



The Impact of Performance Management Systems on Employee Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Competence

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v5i5.3170>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Performance Management System;
Employee Competence;
Employee Performance;
PLS-SEM

Effective performance management is important for improving employee performance, while employee competence may enhance the extent to which performance management practices contribute to better work outcomes. However, empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of employee competence in this relationship remains limited. This study examines the effect of performance management systems on employee performance and employee competence and investigates the mediating role of employee competence in the relationship between performance management systems and employee performance. A quantitative associative approach was employed involving 154 employees selected through saturated sampling. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The results indicate that performance management systems positively and significantly affect employee performance ($\beta = 0.578$; $t = 6.350$; $p < 0.001$) and employee competence ($\beta = 0.818$; $t = 17.686$; $p < 0.001$). Employee competence also positively and significantly affects employee performance ($\beta = 0.255$; $t = 2.857$; $p = 0.004$). Furthermore, employee competence significantly mediates the relationship between performance management systems and employee performance ($\beta = 0.208$; $t = 2.787$; $p = 0.006$). These findings imply that organizations should integrate effective performance management with continuous competence development to achieve sustainable improvements in employee performance.

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Article History:

Received: July 2026; Revised: August 2026; Accepted: September 2026

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Fadhlurrahman, M. (2026). The Impact of Performance Management Systems on Employee Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Competence. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 5(5), 6123-6138.

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a central determinant of organizational effectiveness because it reflects how effectively employees translate organizational expectations into measurable work outcomes. In increasingly

competitive workplaces, organizations require performance systems that can align individual contributions with organizational objectives, identify performance gaps, and support continuous improvement. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) explain that effective human resource management connects employee performance with systematic practices for setting expectations, monitoring achievement, evaluating results, and developing employees. Systematic performance measurement is also important because organizations need reliable information to evaluate whether employees are achieving expected standards and where improvement is required (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022; Kharismasyah et al., 2026; Furqon et al., 2026). Accordingly, performance management should be viewed not merely as an administrative evaluation process but as a strategic mechanism for improving organizational capability. Strengthening performance management is therefore important because consistent employee performance contributes directly to organizational productivity, service quality, and sustainability.

Performance management can be theoretically understood as a systematic process that connects organizational objectives, employee goals, performance monitoring, evaluation, feedback, and development. Goal-setting theory emphasizes that clear and appropriately challenging goals can direct employee effort and motivate better performance (Latham, 2023; Maulia et al., 2026; Ulfa & Aldin, 2026). Within this framework, performance management provides the organizational mechanism through which goals are communicated, monitored, and evaluated. The performance management system is therefore expected to influence employee performance by establishing clearer expectations and providing feedback for improvement. Empirical evidence supports this relationship, as performance management has been associated with employee performance in organizational settings (Almulaiki, 2023; Siraj & Hågen, 2023; Patriansyah et al., 2026). The concept of employee competence provides a complementary theoretical perspective because performance depends not only on organizational systems but also on employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, and capacity to apply them effectively. Competence-based approaches emphasize the importance of developing individual capabilities to support effective organizational functioning (Škrinjarčić, 2022; Putri & Prianthara, 2026; Kuswanti et al., 2024).

A general organizational problem arises when performance management systems are implemented without adequately ensuring that employees possess the competencies required to meet established performance expectations. Performance standards may identify what employees should achieve, but

competence determines whether employees have sufficient knowledge, skills, and capabilities to translate those expectations into effective work behavior. This issue becomes increasingly important as organizations face technological and environmental changes that require employees to continuously adapt and develop new capabilities. Shet (2024) emphasizes that changing organizational environments increase the importance of workforce competencies and continuous learning, while Blanka et al. (2022) demonstrate the relationship between digital transformation and employee competency development. Similarly, organizational learning can strengthen effectiveness through knowledge sharing and employee competencies (Meher et al., 2024; Sudrajat et al., 2026; Fitria, 2024). Thus, weaknesses in either performance management or employee competence may limit improvements in employee performance. Understanding how these factors interact is consequently important for organizations seeking sustainable performance improvement.

Previous studies have established that performance management and employee competence are relevant to employee performance, but their relationships remain insufficiently integrated. Almulaiki (2023) and Siraj and Hågen (2023) provide evidence that performance management can positively influence employee performance, supporting the argument that systematic performance practices contribute to better work outcomes. However, performance management research has also increasingly emphasized technological and analytical developments rather than examining the competency mechanism underlying employee performance (Varma et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2023; Suriono & Dewantoro, 2026). Research on competence similarly demonstrates its importance. Kaur and Kaur (2022) found that employee competencies form part of the mechanism connecting human resource practices with firm performance, while Astarina et al. (2022) identified competence as an important factor associated with employee performance. Nevertheless, these studies generally examine competence within broader human resource or mediation frameworks, leaving limited evidence concerning its specific role in transmitting the effect of a performance management system to employee performance.

Further evidence suggests that employee competence may function as an explanatory mechanism rather than merely as an independent predictor of performance. Nelly et al. (2024) demonstrated the mediating role of competency between transformational leadership and lecturer performance, indicating that organizational practices may improve performance partly by strengthening employee capabilities. Janah et al. (2023) similarly showed that competence can contribute to employee performance through intervening organizational factors,

while Vijn et al. (2022) identified commitment as another mediating mechanism in the competence–performance relationship. Meher et al. (2024) further demonstrated that employee competencies can participate in a serial mediation process linking organizational learning culture and organizational effectiveness. Although these studies strengthen the argument that competence can operate as a mediator, they do not specifically explain whether employee competence mediates the relationship between a performance management system and employee performance. This unresolved relationship represents an important research gap because performance management may improve performance not only directly but also by developing employees' capacity to meet organizational expectations.

The state of the art of this study lies in integrating performance management, employee competence, and employee performance within a single explanatory model. Rather than treating competence only as an outcome or independent predictor, this study positions employee competence as a mediating mechanism through which performance management can contribute to improved employee performance. This perspective addresses an important conceptual limitation in existing research by connecting organizational performance practices with the employee capabilities required to implement them effectively. The novelty also lies in examining whether the effectiveness of performance management depends partly on its capacity to strengthen employee competence. Such an approach provides a more comprehensive explanation of how performance improvement can occur, moving beyond the assumption that evaluation and monitoring alone automatically produce better outcomes. Therefore, examining the direct and indirect relationships among these variables is important for developing a more integrated understanding of performance management and employee development.

Based on the identified research problem, this study investigates whether a performance management system contributes to employee performance directly and indirectly through employee competence. The central argument is that an effective performance management system can establish clear expectations, monitor achievement, provide feedback, and identify development needs, while employee competence enables employees to translate these processes into effective work behavior. Accordingly, this study examines four relationships: the effect of the performance management system on employee performance, the effect of the performance management system on employee competence, the effect of employee competence on employee performance, and the mediating effect of employee competence between performance management and employee performance. The study contributes theoretically by clarifying the mechanism connecting organizational performance management with

individual performance and contributes practically by providing evidence that organizations can use to strengthen performance improvement through both systematic management practices and employee capability development.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative associative design to examine the relationships among the performance management system, employee competence, and employee performance. A quantitative approach was selected because the study involved numerical measurement of predetermined constructs and statistical testing of hypothesized relationships. The associative design was appropriate because the research aimed to examine the effects among variables without manipulating the organizational setting. The performance management system was specified as the independent variable (X), employee competence as the mediating variable (Z), and employee performance as the dependent variable (Y). This model enabled the study to examine both direct and indirect relationships among the constructs. The mediation framework was used to determine whether employee competence explains part of the relationship between the performance management system and employee performance, consistent with the application of mediation analysis in quantitative research (Ge, 2023; Qin, 2024).

The study was conducted at PT. Nusantara Sejahtera Raya Kota Medan. The location was selected because the organization had a structured employee performance assessment system and documented performance evaluations across multiple work-related aspects. These conditions provided an appropriate empirical setting for examining how performance management relates to employee competence and performance. The study population comprised 154 employees distributed across seven work units: Guide (32), Technical (27), Cashier (38), Waiters Premiere (9), Product (35), Bar Premiere (4), and Kitchen Premiere (6). Because the population was relatively small and accessible, saturated sampling was employed, whereby all population members were included as respondents. Consequently, the final sample consisted of 154 employees. The use of an appropriate sampling strategy is important for ensuring that the selected respondents adequately represent the intended study population (Ahmed, 2024; Fikriyah, 2026).

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure the three research constructs. The instrument contained eight indicators for the performance management system, ten indicators for employee competence, and ten indicators for employee performance. Each item was assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was administered to all 154 respondents

included through saturated sampling. The use of structured survey instruments enabled consistent measurement across respondents and facilitated subsequent statistical analysis. Attention was given to the quality of the measurement instrument because valid and reliable measurement is essential for quantitative research. Survey-based research requires appropriate evidence regarding the validity and quality of measurement items to support meaningful interpretation of empirical findings (Hill et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2024). Data quality was therefore considered an important component of the research procedure.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The analysis comprised evaluation of the measurement model and structural model. The measurement model was assessed through convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was examined using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with values below 0.90 indicating acceptable discriminant validity. The structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect size (f^2). Hypothesis testing employed bootstrapping to assess the significance of direct and indirect effects, including the mediating role of employee competence. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for examining complex predictive relationships and mediation models in organizational research (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Guenther et al., 2023; Legate et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 154 employees. Respondent characteristics were examined based on gender, educational background, age, and length of employment. Of the total respondents, 47 (30.52%) were male and 107 (69.48%) were female. Regarding educational background, 103 respondents (66.88%) had completed senior high school, 13 (8.44%) held a Diploma (D3), and 38 (24.68%) held a bachelor's degree. In terms of age, 32 respondents (20.78%) were younger than 20 years, 91 (59.09%) were aged 20–30 years, 24 (15.58%) were aged 30–40 years, and 7 (4.55%) were older than 40 years. Regarding length of employment, 39 respondents (25.32%) had worked for less than two years, 88 (57.14%) had worked for two to five years, and 27 (17.53%) had worked for more than five years. Thus, the largest respondent groups were female employees, employees with senior high school education, employees aged 20–30 years, and employees with two to five years of work experience.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	47	30.52
	Female	107	69.48
Education	Senior High School	103	66.88
	Diploma (D3)	13	8.44
	Bachelor's Degree	38	24.68
Age	< 20 years	32	20.78
	20–30 years	91	59.09
	30–40 years	24	15.58
	> 40 years	7	4.55
Length of Employment	< 2 years	39	25.32
	2–5 years	88	57.14
	> 5 years	27	17.53

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher, 2026.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was assessed to establish the reliability and validity of the constructs before evaluating the structural relationships. Convergent validity was examined using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability. The outer loading values ranged from 0.725 to 0.960, indicating that all indicators met the specified loading criterion of 0.70. As shown in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.940 to 0.980, rho_A values ranged from 0.943 to 0.980, and Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.949 to 0.983. All values exceeded 0.70. The AVE values were 0.878 for the Performance Management System, 0.727 for Employee Performance, and 0.650 for Employee Competence, all exceeding 0.50. These results provide evidence of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity for the three constructs.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Performance Management System	0.980	0.980	0.983	0.878
Employee Performance	0.958	0.960	0.964	0.727
Employee Competence	0.940	0.943	0.949	0.650

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The HTMT values were 0.809 for the relationship between Employee Performance and the Performance Management System, 0.848 for the relationship between Employee Competence and the Performance Management

System, and 0.757 for the relationship between Employee Competence and Employee Performance. All reported values were below the 0.90 criterion specified in the research method, indicating adequate discriminant validity among the constructs.

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , and effect size (f^2). The R^2 value for Employee Performance was 0.639, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.634. This indicates that 63.9% of the variance in Employee Performance is accounted for by the Performance Management System and Employee Competence in the model, while the remaining variance is attributable to factors outside the model. For Employee Competence, the R^2 value was 0.669 and the adjusted R^2 was 0.666, indicating that 66.9% of the variance in Employee Competence is accounted for by the Performance Management System.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination and Effect Size

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Employee Performance	0.639	0.634
Employee Competence	0.669	0.666

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

The f^2 analysis showed different effect magnitudes across the structural paths. The effect size of the Performance Management System on Employee Performance was 0.307, the effect size of the Performance Management System on Employee Competence was 2.018, and the effect size of Employee Competence on Employee Performance was 0.060. Based on conventional f^2 benchmarks, these values indicate a medium effect for the Performance Management System on Employee Performance, a very large effect for the Performance Management System on Employee Competence, and a small effect for Employee Competence on Employee Performance.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4. Statistical significance was assessed using a p-value threshold of 0.05. The analysis examined three direct relationships and one indirect relationship involving the mediating variable. As presented in Table 5, all four tested relationships were statistically significant because their p-values were below 0.05. The direction of each estimated relationship was positive, as indicated by the positive original sample coefficients.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	Performance Management System → Employee Performance	0.578	6.350	<0.001	Supported
H2	Performance Management System → Employee Competence	0.818	17.686	<0.001	Supported
H3	Employee Competence → Employee Performance	0.255	2.857	0.004	Supported
H4	Performance Management System → Employee Competence → Employee Performance	0.208	2.787	0.006	Supported

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Direct Effects

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between the Performance Management System and Employee Performance. The estimated path coefficient was 0.578, with a t-statistic of 6.350 and a p-value of <0.001. The result indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two constructs. Therefore, H1 was supported.

The second hypothesis examined the relationship between the Performance Management System and Employee Competence. The path coefficient was 0.818, with a t-statistic of 17.686 and a p-value of <0.001. The positive coefficient and statistically significant p-value indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship. Therefore, H2 was supported.

The third hypothesis examined the relationship between Employee Competence and Employee Performance. The estimated path coefficient was 0.255, with a t-statistic of 2.857 and a p-value of 0.004. Because the p-value was below 0.05 and the coefficient was positive, the relationship was statistically significant and positive. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Indirect Effect

The fourth hypothesis examined the indirect relationship between the Performance Management System and Employee Performance through Employee Competence. The estimated indirect effect was 0.208, with a t-statistic of 2.787 and a p-value of 0.006. The p-value was below 0.05, indicating that the indirect effect was statistically significant. Because the indirect-effect coefficient was positive, the mediated relationship was positive. Therefore, H4 was supported.

Taken together, the structural analysis identified statistically significant positive direct relationships from the Performance Management System to Employee Performance and Employee Competence, as well as from Employee Competence to Employee Performance. The indirect effect through Employee Competence was also statistically significant. These results indicate that Employee Competence represents a statistically significant mediating pathway in the relationship between the Performance Management System and Employee Performance. The results describe the statistical relationships observed in the model; their theoretical meaning and comparison with previous research are addressed separately in the Discussion section.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the performance management system (PMS) is an important determinant of employee performance, both directly and indirectly through employee competence. All four hypothesized relationships were statistically significant, indicating that PMS operates through more than one pathway in shaping employee outcomes. This overall pattern is consistent with the view that performance management integrates goal setting, performance evaluation, feedback, and employee development into a continuous managerial process (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Latham, 2023). The findings also extend previous studies by examining PMS, competence, and performance simultaneously rather than treating these relationships separately. Thus, the contribution of this study lies in demonstrating an integrated mechanism in which PMS not only relates directly to performance but also strengthens competence, which subsequently contributes to performance.

The positive effect of PMS on employee performance ($\beta = 0.578$, $t = 6.350$, $p < 0.001$) confirms H1. This finding is consistent with Siraj and Hågen (2023), who reported a significant relationship between performance management systems and employee performance, and with Almulaiki (2023), who emphasized the role of PMS in improving employees' effectiveness in completing assigned tasks. The result also supports Armstrong and Taylor's (2023) perspective that effective performance management aligns individual efforts with organizational expectations. The present finding strengthens this literature by providing evidence from an organizational setting in which performance management is associated with a substantial direct contribution to employee performance. However, the coefficient does not imply that PMS is the sole determinant of performance, since other organizational and individual factors may also influence employee outcomes.

PMS also has a strong positive effect on employee competence ($\beta = 0.818$, $t = 17.686$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. This result is consistent with competence-based perspectives emphasizing that organizational systems can facilitate the development and application of employee knowledge, skills, and capabilities (Škrinjarić, 2022). It also complements Shet (2024), who highlights the strategic importance of competency development within organizational contexts. The strength of the relationship in this study suggests that PMS may function not merely as an evaluation mechanism but also as a developmental mechanism. In particular, systematic performance expectations and monitoring can create opportunities for employees to identify performance requirements and develop capabilities relevant to their work. This finding contributes to the literature by empirically positioning employee competence as an important outcome of PMS rather than considering competence only as a pre-existing employee characteristic.

Employee competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.255$, $t = 2.857$, $p = 0.004$), supporting H3. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing competence as an important foundation for effective employee performance (Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023; Astarina et al., 2022). It also corresponds with the broader literature showing that competence encompasses capabilities that enable employees to perform work effectively and adapt to organizational demands (Škrinjarić, 2022). Nevertheless, the relatively smaller coefficient compared with the direct PMS–performance relationship indicates that competence represents one contributing mechanism rather than the dominant pathway. This distinction is important because it prevents the finding from being interpreted as evidence that competence alone determines performance. Instead, the result suggests that strengthening employees' knowledge, skills, and capabilities can contribute to performance when combined with broader organizational performance-management practices.

The indirect effect of PMS on employee performance through competence is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.208$, $t = 2.787$, $p = 0.006$), supporting H4. This result indicates that employee competence carries part of the relationship between PMS and employee performance. The finding is compatible with studies emphasizing the importance of competency development as an organizational mechanism for translating human resource practices into employee outcomes (Kaur & Kaur, 2022; Meher et al., 2024). It also complements research showing that competence-related mechanisms can connect organizational practices with performance outcomes (Nelly et al., 2024). Importantly, because the direct PMS–performance relationship remains significant alongside the indirect effect, competence should be interpreted as a partial rather than exclusive pathway. The

contribution of this finding is therefore the empirical identification of a dual mechanism: PMS can influence performance directly while simultaneously supporting performance through competence development.

The combined pattern of the direct and indirect effects provides an important refinement of previous PMS research. The direct coefficient of PMS on performance ($\beta = 0.578$) is larger than its indirect effect through competence ($\beta = 0.208$), while PMS shows a particularly strong association with competence ($\beta = 0.818$). This pattern suggests that PMS has a broader role than simply producing immediate performance outcomes. Its implementation may simultaneously establish performance expectations and create conditions that support employee capability development. This interpretation is consistent with the emphasis on integrated human resource practices in previous studies (Van Waeyenberg et al., 2022; Meher et al., 2024; Utamimah & Hussen, 2024). The novelty of the present study lies in empirically connecting these pathways within one model. Rather than viewing performance management and competence development as separate managerial concerns, the findings indicate that they can operate as interconnected components of employee performance improvement.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that PMS is associated with employee performance through both a direct pathway and a competence-based pathway. The findings support existing evidence on the importance of performance management (Almulaiki, 2023; Siraj & Hågen, 2023) and competence (Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023; Astarina et al., 2022), while extending these perspectives by integrating the two mechanisms into a single empirical model. The strongest relationship between PMS and competence further indicates that performance management may have developmental value beyond performance assessment. Practically, organizations may therefore strengthen performance by combining clear performance expectations and evaluation with systematic opportunities for competence development. The study's main novelty is its demonstration of this integrated mechanism in the examined organizational context. However, the findings should not be generalized beyond the study context without further testing across different organizations, sectors, and employee populations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the performance management system (PMS) has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and employee competence, while employee competence also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and significantly mediates the relationship between PMS and employee performance. The key lesson from this study is that effective performance management should not be viewed merely as an evaluation

mechanism, but also as a developmental process that strengthens employee competence and contributes to improved performance. The implication of these findings is that organizations should integrate clear performance targets, continuous monitoring, constructive feedback, and competence development into their performance management practices. Scientifically, this study contributes by demonstrating an integrated mechanism in which PMS influences employee performance both directly and through employee competence, thereby extending the understanding of how performance management generates employee outcomes. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single organizational context and the use of a cross-sectional quantitative design, which limits broader generalization and causal interpretation. Future research should test the model across different organizations, sectors, and larger samples and consider additional factors such as motivation, job satisfaction, leadership, organizational culture, work environment, and compensation.

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