

Competence, Work Ethic, and The Quality of Public Services in Village Government

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of competence and work ethic on the quality of public services at the Marga Mulya Village Office. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 100 residents of Marga Mulya Village, selected using a purposive sampling technique. The data analysis techniques applied were multiple linear regression, the coefficient of determination, and hypothesis testing consisting of the t-test and F-test. The results of the multiple linear regression analysis show that competence and work ethic have regression coefficients of 1.376 and 0.497, respectively. The partial test (t-test) indicates that competence has a positive and significant effect on service quality ($t = 3.647$), whereas work ethic does not have a significant partial effect ($t = 1.200$). The simultaneous test (F-test) shows that competence and work ethic jointly have a significant effect on the quality of public services, with a significance level of 0.000. The coefficient of determination test reveals that 51.9% of the quality of public services can be explained by competence and work ethic together, while the remaining 48.1% is explained by other variables not examined in this study.

Introduction

Indonesia, as a country with broad cultural and geographical diversity, faces various challenges and opportunities in delivering public services amid the dynamics of globalization. Improving the quality of public services is essential to meeting community needs; under Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, such services encompass the provision of goods, services, and administrative functions, and the government bears responsibility for delivering them effectively and efficiently given their crucial role in supporting community life (Puspitasari, 2018).

Since regional autonomy was first regulated under Law No. 22 of 1999 and subsequently refined through Law No. 32 of 2004 and Law No. 23 of 2014, local governments have held authority across various sectors, including land administration services. Achieving good governance requires state apparatus to deliver optimal service, particularly as communities have become increasingly critical of the services they receive, placing greater demands on government agencies to provide high-quality service delivery (Istikomah et al., 2021). Public service institutions pursue various innovations to make services more accessible, affordable, fast, and responsive (Takwim et al., 2022), yet in practice, problems such as employee indiscipline, inaccurate service delivery, uncertainty in service completion, and limited convenience in the service process persist. One of the primary factors affecting the quality of public service is employee competence, encompassing the abilities and expertise required to carry out tasks, supported by work attitude, skills, and knowledge (Mauliandri & Roza, 2021).

Public service is one of the core functions of village government in meeting community needs and fostering shared prosperity. Fast, accurate, transparent, and accountable service strengthens public trust in village government and encourages community participation in development; achieving such quality service, however, requires village officials who are both competent and possess a strong work ethic (Angin & Ramadhani, 2022). In practice, public service delivery at the village level still faces persistent problems: complaints often relate to service delays, unclear information, convoluted procedures, and unresponsive staff attitudes, indicating that

service quality is shaped not only by systems and regulations but strongly by the quality of the human resources delivering the service.

At Marga Mulya Village Office specifically, despite serving diverse types of public administrative services (ranging from certificates of domicile to business and welfare certificates), village officials still show constraints in competence, such as limited understanding of service standard operating procedures, minimal technical training, and limited proficiency with information technology, resulting in administrative errors, service delays, and procedural inconsistencies that reduce community satisfaction (Nurjaya et al., 2021). In addition to competence, work ethic—reflecting officials' attitude, spirit, responsibility, and commitment—also plays an important role; a low work ethic can manifest as poor discipline, tardiness, low initiative in assisting the public, and unprofessional conduct, all of which hinder the service process and diminish community trust in the village government.

Although the village government has made various improvement efforts, including computerized administrative systems and staff training, complaints about service delays, unclear information, and unresponsive officials persist, indicating that competence and work ethic remain factors requiring serious attention because both are closely interrelated in shaping public service performance. Given this context, research examining the effect of competence and work ethic on public service quality at the village office level is both important and urgent, as it can identify the factors influencing officials' competence and work ethic, analyze their impact on service quality, and formulate policy recommendations to improve service effectiveness at the village level. Accordingly, this study is entitled “The Effect of Competence and Work Ethic on the Quality of Public Services at the Marga Mulya Village Office.”

Based on the background above, the research problem can be formulated as follows: does competence affect the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office; does work ethic affect the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office; and do competence and work ethic simultaneously affect the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office? Accordingly, this study aims to examine the partial and simultaneous effects of competence and work ethic on the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office.

Literature Review And Hypotheses Development

The Effect of Competence on the Quality of Public Services

Competence generally concerns an individual's fundamental ability to carry out a task; an employee with good competence will possess the skill to resolve problems quickly and demonstrate strong initiative at work. According to the competence theory of Spencer and Spencer (1993), competence is an individual's underlying characteristic that is causally related to superior performance in a job or situation; in the context of public service, village officials with high competence are able to carry out their duties in accordance with standard operating procedures, thereby minimizing technical errors and accelerating the completion of administrative documents. Wahyu (2026), in a study on the effect of competence on service quality in improving community satisfaction at the Housing and Settlement Agency of Banjarmasin City, found that competence has a positive and significant effect on service quality. Based on the relationship between competence and public service quality found in prior research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive and significant effect of employee competence on the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office.

The Effect of Work Ethic on the Quality of Public Services

Work ethic reflects the working spirit and characteristic conduct of an individual or group grounded in ethics and a shared perspective on work, expressed through determination and concrete behavior in the workplace. Alisiya and Fikriyah (2022), in a study on the effect of work ethic on the quality of the One-Stop Integrated Service (PTSP) at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Surabaya City, found that work ethic partially affects service quality. Based on the relationship

between work ethic and public service quality found in prior research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a positive and significant effect of employee work ethic on the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office.

The Simultaneous Effect of Competence and Work Ethic on the Quality of Public Services

Ardyana et al. (2023), in a study on the effect of competence, commitment, and work ethic on employee performance at the Religious Court Office of Takalar Regency, found a positive and significant simultaneous effect of competence, commitment, and work ethic on employee performance. Similarly, Dwinanda et al. (2023), examining the effect of competence, work discipline, and work ethic on employee work effectiveness at PT Telkom Makassar STO Balaikota, found that competence, work discipline, and work ethic jointly have a positive and significant effect on work effectiveness. These findings are closely related to service delivery, leading to the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a positive and significant simultaneous effect of competence and work ethic on the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office.

Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey method, conducted at the Marga Mulya Village Office, Rokan Hulu Regency, from December 2025 to July 2026. The quantitative approach was chosen because the study aims to objectively measure and analyze the relationship and effect of the competence (X1) and work ethic (X2) variables on the quality of public services (Y) through numerical data processed using statistical techniques (Sugiyono, 2021). The population in this study consisted of the residents of Marga Mulya Village, Rokan Hulu Regency, totaling 2,741 people based on 2025 census data. The sample was determined using a purposive sampling technique (Sugiyono, 2021), with the following criteria: residents who had administrative business at the Marga Mulya Village Office within the last 6–12 months, were officially domiciled in Marga Mulya Village, and were at least 17 years of age. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, yielding 96.48 respondents, which was rounded up to 100 respondents in line with the recommendation of Hair et al. (2019) and Sugiyono (2021) that multiple regression analysis on a large population requires a minimum sample of 100 respondents to satisfy statistical and normality testing requirements.

The data used in this study consist of primary data obtained directly from respondents and secondary data obtained from the Marga Mulya Village Office and other relevant data sources. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and library research. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Competence variable (X1) was measured using the indicators of knowledge, skills, work attitude, work behavior, and motives, while the Work Ethic variable (X2) was measured using the indicators of discipline, responsibility, honesty and integrity, work motivation, and work commitment. The Quality of Public Services variable (Y) was measured using the indicators of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, in line with the SERVQUAL framework (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 2023).

Prior to the main analysis, instrument testing was carried out through validity testing (comparing the calculated r-value with the r-table value at a 5% significance level) and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptance threshold of 0.60. Data analysis techniques included descriptive analysis using the Respondent Achievement Level (Tingkat Capaian Responden/TCR) formula, classical assumption testing (normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, multicollinearity test using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor/VIF values, and heteroscedasticity test using scatterplot analysis) in accordance with Ghazali (2021), multiple linear regression analysis with the model $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$, the coefficient of determination (R^2) test, and hypothesis testing through the partial test (t-test) and simultaneous test (F-test) at a 5% significance level.

Results And Discussion

Validity testing showed that all items in the Competence, Work Ethic, and Quality of Public Services questionnaires had a calculated r-value greater than the r-table value (0.196), so all items were declared valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed values of 0.811 for Competence, 0.762 for Work Ethic, and 0.928 for Quality of Public Services, all exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.60, indicating that the research instrument has good reliability.

The respondents in this study consisted of 100 residents of Marga Mulya Village selected through purposive sampling. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were male (54 people or 54%), while female respondents numbered 46 people (46%). Based on age, respondents were dominated by the productive age group of 26–35 years (34%), and based on education level, respondents were dominated by senior high/vocational school graduates (51%). Based on the type of service accessed, respondents were dominated by those processing identity card/family card (KTP/KK) administration (42%) and business certificates (24%).

Table 1. Classical Assumption Test Results

Test	Result	Conclusion
Normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)	Test statistic = 0.183; Asymp. Sig. = 0.760	Residual data is normally distributed (Sig. > 0.05)
Multicollinearity	Tolerance = 0.160; VIF = 6.745 (both variables)	No multicollinearity (Tolerance > 0.10; VIF < 10)
Heteroscedasticity (Scatterplot)	Points scattered randomly with no clear pattern	No heteroscedasticity

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2026

The classical assumption test results indicate that the regression model in this study meets the requirements of normality, is free from multicollinearity, and is free from heteroscedasticity, so the model is suitable for further regression analysis.

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression and t-Test Results

Variable	B	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.237	1.006	0.317
Competence (X1)	1.376	3.647	0.000
Work Ethic (X2)	0.497	1.200	0.233

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2026. Dependent Variable: Quality of Public Services; t-table = 1.98447

Based on Table 2, the regression equation obtained is $Y = 4.237 + 1.376X_1 + 0.497X_2$. The constant value of 4.237 indicates that when Competence and Work Ethic are held at zero, the Quality of Public Services remains at 4.237. The regression coefficient of Competence (X1) of 1.376 and Work Ethic (X2) of 0.497 are both positive, indicating that an increase in either variable is associated with an increase in the quality of public services, assuming other variables remain constant.

Table 3. F-Test and Coefficient of Determination Results

F-calculated	F-table	Sig.	R Square	Adjusted R Square
52.347	3.09	0.000	0.519	0.509

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2026. Predictors: (Constant), Work Ethic, Competence

The t-test results show that the calculated t-value for Competence is 3.647, greater than the t-table value of 1.98447, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), so H1 is accepted: Competence has a positive and significant partial effect on the Quality of Public Services. The calculated t-value for Work Ethic is 1.200, smaller than the t-table value of 1.98447, with a significance value of 0.233 (> 0.05), so H2 is rejected: Work Ethic does not have a significant partial effect on the Quality of Public Services. The F-test result shows a calculated F-value of 52.347, greater than the F-table

value of 3.09, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), so H3 is accepted: Competence and Work Ethic simultaneously have a significant effect on the Quality of Public Services. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.509 indicates that 50.9% of the variation in the Quality of Public Services can be explained by Competence and Work Ethic together, while the remaining 49.1% is explained by other factors outside the research model.

The Effect of Competence on the Quality of Public Services

Descriptive analysis shows that the Competence variable obtained an average Respondent Achievement Level (TCR) of 80.6%, categorized as Good, with the highest score on the Knowledge indicator (TCR 84.6%) and the lowest on the Work Behavior indicator (TCR 78.6%). The partial test (t-test) result confirms that Competence has a positive and significant effect on the Quality of Public Services ($t = 3.647 > t\text{-table } 1.98447$; $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$), so H1 is accepted. This finding empirically demonstrates that the higher the level of knowledge, skill, and professional work attitude possessed by village officials, the higher the quality of service perceived directly by the community, consistent with the competence theory of Spencer and Spencer (1993), which holds that competence is a fundamental characteristic causally linked to superior job performance. This result is consistent with Adelia Ovi Inzaghi and Brilliant Rosy (2022), Rizky et al. (2025), and Wahyu (2026), all of whom found that employee competence has a positive and significant effect on the quality of public service, confirming that the competence of human resources at the village government level is a fundamental element that cannot be neglected in optimizing public service quality.

The Effect of Work Ethic on the Quality of Public Services

Descriptive analysis shows that the Work Ethic variable obtained an average TCR of 80.66%, also categorized as Good, with the highest score on the Responsibility indicator (TCR 84.6%) and the lowest on the Time Discipline indicator (TCR 78.0%). However, the partial test (t-test) result shows that Work Ethic does not have a significant effect on the Quality of Public Services ($t = 1.200 < t\text{-table } 1.98447$; $\text{Sig.} = 0.233 > 0.05$), so H2 is rejected. This finding indicates that the level of officials' work ethic, such as enthusiasm or friendliness, does not directly alter the community's perception of the service quality they actually receive. This can be explained through the SERVQUAL framework (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 2023): in an instrumental village administrative service system (processing identity cards, family cards, and certificates), the community tends to prioritize certainty of outcome (reliability and completeness of documents) and staff technical competence over enthusiasm or friendliness. This result differs from Alisiya and Fikriyah (2022), who found that work ethic significantly affects service quality; the discrepancy may be attributable to differences in service context, given that services at Marga Mulya Village Office are routine and standardized, so an official's internal work ethic is perceived by the community less as a differentiating factor and more as a baseline obligation expected of every village official.

The Simultaneous Effect of Competence and Work Ethic on the Quality of Public Services

The simultaneous test (F-test) shows a calculated F-value of 52.347, greater than the F-table value of 3.09, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), so H3 is accepted: Competence and Work Ethic jointly have a significant effect on the Quality of Public Services, which obtained an overall average TCR of 79.32% (Good category). This finding demonstrates that although Work Ethic does not have a significant effect on its own, its presence still provides a positive contribution when combined with Competence. Theoretically, this finding supports the view that organizational performance and output quality are shaped by the interaction between ability/competence and motivation/attitude in the form of work ethic, with competence acting as the primary driver of technical service quality while work ethic serves as a supporting factor that smooths the service process; without adequate competence, work ethic alone cannot produce service quality that satisfies the community. This simultaneous finding is consistent with and reinforces the results of Adelia Ovi Inzaghi and Brilliant Rosy (2022), Rizky et al. (2025), Ardyana et al. (2023), and

Dwinanda et al. (2023), all of whom confirmed that the combination of employee competence with work ethic or work discipline factors significantly affects and improves the quality of public services in local government institutions.

Implication And Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the competence of village officials has a positive and significant effect on the quality of public services at Marga Mulya Village Office; work ethic does not have a significant partial effect on the quality of public services; and competence and work ethic simultaneously have a significant effect on the quality of public services, explaining 50.9% of its variation, while the remaining 49.1% is explained by other factors outside this study, such as work facilities, leadership, or service digitalization.

These findings imply that Marga Mulya Village Government should continue to strengthen periodic training related to population administration regulations and information technology skills for village officials, given that competence proved to be the dominant factor in service quality. The village office is also advised to address the lowest-scoring indicators identified in this study, namely time discipline and physical service facilities (tangibles), for example through stricter attendance systems, clearer service schedules, and improved waiting-area comfort. Future researchers are recommended to expand this study by incorporating other variables that may affect the quality of public services, such as work facilities, village head leadership, or e-government-based service digitalization, in order to provide more comprehensive findings.

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