

The role of employee competence in shaping public satisfaction: Examining service quality as a mediating factor

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Abstract: In immigration services, it is essential to provide good service to the public, in line with the principles of public service. However, in reality, many people still feel that they have not received optimal public service. This study addresses the issue of whether there is a direct and indirect influence of employee competence on citizen satisfaction, with the indirect influence using service quality as a mediating variable. This research employs a quantitative associative method with a population of applicants at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office over one month, totaling 6236 individuals. A sample of 259 people was obtained using the Isaac and Michael table. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to the applicants. The results were then analyzed using descriptive analysis, hypothesis testing with SPSS version 26, path analysis, and finally, the Sobel test. The results of the study indicate that employee competence directly affects service quality with a t -value (18.119) exceeding the t -table (1.969), but does not directly affect citizen satisfaction with a t -value (0.831) less than the t -table (1.969). Meanwhile, service quality directly affects citizen satisfaction with a t -value (10.156) greater than the t -table (1.969). Path analysis and the Sobel test also show that employee competence indirectly affects citizen satisfaction through service quality, with a Sobel test t -value of (8.87) greater than the t -table (1.969). Based on these results, it is concluded that there is no direct influence of employee competence on citizen satisfaction, but there is an indirect influence of employee competence on citizen satisfaction through service quality.

Keywords: public service; employee competence; service quality; citizen satisfaction

1. Introduction

An organization is a group of individuals with a common purpose who come together to achieve predetermined objectives. One of the key activities within an organization is providing services. In this context, public service delivery is a responsibility primarily carried out by government organizations. Public service organizations have a central goal: to deliver public services that ensure the satisfaction of citizens who utilize their goods or services (Purnomo et al., 2024). Public service refers to a series of activities within a bureaucratic system, conducted by the government to meet and serve the needs of the community (Inzaghi and Rosy, 2022).

It is essential for the government to provide high-quality public services in accordance with the definition of public service established in Law Number 25 of 2009, Article 1, which explains that public service is an important responsibility of the government in meeting the needs of the community. Article 1 states: "Public service is an activity or series of activities aimed at fulfilling the needs for services in accordance with the legislation for every citizen and resident regarding goods, services,

and/or administrative services provided by public service providers (Parulian and Syafri, 2023).”

This is in accordance with Law No. 6 of 2011 concerning immigration, which outlines four functions of immigration: providing immigration services, law enforcement, national security, and facilitating community welfare development. Public service is related to the first function of immigration, which is immigration services that fall within the category of public services (Mulyawan and Santy, 2024). The provision of public services requires human resources, as the absence of qualified personnel would hinder the effective and proper delivery of services. To provide high-quality public services, it is essential to have human resources, or employees, who possess the competence necessary to satisfy service recipients (Jakobsen et al., 2023).

Human resources capable of delivering quality services to the community are expected to have high standards or abilities, which can be assessed based on the competencies of individual employees (Elizah and Wahyono, 2019). Essentially, competence acts as a fundamental attribute of an employee and indirectly influences or predicts high performance. Through good competencies, high-quality service is produced, which in turn leads to satisfactory service for the community, thereby enhancing public satisfaction (Bawono et al., 2024).

Public satisfaction with the quality of public services heavily depends on the extent to which government agencies can meet the needs and desires of the community. In this context, it is crucial to ensure that employee competencies align with high standards of service quality (Aji, Purnomo, et al., 2024). This alignment aims to ensure that the community feels satisfied with the services they receive. Therefore, the quality of public service significantly influences public satisfaction (Ahmad, 2019).

The Surakarta Class I Immigration Office faces challenges in delivering quality services to the community, primarily due to the need for competent immigration staff in their respective fields. The numerous complaints received, particularly through the Instagram account of the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office, serve as an important note for the office. In addition to Instagram, complaints are also submitted via Google Reviews (Nurkumalawati et al., 2024).

Based on **Table 1**, another issue encountered is the lack of attention to detail and precision among staff when inputting data. In the immigration traffic section (lantaskim), errors in data input often occur by interview and biometric staff, which are later corrected by the adjudicator before the passport is printed. This situation arises from the employees' lack of meticulousness in entering data, resulting in ineffective service delivery (Ryanindityo et al., 2024). The inattention of staff at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office may be attributed to the large volume of data that needs to be inputted due to the high number of applicants each day. The number of passport applicants can be observed in the monthly report data for March 2024.

Table 1. Public complaints.

No.	Source of Complaint	Complaint	Account
1.	Google Review	I apologize, the customer service staff is very unfriendly and even seems somewhat rude. It would be great if they could be like private institutions that serve customers warmly and kindly. It's quite unfortunate, as I was asking politely to seek information and needed an explanation. I hope there will be improvements. Thank you.	Himaa Aliya
2.	Google Review	For services for the elderly, it is better to follow the online queue rather than the special queue, as the wait is much longer. The staff is also less friendly; when asked why the elderly have to wait so long, the response was simply, "If you haven't been called yet, don't enter." However, the online queue is called much faster.	Eka fitriyanti
3.	Instagram	Hello, I have DM'd but haven't received a response yet. I want to ask what the requirements are for passport collection.	@abaymlanch
4.	Instagram	I want to ask why the staff seem unfriendly and grumpy. They are actually good-looking, but their expressions are irritating; they don't smile at all.	@pibi_pi

Table 2. Passport applicant data March 2024.

No.	Type of Passport Application	Number of Applications
1.	Electronic Passport (48 Pages)	4338
2.	Regular Passport (48 Pages)	1191
3.	Passport (24 Pages)	573
Total		6102

In addition to passport application data, there is also data regarding residence permit applications for foreign nationals (WNA) are shown in **Tables 2** and **3**.

Table 3. Stay permit applicant data March 2024.

No.	Type of Residence Permit Application	Number of Applications
1.	Visit Permit	29
2.	Limited Stay Permit	100
3.	Permanent Stay Permit	5
Total		134

Based on the data presented in the table above, it can be observed that the number of passport service applications at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office in March was 6102 applicants, while the number of residence permit applications at the same office during March was 134 applicants. Thus, the total number of applicants at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office for March amounts to 6236 applicants, which means that the average number of applicants per day is approximately 201. The high volume of daily applicants is not proportionate to the number of service ambassadors available at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office. There is only one service ambassador assigned to provide assistance to around 201 applicants each day, which results in a high workload and diminishes the competence and effectiveness that should be delivered to the community.

The scope of the study is limited to the variables Employee Competence, Service Quality, and Public Satisfaction. Due to limited time and costs, this study was only carried out at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office, which is one of

the immigration offices with the highest service volume on the island of Java. The data obtained from respondents involved in this study is perceptual in nature and cannot be separated from the subjectivity of each respondent, this is because this study uses a questionnaire method. The truth level in this study depends on the honesty of the respondents who answered the questions in the probe.

2. Research formulation

Based on the background presented, the following four problem formulations are established:

- 1) Is there an influence of employee competence on service quality at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office?
- 2) Is there an influence of employee competence on public satisfaction at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office?
- 3) Is there an influence of service quality on public satisfaction at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office?
- 4) Is there an indirect influence of employee competence on public satisfaction through service quality at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office?

This research has similar characteristics to the study conducted by Rosmika and Nurhaida (2017) which has the same independent, dependent, and mediating variables: the independent variable being employee competence, the dependent variable being public satisfaction, and the mediating variable being service quality, titled "Employee Competence and Culture Set to Customer Satisfaction with Service Quality as Intervening Variable of PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk Medan." The results of the research conducted by Rosmika and Nurhaida (2017) are: 1) Employee competence positively and significantly affects service quality. 2) Service quality positively affects customer satisfaction. 3) Employee competence positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction. 4) Competence acts indirectly as an intervening variable to customer satisfaction.

Based on previous research findings, this study proposes four hypotheses to examine the influence among variables at the Surakarta Class I Checkpoint Immigration Office:

H1: There is a positive and significant influence of employee competence on service quality

H2: There is a positive and significant influence of employee competence on public satisfaction

H3: There is a positive and significant influence of service quality on public satisfaction

H4: There is a positive and significant influence of employee competence on public satisfaction through service quality

From **Figure 1**, it can be seen that the research framework consists of 3 variables, namely Employee Competence (x), Service Quality (z), and Public Satisfaction (y). This framework assumes that employee competence has an impact on public satisfaction. Service quality is used as a mediator in the relationship between employee competence and public satisfaction.

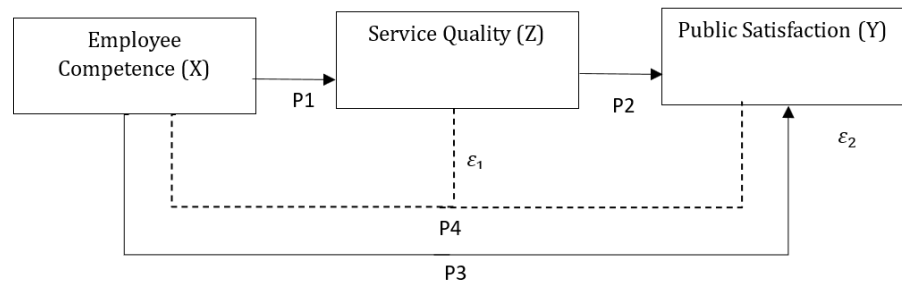


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Literature review

3.1. Employee competence

Competence refers to the skills or knowledge characterized by expertise in a specific sector, regarded as the most essential aspect and a hallmark of that field (Wibowo, 2014).

According to Rosmika and Nurhaida (2017), it is stated that “One of the main factors influencing an individual’s ability to work well both individually and in groups is competence. A crucial factor in determining an organization’s success is competence. Work performance resulting from performance or service quality, as well as effectiveness and efficiency, will happen based on the abilities that will deliver such outcomes (Rizki et al., 2025).” Based on the definition of employee competence provided above, it is clear that employee competence refers to an employee’s ability to deliver good and professional services to the public. Therefore, the organization’s goal namely, providing quality public services can be achieved.

According to Spencer dan Spencer as cited in Wibowo (2014) There are five attributes of competence: motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills. These five attributes, as proposed by Spencer dan Spencer as cited in Wibowo (2014), will be used as dimensions in this study.

3.2. Service quality

To have a positive impact on public satisfaction, a government institution must be able to provide high-quality services by taking critical factors into account. Meeting the desires and needs of the public is at the core of the public services delivered by civil servants (Elizah and Wahyono, 2019). According to Kotler as cited in Majid et al. (2021) The higher the quality level, the greater the satisfaction felt by consumers; when consumers are satisfied, they are more likely to recommend the service or product to others.

Service quality can thus be defined as the degree of public satisfaction with the quality of services provided by a company or institution. When the services meet or even exceed public expectations, the company or institution is considered to have good service quality (Singh and Slack, 2022). This is crucial for maintaining public satisfaction and fulfilling the community’s long-term needs. Zeithaml (1985) identified five dimensions of service quality: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, and Assurance (Mantatu et al., 2020). These dimensions were later

expanded into seven core dimensions of service quality, according to in Zeithaml as cited in Hardiyansyah (2018): Responsiveness, Courtesy, Credibility, Security, Access, Communication, and Understanding the Customers. These seven dimensions will be used as the service quality dimensions in this study.

3.3. Public satisfaction

According to Kottler as cited in Robbani (2021), satisfaction is a person's experience of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's performance (or outcome) with what was expected. Similarly, Hansemark and Albinsson defines satisfaction as an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of some need, goal, or desire (Xie et al., 2022). The concepts of public satisfaction and customer satisfaction carry identical meanings. Government services are provided to both customers and the general public, with both groups receiving the same services.

Based on the Minister of Administrative Reform and Bureaucratic Reform Decree No. KEP/25/M.PAN/2004, public satisfaction is defined as the public's evaluation and opinion regarding the performance of public service providers. Thus, public satisfaction refers to the level of assessment and expectations held by the community concerning the quality of services provided by a public institution or organization. In this study, the dimensions used follow the seven attributes outlined in the Minister of Administrative Reform and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation No. 14 of 2017, which serves as a guide for developing public satisfaction assessment factors. The seven dimensions are as follows: System, mechanism, and procedure; Completion time, Cost, Service type, Competence of personnel, Complaint handling and Facilities & infrastructure (Aji, Riyadi, et al., 2024).

3.4. Research method

This study employs an associative quantitative method, which involves testing theories related to the variables under investigation and analyzing them using statistical techniques (Syahrin et al., 2024). The path analysis method, also known as route analysis, which is a development methodology from linear regression double, was then used by the researcher. Researchers can determine the route coefficient's magnitude contribution between variables X and Y as well as its effect on Z by employing this method.

The population in this study was 6236 people are calculated from the number of applicants from passport and residence permit services at the Surakarta Class I Immigration Office per month. Based on Isaac and Michael's table (Jemai et al., 2022) with a Margin of Error of 10%, the results obtained showed that the total sample required was 6236 populations people is 259 people.

The data was obtained by distributing questionnaires to applicants at the Class I Immigration Office TPI Surakarta, with a sample size of 259 respondents. The sample was determined using Isaac and Michael's table with a 10% margin of error (Sugiyono 2019). In this study, the researcher utilized a questionnaire as the data collection tool. A Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used to assess respondents' responses to the

questions in the questionnaire. Google Forms was employed as a supporting medium to facilitate data collection from the respondents.

4. Result and discussion

4.1. Result

Validity testing is a procedure used to assess whether a questionnaire or research indicator possesses adequate validity (Ghozali, 2018). A questionnaire is considered valid if the calculated correlation value (r) is greater than the critical value of r from the table. In this study, a significance level of 5% was set for the critical r value, as the 5% significance level is commonly used in research involving social and humanities variables. To calculate the critical r value at a 5% significance level, the formula for degrees of freedom (df), which is the number of respondents minus 2, is applied, resulting in $259 - 2 = 257$. Using the product moment distribution table, the critical r value was determined to be 0.113.

Based on **Table 4** that all variables, such as employee competence (X), service quality (Z), and public satisfaction (Y), have calculated r -values greater than the critical r -value set at 0.113. In other words, all statements or items in this study are considered valid. The Reliability Test is used to ensure that the questionnaire in the study produces consistent results when remeasured (Ghozali, 2018). A questionnaire is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value exceeds 0.60, and the reliability test results for each variable are presented in the table:

Table 4. Validity test results.

Variable	Item	r value	r table	Sig.	Description
Employee Competence (X)	1	0.526	0.113	0.000	Valid
	2	0.739	0.113	0.000	Valid
	3	0.534	0.113	0.000	Valid
	4	0.645	0.113	0.000	Valid
	5	0.718	0.113	0.000	Valid
Service Quality (Z)	1	0.610	0.113	0.000	Valid
	2	0.543	0.113	0.000	Valid
	3	0.461	0.113	0.000	Valid
	4	0.818	0.113	0.000	Valid
	5	0.797	0.113	0.000	Valid
	6	0.830	0.113	0.000	Valid
	7	0.553	0.113	0.000	Valid
Public Satisfaction (Y)	1	0.641	0.113	0.000	Valid
	2	0.444	0.113	0.000	Valid
	3	0.390	0.113	0.000	Valid
	4	0.774	0.113	0.000	Valid
	5	0.794	0.113	0.000	Valid
	6	0.819	0.113	0.000	Valid
	7	0.484	0.113	0.000	Valid

According to **Table 5**, it was found that all three variables studied had Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.60, indicating that all three variables have proven reliability. Hypothesis Test for Sub-Structure I examines the effect of employee competence on service quality.

Table 5. Reliability test results.

No	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Nilai Alpha	Description
1	Employee Competence (X)	0.628	0.60	Reliabel
2	Service Quality (Z)	0.766	0.60	Reliabel
3	Public Satisfaction (Y)	0.704	0.60	Reliabel

Based on **Table 6**, it can be concluded that the employee competence variable (X) has a significant influence on the service quality variable (Z). In other words, changes in employee competence significantly affect the level of service quality. Therefore, hypothesis 1, which likely posits a relationship between employee competence and service quality, can be accepted.

Table 6. Coefficients^a.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	12.394	0.960		12.915	0.000
1 EMPLOYEE COMPETENCE	0.827	0.046	0.749	18.119	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: SERVICE QUALITY.

According to **Table 7**, the R Square (R^2) value is 0.561 or equivalent with 56.1%. This gives an idea of how big the contribution is from the employee competence variable (X) to service quality (Z). In this context, the R^2 value of 56.1% indicates that the variable Employee competency (X) is able to explain around 56.1% of the variation contained in the service quality variable (Z). However, it is worth noting that the remaining 43.9% cannot be explained by variables employee competency (X) which has been examined in this research the Hypothesis Test for Sub-Structure II examines the influence of employee competence and service quality on public satisfaction.

Table 7. Model summary^b.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.749 ^a	0.561	0.559	1.808

a. Predictors: (Constant), EMPLOYEE COMPETENCE; b. Dependent Variable: SERVICE QUALITY.

Based on **Table 8**, it can be concluded that the employee competence variable (X) does not influence the public satisfaction variable (Y). In other words, changes in employee competence do not affect public satisfaction. Therefore, hypothesis 2, which likely posits a relationship between employee competence and public satisfaction, is rejected. Meanwhile, the service quality variable (Z) has a significant influence on public satisfaction (Y). In other words, changes in service quality can affect the level

of public satisfaction. Therefore, hypothesis 3, which likely posits a relationship between service quality and public satisfaction, is accepted.

Table 8. Coefficients^a.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	10.646	1.212		8.782	0.000
1 EMPLOYEE COMPETENCE	0.056	0.068	0.055	0.831	0.407
SERVICE QUALITY	0.623	0.061	0.671	10.156	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: PUBLIC SATISFACTION.

Based on **Table 9**, it can be seen in the table that the *R* Square (R^2) value is 0.509 or equivalent with 50.9%. This gives an idea of how big the contribution is from the variables of employee competency (X) and service quality (Z) to community satisfaction (Y). In this context, the R^2 value is 50.9% indicates that the employee competency variable (X) and variable Service quality (Z) is able to explain around 50.9% of the variation contained in the community satisfaction variable (Y). However, it is worth noting that the remaining 49.1% cannot be explained by variables employee competency (X) and service quality (Z) which have been researched.

Table 9. Model summary^b.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.713 ^a	0.509	0.505	1.779

a. Predictors: (Constant), SERVICE QUALITY, EMPLOYEE COMPETENCE; b. Dependent Variable: PUBLIC SATISFACTION.

Based on the recapitulation of sub-structure 1 and sub-structure 2 (**Table 10**), the path diagram is depicted as follows:

Table 10. Path analysis.

Model	Path Coefficient	T-Test	T-Table	Probability	R ²	Explanation
Sub-structure 1						
<i>p_{zx}</i>	0.749	18.119	1.969	0.000	0.561	Sig.
Sub-structure 2						
<i>p_{yx}</i>	0.055	0.831	1.969	0.407	0.509	Not Sig.
<i>p_{yz}</i>	0.671	10.156	1.969	0.000		Sig.

From **Figure 2** it can be described as follows:

- Direct effect:
 - a. The influence of the employee competence variable on service quality is 0.749;
 - b. The influence of the employee competence variable on public satisfaction is 0.055;
 - c. The influence of the service quality variable on public satisfaction is 0.671.

- Indirect effect:

The indirect influence of employee competence on public satisfaction is calculated by multiplying the influence of employee competence on service quality by the influence of service quality on public satisfaction (0.749×0.671) = 0.503. Therefore, it can be said that the influence of employee competence on public satisfaction, through service quality, is 0.503. This result is greater than the direct influence of employee competence variable (X) on community satisfaction (Y) which only has an influence of 0.055. So it can be said that the service quality variable (Z) can mediate between employee competency (X) and community satisfaction (Y).

- Sobel test:

Based on the results of the Sobel test calculation, a *t*-value of 8.87 was obtained, which is greater than the critical *t*-value of 1.969. Therefore, it can be concluded that the mediation effect of the service quality variable (Z) in mediating the relationship between employee competence and public satisfaction (Y) is significant.

Based on the results of the indirect effect and the Sobel test, it can be concluded that hypothesis 4 is accepted. This is because it has been demonstrated that service quality can mediate the relationship between employee competence and public satisfaction.

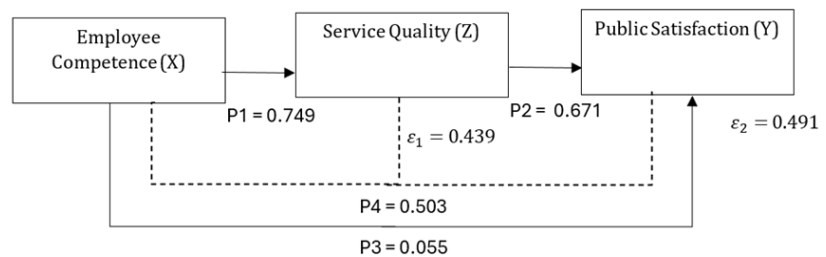


Figure 2. Path analysis of sub-structure 1 and sub-structure 2.

4.2. Discussion

The Influence of Employee Competence on Service Quality

The results of hypothesis testing in this study, as shown in the sub-structural hypothesis testing I, indicate a significant influence of employee competence (X) on service quality (Z). This is evident from the descriptive analysis of responses from 259 respondents, who on average gave a score of 4, indicating agreement. The statistical analysis also confirmed this finding, with a *t*-value (18.119) exceeding the critical *t*-value (1.969) and a significance level ($0.000 < 0.05$).

Thus, it can be concluded that the employee competence variable (X) has a significant influence on the service quality variable (Z). This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Irawan dkk (2015), which demonstrated a positive and significant influence of employee competence on service quality at the One-Stop Service Agency (PTSP) of the Batam Free Trade Zone Authority, according to the path analysis results of employee competence on service quality.

The Influence of Employee Competence on Public Satisfaction

The results of the previous hypothesis testing, as shown in the sub-structural hypothesis testing II, indicate that employee competence (X) does not have a significant effect on public satisfaction (Y). This is supported by the obtained *t*-value

of 0.831, which is less than the critical t -value of 1.969, with a significance value of $0.407 > 0.05$, indicating that employee competence (X) does not have a direct influence on public satisfaction (Y). This finding contrasts with the research by Jusmaindah (2019), which found that employee competence had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.

However, the study by Ratmelia dkk (2024), aligns with the results of this research, showing that employee competence does not have a direct effect on public satisfaction. In their study, they stated that the data processing results revealed that competence did not have a significant and direct impact on public satisfaction. This outcome presents an anomaly compared to other studies, as described in the background section, where Irawan (2015) explains that competence acts as a fundamental trait within an employee and indirectly affects or predicts high performance.

This suggests that for employee competence to impact public satisfaction, it must be channeled through service delivery. Therefore, this study employs the mediating variable of service quality to allow employee competence to have an indirect influence on public satisfaction.

The Influence of Service Quality on Public Satisfaction

The results of the previous hypothesis testing, as shown in the sub-structural hypothesis testing II, indicate that service quality (Z) has a significant effect on public satisfaction (Y). This is supported by the obtained t -value of 10.156, which is greater than the critical t -value of 1.969, with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that service quality (Z) has a direct and significant influence on public satisfaction (Y). This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Ekananda (2023), which found that service quality positively and significantly affects applicant satisfaction. In their study, statistical analysis confirmed this, with a t -value of 3.345 exceeding the critical t -value of 1.967 and a significance value of $0.001 < 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the service quality variable has a significant influence on the applicant satisfaction variable.

The Influence of Employee Competence on Public Satisfaction through Service Quality

Based on the path analysis conducted in the previous study using regression tests from sub-structural I and II, the results show that employee competence has an effect on public satisfaction when mediated by service quality. The magnitude of this influence is calculated by multiplying the effect of employee competence on service quality with the effect of service quality on public satisfaction, resulting in $(0.749 \times 0.671 = 0.503)$. This indirect effect is greater than the direct effect of employee competence (X) on public satisfaction (Y), which only accounts for 0.055. Therefore, it can be concluded that service quality can mediate the relationship between employee competence and public satisfaction. Additionally, the total effect of the mediating variable is 0.558, or 55.8%, while the remaining 44.2% is influenced by other factors not included in this study. This finding aligns with the research by Elizah and Wahyono (2019), where they concluded that employee competence has an indirect and significant effect on public satisfaction through service quality. This was evidenced by an indirect effect of employee competence of 0.527, compared to a direct effect of 0.520. These results indicate that the indirect effect is greater than the direct effect. In

addition to path analysis, the influence of service quality (Z) was also examined using the Sobel test. The Sobel test results showed a standard error of mediation of 0.058 and a mediation t -value of 8.87, which is greater than the critical t -value of 1.969. This suggests that service quality (Z) significantly mediates the relationship between employee competence and public satisfaction (Y). This can be compared with the direct effect of employee competence (X) on public satisfaction (Y), where the obtained t -value for the direct effect was only 0.831, which is less than the critical t -value of 1.969, indicating a non-significant direct influence. This finding is consistent with the study by Wulandari (2017), which concluded that employee competence affects public satisfaction through service quality.

5. Conclusion

The analysis reveals the following findings:

- a. **Employee Competence and Service Quality:** The findings indicate that employee competence (Variable X) has a strong positive and significant effect on service quality (Variable Z), as evidenced by a high t -value of 18.119. This suggests that enhancing the skills and abilities of employees is crucial for improving the quality of services offered.
- b. **Employee Competence and Public Satisfaction:** Contrary to expectations, employee competence does not have a direct positive and significant effect on public satisfaction (Variable Y). The t -value of 0.831 indicates that improvements in employee skills alone do not directly lead to increased public satisfaction, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis H2.
- c. **Employee Competence and Public Satisfaction:** Contrary to expectations, employee competence does not have a direct positive and significant effect on public satisfaction (Variable Y). The t -value of 0.831 indicates that improvements in employee skills alone do not directly lead to increased public satisfaction, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis H2.
- d. **Employee Competence and Public Satisfaction:** Contrary to expectations, employee competence does not have a direct positive and significant effect on public satisfaction (Variable Y). The t -value of 0.831 indicates that improvements in employee skills alone do not directly lead to increased public satisfaction, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis H2.

These findings underscore the importance of focusing on both employee development and service quality enhancement strategies to achieve higher levels of public satisfaction. By implementing targeted training programs and maintaining high service standards, organizations can create a positive feedback loop that benefits employees and customers alike.

Further studies on the relationships between employee competence, service quality, and public satisfaction are essential for developing a nuanced understanding of these dynamics. By exploring various methodologies (such as interviews or focus groups with employees and customers, to gain deeper insights into how employee competence impacts service quality and customer perceptions), contexts, and additional variables (such as employee engagement, organizational culture, or customer experience), future research can contribute significantly to enhancing

organizational practices aimed at improving customer experiences and satisfaction levels.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, BM and SLK; methodology, BM; software, RKA; validation, BM and AF; formal analysis, BM; writing—review and editing, ASRM, BM and SLK; project administration, AF. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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