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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## How to Improve Employee Performance through the Role of Work Engagement Mediation Empirical Studies on Public Sector Organizations

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**ABSTRACT**

The demand for responsive, effective, and efficient employee services to the public is a challenge for public sector organizations. This study aimed to examine the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between training and rewards for employee performance. Work engagement creates good interaction between employees and workers so that employees feel obliged to respond through increased performance. The data were obtained from 213 BPS employees who were processed using *SmartPLS3*. The results showed that work engagement acted as a mediator of the relationship between training and rewards for employee performance. This research is expected to add information about the management of performance management in public sector organizations.

**KEYWORDS**

Training, rewards, work engagement, employee performance

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### 1. Introduction

Employee performance in achieving service quality is a serious problem in various countries, especially in the public sector. The results of a survey conducted by the Global Competitiveness Report (2018) show that the quality of the Indonesian bureaucracy is in a bad category where corruption and government bureaucratic inefficiency are problems facing the Indonesian state. Indonesia is a country with the lowest level of good governance among neighboring countries, with Indonesia's good governance index at 2.8; this figure is very low compared to other countries, such as Singapore 8.9; Malaysia 7.7 (Indonesia.go.id). One of the factors causing Indonesia's low good governance index comes from human resources. According to (Mahsyar 2011), these weaknesses are related to professionalism, competence, and ethics. In addition, it is also caused by a low and inappropriate compensation system. The ASN work pattern still adheres to the classic bureaucracy, which applies a structured/hierarchical, formal, legalistic, and closed system of work. The Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment stated that ASN performance was still relatively low, especially in terms of public services. This problem is a serious concern for the government, so strategic steps are needed in managing human resources in public sector organizations ([www.menpan.go.id](http://www.menpan.go.id)).

Effective human resource management is required in facing increasingly complex organizational challenges (Karatepe 2013). Performance management has developed into a tool that can be used to overcome problems related to employee performance through the effective and efficient use of human resources (Hanaysha 2016). According to (Sarvaiya, Eweje, and Arrowsmith 2018), employees are considered strategic partners who are involved in the success of the organization in achieving its goals. Training and awards are expected to motivate employees to improve their performance. Positive work engagement and performance are ways for employees to provide feedback on the benefits that have been provided by the organization. Employees give their thoughts and energy to play a role in carrying out tasks with a high energy level, so they will be more enthusiastic about their work.

Training is the practice of skills and knowledge given to employees through learning experiences aimed at achieving better performance (Hanaysha 2016); training is needed to improve the knowledge and attitudes of employees so that they are more committed, have a competitive advantage, and can adapt to changes related to the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991). The organization seeks to develop employee capabilities to improve competency through effective training programs to achieve organizational goals (Younas et al., 2018). Likewise, rewards are considered a strategy to motivate employees to improve performance. Organizations need to design reward systems that can have a positive impact on the performance contributions that have been made by employees (Hamer et al. 2006). This award can be in the form of promotions, bonuses, or positive behavior given by the organization to employees; this is a way to motivate them to show positive performance for the organization.

Previous research proved that human resource management practices such as training and awards positively influence employee performance (Truss et al., 2013)

However, mechanisms where human resource management practice still needs a lot of attention (Muduli, Verma, and Datta 2016). Therefore several recent types of research emphasize the role of training and awards in improving employee performance (Memon, Salleh, and Baharom 2016).

According to (Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova 2006), work attachment is a state of mind related to full time working hours and a positive mind marked with eagerness, dedication and absorbent. High attachment to work tends to show a high performance in one employee (Shuck and Reio Jr 2014); an employee who has an attachment to his work will perform a positive attitude, and that benefits the company.

This research aims to fill the void in previous literature (Muduli, Verma and Datta 2016) by examining mediation effects between work attachment, training & prizes and employee performance. Social exchange theory is a guideline to explain that an employee who receives financial and socio-emotional resources from one organization tends to pay back in the form of commitment and better performance (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005).

With social exchange theory as a theoretical framework, this research will examine whether work attachment could mediate the relationship between training & prizes and employee performance.

## **2. Theoretical Framework, Hypothesis and Research Model**

### **2.1 Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory is a conceptual perspective that influences how we perceive certain attitudes in the working area (Settlon, Bennett, Liden 1996). It also involves a series of interactions that lead to attachment (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). The relation of social exchange appears when a good relationship between the organization and the employee exists, followed by beneficial consequences that result in the effective and positive performance of the employee (Blau 1968).

Work attachment and positive performance are good feedback to the organization (Saks 2006). An employee who gives his ability, emotion and effort to work enthusiastically and contribute to the company. When they are given proper training and award, they will participate through the level of work attachment. Training and award are hoped to improve the quality of social exchange quality (Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith 2013). The appearance of proper management for the employee will create a working environment where the employee and the company will have a high quality relationship

### **2.2 Training and Working Attachment**

Training is an important aspect in public sector organizations where it will give opportunity and support to the employee and finally will influence the work attitude to reach the objective.

Employees are joining technical and administrative training according to the operational procedure.

Training that will improve knowledge, skill and motivation has the aim to improve performance if done in an organized way; it will strengthen the company (Hanaysha 2016).

The impact of holding the training will create a working attachment, as mentioned in the social exchange theory, that organizations who invest in human resources will always get good feedback from that. Therefore following hypotheses below are proposed:

**H1: Training positively affects work attachment.**

### **2.3 Training and Employee Performance**

Training is a series of processes focusing on obtaining knowledge, improving skills and employee's performance (Sabir et al., 2014); therefore, organizations should provide an effective training program. Training is an important element in performance

management that will result in imaginative, productive and competitive employees to improve performance (Falola, Osibanjo, and Ojo 2014).

Previous research has revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between training and employee performance (Aiello et al., 2011). The employee who receives adequate training will be able to grow positive work productivity which certainly has a positive impact on the organization. It is in line with social exchange theory which reveals that reciprocity is an interdependent exchange, where organizations that have provided training to employees expect improved performance. Then the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**H<sub>2</sub>: Training has a positive effect on employee performance**

**2.4 Employment rewards and attachments**

A reward is defined as the benefits that an organization offers to employees as a form of reward for job performance (Karatepe 2013). Rewards can be intrinsic or extrinsic, direct or indirect, and financial or non-financial (Armstrong and Brown 2006), so organizations must implement effective and efficient rewards as needed. Social exchange theory reveals the social relations that develop between the employee and the organization in which he works give rise to mutual dependence, where when the organization provides appropriate rewards to the employee will give rise to his attachment to the organization. Then the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**H<sub>3</sub>: Rewards have a positive effect on work attachment**

**2.5 Employee Rewards and Performance**

Rewards are benefits offered to employees in exchange for employment, such as career advancement or promotion. That is necessary to understand that the reward system will essentially affect the performance and level of attachment of individuals in the workplace. An organization's reward system should be designed to motivate employees in terms of higher performance, productivity, and engagement. Research (Hoole and Hotz 2016) revealed that valued employees tend to improve their performance. To improve employee performance, organizations can use rewards by considering the existence of assessments or promotions for employees who have a high-performance record. Then the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**H<sub>4</sub>: Rewards have a positive effect on Employee Performance**

**2.6 Work Attachment and Employee Performance**

Work attachment creates an assumption that the workers involved dedicate resources both physically and mentally to job tasks so that the employees involved show positive attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. Work attachment is the level at which employees can absorb and pay attention to their job performance, and they tend to prioritize job tasks. It is consistent with social exchange theory, where employees who have a work attachment to the organization will show positive behaviour (Saks 2006); it showed that employee attachment has a strong influence on their performance, such as how they handle their work. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H<sub>5</sub>: Work attachment has a positive effect on Employee Performance**

**2.7 The Role of Work Attachment Mediation**

Social exchange theory describes work attachment as a mediator of the effects of training and reward on employee performance. Employees who receive appropriate training and rewards will show higher work attachment (Karatepe 2013), so there is a more qualified relationship between employees and the organization. The research revealed that work attachment mediates the relationship between training and reward and employee performance. Employee work attachment is at a high level when the organization provides a fair compensation system to its employees (Karatepe 2013) so that employees feel that their careers align with the organizational culture and job requirements; employees will improve their performance in exchange for the awards given by the organization (Karatepe 2013). Thus, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**H<sub>6a</sub>: Work attachment mediates the relationship between training and Employee Performance**

**H<sub>6b</sub>: Work attachment mediates the relationship between Reward and Employee Performance**

**3. Research Methods**

**3.1 Research samples and procedures**

BPS is a non-ministerial government agency tasked with carrying out activities in the statistical field according to the law ([www.bps.go.id](http://www.bps.go.id)). The bureaucratic reform program carried out by BPS has areas of change, one of which is human resource

management. The data in this study were obtained from the BPS State Civil Apparatus, with a total of 213 employees. Data collection was carried out by distributing online questionnaires using the Google Form tools via the media of WhatsApp and Email. The questionnaire contains profiles of respondents at the beginning, then question items from training, rewards, work engagement and employee performance variables. Initially, the questionnaire was tested on 43 BPS employees; input from respondents in this pre-test is expected to help develop respondents' understanding of the question items in the questionnaire.

The number of respondents in this study was 213 BPS employees; the characteristics of the respondents can be seen in the table below

Table . 1  
demographic statistics (N=213)

category	Items	frequency	percentage (%)
gender	male	109	50,90
	female	104	49,10
education	undergraduate	35	16,30
	graduate	143	67,30
	postgraduate	35	16,40
age	< 26 years	16	7,50
	26-35 years	63	29,90
	36-45 years	82	38,30
	> 45 years	52	24,30

**3.2 Measurement Instruments**

Variables are measured using several indicators. Training is measured by 5 items adapted from (Schmidt 2007), and 11 items to measure reward was adapted from (Siegrist et al. 2004). Job engagement question items 17 items from (Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova 2006) and employee performance with 9 items from (Griffin, Neal, and Parker 2007). Responses to the training question items, rewards, work engagement and employee performance were assessed on a 5-point scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The question items in the questionnaire were taken from the English language and then translated into Indonesian language using the back translation method (Parameswaran and Yaprak 1987).

**4. Results by Analysis**

This research uses PLS-SEM with SmartPLS3 software, where the software is designed to examine the relationship between variables in a model, whether it is the relationship between indicators and constructs or the relationship between constructs (Joe F. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2011). This analysis uses 2 types of models, namely the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model).

The measurement model is determined based on the relationship between variables with each indicator using validity and reliability. Convergent validity measures the validity of the indicator as a measure of the variable that can be seen from the outer loading value. An indicator is said to have good validity if the outer loading value for each indicator is > 0.70, so if there is an indicator with a loading value below 0.70, it is excluded from the model. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to measure the fulfillment of the discriminant validity requirements. The minimum value requiring that reliability has been achieved is 0,50. Several indicators were excluded from the model because they did not meet the validity requirements, where 3 items from training, 3 items from awards, 3 items from work engagement, and 2 items from employee performance were excluded from the model for the next analysis stage.

Table 2.  
confirmatory factor analysis

indicator	loading factor	AVE	CR	Cronbach's $\alpha$
training		0.713	0.882	0.799
train3	0.809			
train4	0.883			
train5	0.841			
rewards		0.585	0.918	0.898
rewards1	0.756			
rewards 2	0.734			
rewards 4	0.815			
rewards 6	0.843			
rewards 7	0.721			
rewards 8	0.724			
rewards 9	0.737			
rewards 11	0.779			
Work engagement		0.609	0.956	0.950
WE1	0.845			
WE2	0,778			
WE3	0,821			
WE4	0,708			
WE5	0,753			
WE7	0.717			
WE8	0.792			
WE9	0.800			
WE11	0.782			
WE13	0.763			
WE14	0.859			
WE15	0.801			
WE16	0.774			
WE17	0.718			
Employee performance		0.617	0.919	0.896
EP1	0.753			
EP4	0.720			
EP5	0.830			
EP6	0.801			
EP7	0.781			
EP8	0.829			
EP9	0.781			

Discriminant validity was measured using the criteria presented by Fornell-Larcker, where the root of the AVE variable is greater than the correlation between variables.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

variabel	training	WE	EP	rewards
training	0,845			
WE	0,560	0,781		
EP	0,517	0,778	0,786	
rewards	0,515	0,757	0,758	0,765

Hair et al. (2019) recommend Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) because this measure is considered more accurate in detecting discriminant validity with a value below 0,9. The test results in Table 4 show that the HTMT value is below 0,9, so discriminant validity is achieved.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	training	WE	EP	rewards
training				
WE	0,642			
EP	0,609	0,848		
rewards	0,605	0,837	0,844	

Discriminant validity can also be known through cross-loading if the loading value of each item on the construct is greater than the cross-loading value.

Table 5. Cross-loading

	WE	EP	training	rewards
WE1	<b>0,845</b>	0,625	0,556	0,657
WE11	<b>0,782</b>	0,623	0,458	0,586
WE13	<b>0,763</b>	0,654	0,389	0,679
WE14	<b>0,859</b>	0,659	0,403	0,645
WE15	<b>0,801</b>	0,593	0,419	0,528
WE16	<b>0,774</b>	0,661	0,425	0,655
WE17	<b>0,718</b>	0,567	0,387	0,551
WE2	<b>0,778</b>	0,528	0,481	0,579
WE3	<b>0,821</b>	0,621	0,454	0,659
WE4	<b>0,708</b>	0,625	0,347	0,610
WE5	<b>0,753</b>	0,653	0,432	0,627
WE7	<b>0,717</b>	0,540	0,444	0,489
WE8	<b>0,792</b>	0,594	0,468	0,588
WE9	<b>0,800</b>	0,608	0,450	0,593
EP1	0,649	<b>0,753</b>	0,494	0,612
EP4	0,564	<b>0,720</b>	0,375	0,548
EP5	0,614	<b>0,830</b>	0,434	0,610
EP6	0,612	<b>0,801</b>	0,337	0,549
EP7	0,591	<b>0,781</b>	0,376	0,563
EP8	0,655	<b>0,829</b>	0,404	0,641
EP9	0,625	<b>0,781</b>	0,414	0,636
train3	0,427	0,411	<b>0,809</b>	0,343
train4	0,498	0,452	<b>0,883</b>	0,491
train5	0,490	0,446	<b>0,841</b>	0,463

rewards1	0,614	0,559	0,508	<b>0,756</b>
rewards11	0,536	0,611	0,223	<b>0,779</b>
rewards2	0,557	0,584	0,475	<b>0,734</b>
rewards4	0,578	0,586	0,408	<b>0,815</b>
rewards6	0,607	0,606	0,246	<b>0,843</b>
rewards7	0,631	0,531	0,474	<b>0,721</b>
rewards8	0,631	0,581	0,404	<b>0,724</b>
rewards9	0,589	0,578	0,415	<b>0,737</b>

For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha can be used. This value reflects the reliability of all indicators in the model. In Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values are in accordance with the requirements, with Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability each being more than 0.7, so it is concluded that reliability is fulfilled.

The structural model is used to test the causal relationship between variables, which has been built based on the theory. To explain the multicollinearity of VIF, each predictor is lower than 5 (Joseph F Hair et al. 2019). In this study, a VIF value below 5 means that no collinearity problems are found. R-square is used to test the structural model. Criteria for R-square value < 0,3 (weak), 0,3 < R-square < 0,6 (moderate), R-square > 0,6 (high) (Sanchez, 2013). The R-square value indicates that the training, reward and work engagement variables are able to explain the construct variability of employee performance by 67,7%, and the remaining 32,3% is explained by other constructs outside this research model.

**4.1 Hypothesis Test**

Hypothesis testing is carried out based on the results of testing the Inner model (structural model) to see whether the hypothesis can be accepted or rejected by taking into account the significant values between constructs, t-statistics and p-values. Testing the research hypothesis using *smartpls 3.0* software with the bootstrapping method with 1000 subsamples. The criteria used in this study were t-statistics > 1.96 with a significance level of p-values < 0.05.

Table 6. Path coefocien

Hipotesis	t-statistik	Interval Confidency 95%		P Values	remarks
		2,50%	97,50%		
H1 : training -> WE	2,566	0,035	0,348	0,011	significant
H2 : training -> EP	1,153	-0,050	0,187	0,249	no
H3 : reward -> WE	11,706	0,568	0,787	0,000	significant
H4 : rewards -> EP	3,143	0,135	0,550	0,002	significant
H5 : WE -> EP	3,432	0,242	0,714	0,001	significant

Table 6 provides information that, based on this study, the H<sub>1</sub> hypothesis is supported (p-value <0.05), which means that training directly has a significant effect on employee performance. The H<sub>2</sub> hypothesis is not supported (p-value <0.05), where training does not directly affect work engagement. The H<sub>3</sub> hypothesis is supported (p-value <0.05), meaning that rewards have a significant direct effect on work engagement. The H<sub>4</sub> hypothesis is supported (p-value <0.05), which means that rewards have a significant effect on work engagement. The H<sub>5</sub> hypothesis is supported (p-value <0.05), meaning that work engagement directly has a significant effect on employee performance.

Table 7. indirect effect

Hipotesis	t-statistik	P-Values	remarks
H6a : Training -> WE -> EP	2,098	0,036	significant
H6b : rewards -> WE -> EP	2,923	0,004	significant

The indirect effect of training and rewards on employee performance was also observed. The output of smartPLS has provided an analysis of the expected results when researchers use the indirect effect as part of the hypothesis. As seen in the table above, the results of smartPLS bootstrapping on the specific indirect effect show that training indirectly affects employee performance,

whereas the H6a hypothesis is supported (p-value <0.05), which means that work engagement mediates the relationship between training and employee performance. The H6b hypothesis is supported (p-value <0.05), which means that work engagement mediates the relationship between rewards and employee performance.

In addition, to determine the indirect effect of the relationship between rewards and employee performance through the sobel test. The Sobel test is carried out by testing the strength of the indirect effect between rewards on employee performance. In this study, the sobel test was calculated using the sobel calculator (Preacher and Leonardelli 2001), and the sobel test values were obtained as in the following table.

	test statistik	std. error	p-values
sobel test	2.412	0.069	0.015

The p-value is 0.015 <0.05, and the t-statistic is 2.412 > 1.96, which means that work engagement mediates the relationship between rewards and employee performance.

### **5. Discussion**

This study proposes and tests a model that investigates work engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between training and rewards and employee performance. The social exchange theory states that employees will be more committed to showing committed behavior in carrying out tasks when the organization provides benefits for them. This research also provides literature that organizations must improve employee performance by providing job training because this can help increase employee knowledge and skills. When employees have sufficient skills, they can improve their performance. The results of this study are from the perspective of strategic human resources, where the combination of performance management practices used by organizations has a major role in encouraging employees to perform tasks with better performance (Cooke and Kim 2018). Therefore, employees must have an attachment to work so that they remain competitive. Training programs focus on increasing knowledge and skills related to employee duties and can create interactions in the workplace so that employees feel obliged to respond through work engagement.

This study provides information that training directly does not have a significant effect on employee performance. This is because some employees do not receive training following their duties and responsibilities; when the organization increases the volume of training for employees according to their needs, they will improve performance which will provide benefits to the organization.

This study provides information that the training program provided by the BPS organization has not been running effectively. Technical field training at BPS is carried out to harmonize the concepts and definitions of the implementation of census or survey activities. The large number of officers required in carrying out the survey meant that the training participants had to involve cross-sectional employees to meet the required quota of officers so that not all employees who took part in the training were competent or according to their main duties and job functions. Training materials tend to be in the form of refreshments because most of the surveys conducted by BPS are routine surveys, whether annual, semiannual, quarterly, or monthly.

The study proved that there was a positive relationship between appreciation with work engagement, in line with the study conducted by wall and wood 2005. The workplace reward mechanism signalled strongly to employees that their efforts were valued and recognized by the organization. Observing from the management of human resources point of view, appreciation was able to provide motivation for the employees to show their positive work behaviour (hublanke 1995). The organization needed to know what the employees actually expected from their work. Applying a proper appreciation system to employees, made the employees more motivated in their performance which increased their work engagement. It emphasized that motivation had increased the employees' contribute to the organization. Therefore, it is important for the organization to find a strategy in order to have a competitive advantage.

To achieve the bureaucratic reform goals at the Central Bureau of Statistics, the organization should implement mutually synergized awards in order to gain fair organizational policy feedback in making decisions on improving employee performance. The awards were given in the form of appreciation to employees who have the best performance, such as giving performance allowances according to employee performance and promoting the employees who perform well.



It was hoped that the awards would motivate employees to carry out the Central Bureau of Statistics' core values (professional, integrity and trustworthiness), which were necessary to improve employee performance; thereby, it provided better governance changes that lead to the best public service delivery.

This study provided information that work engagement acted as a full mediator between training and rewards due to employee performance; this is in line with the research conducted by (Karatepe 2013). The reward system played an important role in encouraging employee engagement; it supported the research conducted by (Bakker and Demerouti 2018), which stated that a positive relationship between work resources and work engagement was the rewards provided by the organization to motivate the employees. The results of this study were in line with (Yalabik et al., n.d.), which revealed that the relationship between training and rewards due to employee performance depended on the driving forces that applied in the workplace (e.g. the training and reward systems implemented by the organization).

### 5.1 The managerial implications

This study provided an overview of performance management in public sector organizations. Work engagement is a long-term and sustainable process; therefore, organizations need to understand the important role of work engagement and employee performance (Saks 2006). Organizations should provide training and rewards to make the employees feel that they are obligated to respond to the organization by increasing their engagement and performance. Organizations should ensure that they have an ongoing training program in place to improve employee skills. An appropriate reward system also needs to be a concern by the organization to increase work engagement. It is recommended that the organization should conduct regular training in order to improve the employees' skills and competency to achieve higher performance.

### 5.2 Research Limitations

Employee performance was used as a performance result in the research. On the other hand, there was another important performance behaviour, such as innovative work behaviours referring to the employees' new ideas in performing work and related tasks. Future research could incorporate innovative work behaviour into research models. Thus, it could give a better draft of the job mediation role in relationships between training and appreciation of employee performance. In data collection, the researchers faced a challenge because of the respondent's lack of response. In dealing with the problem, the institution leaders' support was needed in collecting the data, such as a research recommendation letter to gain better response from the respondents.

## 6. Conclusion

The study proposed and tested research models of job attachment as a mediator between training and reward due to employee performance. Training and appreciation create a closer work engagement between employees and organizations, which will eventually improve employee performance. Job engagement was entirely mediated by the relationship between training and reward due to employee performance. In this case, organizations should invest in training and reward systems to get employees involved in the organization and thus perform high-quality performance. Researchers suggested that organizations should create a better program of incentives where organizations were able to manage each employee to become more responsible for their duties. It is hoped that this study will provide input for other researchers to focus on the role of mediation in the relationship between training and reward due to employee performance and broader subjects of research.

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