of *the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) software version 26, with the hypothesis testing criteria at a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$).

4. Results and Discussion

Research Results

This research was carried out in Ambon City government agencies by involving ASN employees who are directly in charge of the office administration service unit. Data collection was carried out through the distribution of structured questionnaires to respondents who had been determined according to the criteria *purposive sampling*. Before the data is further analyzed, the validity and reliability test of the research instrument is first carried out to ensure the feasibility of the measuring instrument used. The results of the validity test showed that all statements in the questionnaire were declared valid with a value of *r count* greater than *r Table*, while the results of the reliability test use *Cronbach's Alpha* resulting in a coefficient above 0.70 for all variables, which indicates that the research instrument is consistent and reliable as a measuring tool (Pradana et al., 2022).

Descriptively, an overview of respondent characteristics and the distribution of answers for each research variable is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Respondents.

Yes	Characteristics	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	38	50,7
		Women	37	49,3
2	Age	20–30 years	18	24,0
		31–40 years	29	38,7
		41–50 years	20	26,7
		> 50 years	8	10,6
3	Education	D3	12	16,0
		S1	48	64,0
		S2	15	20,0
4	Tenure	< 5 years	14	18,7
		5–10 years	31	41,3
		> 10 years	30	40,0

Based on Table 1 above, it is known that respondents are dominated by employees with a Strata One (S1) educational background of 64%, with a productive age range of 31-40 years as the largest group. This indicates that academically, employees who are in charge of office administration services in Ambon City government agencies have adequate knowledge capital to carry out service functions. The length of service, which is mostly above five years, also shows that work experience is quite representative in supporting technical competence in the field (Dyastari, 2025).

Table 2. Distribution of Average Scores of Employee Competency Variables.

Yes	Competency Indicators	Average Score	Categories
1	Technical Competence (mastery of work procedures)	4,12	Height
2	Managerial Competence (planning and coordination skills)	3,78	Height
3	Socio-Cultural Competence (communication and empathy)	3,95	Height
4	Mastery of administrative information technology	3,60	Quite High
5	Understanding of public service standards	3,85	Height
	Overall Average	**3,86**	**Height**

Based on the results presented in Table 2, the average score distribution in each indicator of employee competency variables shows a pattern that is quite informative and worthy of more in-depth study. Technical competence occupies the highest position with a score of 4.12, which indicates that employees in general already have a good command of procedures and procedures for carrying out daily administrative tasks. In the next position, socio-cultural competence obtained a score of 3.95, which reflects the ability of employees to build effective and empathetic communication with the community as service users. Meanwhile, managerial competence is at 3.78, and understanding of public service standards reaches 3.85. This condition indicates that employees have sufficiently understood the applicable service regulatory framework, although its application in daily work practices still needs to be further optimized. Safitri & Susanti (2025) emphasized that employee competence that covers various dimensions simultaneously has a real effect on the quality of service felt by the community.

What needs special attention is the indicator of administrative information technology mastery that received the lowest score, which was 3.60. Although it is still in the category of quite high, this value is far below other indicators and indicates a significant digital competency gap among employees. Dyastari (2025) revealed that the low digital competence of government apparatus is a structural problem that has a direct impact on the efficiency of the administrative process, because the inability of employees to utilize information systems optimally will slow down the entire service completion flow. Therefore, before discussing the overall quality of service, it is important to first understand that the employee competency profile described above is the main foundation that underlies the quality of office administration services received by the people of Ambon City.

Table 3. Distribution of Average Score of Office Administration Service Quality Variables.

Yes	Service Quality Dimension (*ServQual*)	Average Score	Categories
1	*Tangibles* (completeness of facilities and appearance of officers)	3,92	Height
2	*Reliability* (reliability and accuracy of service)	3,74	Height
3	*Responsiveness*	3,68	Height
4	*Assurance*	3,89	Height
5	*Empathy* (personal attention and concern of the officers)	3,77	Height
	Overall Average	**3,80**	**Height**

Based on Table 2 and Table 3, it is known that the average employee competency score is at 3.86 out of a maximum scale of 5, which is classified as high. The technical competency indicator occupies the highest position with a score of 4.12, while the mastery of administrative information technology is the dimension with the lowest value of 3.60. This condition indicates that even though employees are quite proficient in conventional work procedures, adaptation to digital-based administrative systems still requires further attention and strengthening. Meanwhile, the average score of the overall quality of office administration services reached 3.80, with the *Tangible* as the highest value and dimension *Responsiveness* as the lowest. This pattern shows that even though the physical facilities and appearance of officers are adequate, the aspect of response speed in serving the community is still a weak point that needs to be systematically improved (Safitri & Susanti, 2025).

Hypothesis testing was carried out using *the Spearman Rank correlation test* after the results of the normality test showed that the data was not distributed normally. The test results showed a correlation coefficient value (*rs*) of 0.712 with a significance value (*p*) = 0.000 < 0.05, which means that there is a positive, strong, and significant relationship between employee competence and the quality of office administration services in Ambon City government agencies. Thus, the research hypothesis that states that there is a significant relationship between the two variables is accepted and statistically proven.

Discussion

Overview of Employee Competencies in Ambon City Government Agencies

The results of the descriptive analysis show that the level of competence of ASN employees in Ambon City government agencies as a whole is in the high category, with an average score of 3.86. Of the five indicators measured, technical competence occupies the most dominant position, which reflects that employees in general have understood and are able to carry out administrative work procedures correctly. These findings are in line with the results of the study Pradana et al. (2022) which concludes that the competence of employees within government agencies has a significant influence on public service performance, where employees who master technical procedures well tend to produce more structured and consistent service outputs.

Nevertheless, the indicator of administrative information technology mastery obtained the lowest score in the competency variable. This condition reflects the reality that is still common in various local government agencies, especially in eastern Indonesia, where access to digital technology-based training is still uneven. Dyastari (2025) In his study, it was revealed that nationally, only around 40% of government employees really have adequate managerial and digital competencies in accordance with the demands of their positions, while conventional technical competencies are relatively higher, reaching 72%. This gap between technical competence and digital competence is a structural challenge that needs to be addressed immediately through a competency development program that is more adaptive and based on real needs in the field. Further, Rosiawati & Purwanto (2023) emphasizing that employee competence has a significant direct influence on service quality, so that any weakness in the competency dimension will have a direct impact on the quality of services received by the community.

Overview of the Quality of Office Administration Services in Ambon City Government Agencies

Overall, the quality of office administration services in Ambon City government agencies is in the high category with an average score of 3.80. Dimensions *Tangible* being the highest value, indicating that the completeness of physical facilities and the appearance of officers have been assessed well by the community. Meanwhile, the dimensions *Responsiveness* being the lowest, which reflects that there are still obstacles in terms of the speed of officers in responding and resolving community needs in a timely manner. This fact reinforces the findings Safitri & Susanti (2025) which shows that employee competence, office facilities, and work discipline together contribute to service quality, but the responsiveness aspect is the dimension that is most vulnerable to being influenced by fluctuations in individual employee competencies.

Low dimensions *Responsiveness* It is also closely correlated with findings on competency variables, especially in information technology mastery indicators that are still not optimal. When employees are not skilled enough in operating the administrative information system digitally, the process of completing documents and service requests will tend to be slower, so that public perception of the officer's responsiveness decreases. Mulyawan et al. (2024) In his research at the Class I Immigration Office of Surakarta found that employee competence has a significant effect on the quality of service, but its effect on community satisfaction is indirect — but mediated by the quality of the service itself. This means that improving employee competence will only have a real impact on community satisfaction if it first succeeds in improving the dimensions of service quality as a whole, including the *Responsiveness* which is still a weakness in this research location.

The Relationship between Employee Competency and the Quality of Office Administration Services

Correlation test results *Rank Spearman* shows a correlation coefficient value of 0.712 which is classified as a strong relationship, with a positive direction and a very high level of significance (p = 0.000). This means that any increase in the level of employee competence will be followed by a comparable improvement in the quality of office administration services received by the public. This relationship pattern is fully consistent with the results of previous research that has been conducted in various local government contexts in Indonesia. Rosiawati & Purwanto (2023) For example, it was found that employee competence has a significant direct influence on the quality of service at the Pasuruan City Public Housing and Settlement Areas Office, as well as indirectly affecting user satisfaction through the service quality pathway.

From a theoretical perspective, this relationship can be explained through *the New Public Service* (NPS) framework which emphasizes that government apparatus must have full capabilities to serve the community in a professional, responsive, and public-interest-oriented manner. Pradana, Kismartini, and Aripin (2022) emphasized that in the paradigm of bureaucratic reform, employee competence, work discipline, and employee performance together contribute 77.9% to the variation in the quality of public services, which shows how dominant the human resource factor is in determining the quality of services produced by government agencies. These findings strengthen the position of employee competence not as a supporting variable, but as the main determinant factor in the framework of improving the quality of office administration services at the regional level.

Furthermore, in the context of Ambon City, which has won the Green Zone title from the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in 2023, the results of this study provide an empirical explanation that this achievement is inseparable from the real contribution of employee competencies that are consistently in the high category. Adelia et al. (2025) affirms that effective office management—which includes structured planning, document management, digital information systems, and human resource competency development—makes a significant contribution to improving the overall quality of services. Therefore, the sustainability and strengthening of apparatus competency development programs, especially in the aspects of digital literacy and modern administrative management, is an urgent strategic recommendation to be implemented in order to maintain and even improve the service standards that have been achieved. Imam et al. (2025) In a broader context, it also confirms that employee empowerment and organizational learning culture are factors that positively affect public sector performance, which ultimately leads to an improvement in the quality of services received by the community. Nissinen et al. (2022) He added that employees in the public sector are able to balance between work resources and work demands — one of which is through behavior *Job Crafting* — will indicate the level *Work Engagement* which in turn correlates with more optimal productivity and service quality.

5. Conclusion

This study succeeded in empirically proving that there is a positive, strong, and significant relationship between employee competence and the quality of office administration services in Ambon City government agencies, with a *Spearman Rank correlation coefficient* value of 0.712 at a significance level *of p* = 0.000. The overall level of employee competence is in the high category, with technical competence as the most dominant dimension, while the mastery of administrative information technology is still an aspect that needs to be improved. The quality of office administration services is also relatively high, but the responsiveness dimension is still a weak point that requires systematic improvement. Based on these findings, strengthening the competence of ASN employees — especially through digital technology-based training and standardization of service procedures — is a strategic step that must be prioritized by the Ambon City government in order to realize office administration services that are increasingly qualified, responsive, and oriented towards community satisfaction.

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