International Journal of Economics, Business and Innovation Research
https://e-journal.citakonsultindo.or.id/index.php/IJEBIR
E-ISSN : 2964-0865
IJEBIR

The Effect Of Performance Management On Employee Performance Through Civil Servant Professionalism At The Gorontalo High Court

Mohammad Andrik Yusron[1], Raflin Hinelo [2]

[1,2]Postgraduate Program, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia

Email: andrikyuzron@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the effect of performance management on employee performance through civil servant professionalism at the Gorontalo High Court. A quantitative survey design was employed, and data were collected from 53 civil servants using a saturated sampling technique. The analysis used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The results show that performance management has a positive and significant effect on both employee performance and civil servant professionalism, and that professionalism has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Professionalism partially mediates the effect of performance management on employee performance. The model explains 81.0% of the variance in employee performance but only 9.2% of the variance in professionalism, indicating that professionalism is largely shaped by factors beyond performance management. The study underscores the importance of linking the performance management cycle to professional development to improve employee performance in the judicial sector.

Keywords: Civil Servant Professionalism; Employee Performance; Judiciary; Performance Management; PLS-SEM;

INTRODUCTION

The success of public sector organizations in realizing their mandates cannot be separated from the way these organizations manage the performance of their personnel. Among the various practices of human resource management, performance management occupies a crucial position as it serves as a mechanism that links the organization's strategic goals with individual behavior and work outcomes. Geru et al. (2026) show that strategic HR practices can improve public sector performance by strengthening human resource capacity. Other evidence supports this position, namely

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that consistently implemented performance management has been proven to bridge work engagement and the quality of work relationships among employees in the public sector (Maake et al. 2021). The positive influence becomes more evident when the assessment is perceived as fair and followed up as a means of development, rather than just a formality (Rodrigues & Dias, 2024). Thus, performance management is better understood as a strategic instrument that shapes the quality of the apparatus rather than as an administrative reporting routine.

In the context of the Indonesian civil service (ASN), the culmination of performance management is evident in employee professionalism. ASN professionalism is measured through the ASN Professionalism Index, which encompasses dimensions of qualifications, competence, performance, and discipline, and serves as an indicator of the extent to which merit-based bureaucratic reform has been implemented in practice. Mainardes et al. (2024) proved that the competence of government employees has a significant impact on the quality of service and organizational performance. Similar findings were reported by Darmi & Justian (2025), who identified the competence of civil servants as a determining factor for performance in regional personnel agencies. From a different perspective, Das (2023) emphasizes that the performance drive among public employees also explains why performance outcomes differ between units even though they operate within the same regulatory framework. Professionalism, within this framework, does not emerge on its own, but is shaped by the quality of the accompanying performance management practices.

The reality on the ground, however, often shows a gap between the availability of the system and its effectiveness. Fitriady & Asropi (2026) note that the performance assessment of ASN tends to be subjective and uniform, thereby weakening the evaluation function. In the realm of accountability, Syafirman & Syamsir (2024) found that the performance accountability system has not fully encouraged individual performance improvement despite the availability of instruments. A similar phenomenon is observed at the Gorontalo High Court. Although this institution is able to maintain timely case resolutions, its ASN Professionalism Index is at a relatively low level, with the competence dimension being the weakest point. The gap between the high achievements of the organization and the lagging professionalism of the apparatus raises fundamental questions about the extent to which the ongoing performance management can truly elevate professionalism and, in turn, employee performance.

Efforts to answer that question face limitations in the existing literature. Previous studies on ASN performance management in Indonesia mostly stop at evaluating the implementation of the e-Kinerja application or the effectiveness of the accountability system in regional devices (Syafirman & Syamsir, 2024), and rarely empirically test the relationship between performance management, professionalism, and employee

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performance in a single comprehensive model. The examination of the role of ASN professionalism as an intermediary mechanism that explains how performance management leads to employee performance is still rare, especially in judicial institutions that have unique characteristics of workload and governance. However, the ability-motivation-opportunity perspective suggests that the influence of HR practices on performance generally occurs through the development of employee capacity and professionalism, rather than directly (Appelbaum et al. 2000). This view is in line with the findings of Geru et al. (2026), which demonstrate the mediating role of human capital in the relationship between strategic HR practices and public sector performance.

Starting from that gap, this study aims to examine the effect of performance management on employee performance with ASN professionalism as a mediating variable at the Gorontalo High Court. Theoretically, this research deepens the understanding of the indirect mechanisms linking performance management practices with employee work outcomes in the judicial environment, a context that has been underexplored until now. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as an empirical basis for leaders and the human resources department in designing performance management interventions that focus on strengthening professionalism, rather than merely fulfilling reporting obligations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance Management

Performance management is understood as a continuous process that includes planning, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up on employee performance, as well as linking organizational goals with individual work outcomes. In the civil service, this process is regulated by Government Regulation Number 30 of 2019 and Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation Number 6 of 2022, which emphasize the establishment of performance targets, periodic monitoring, and the utilization of assessment results for coaching. Theoretically, the effectiveness of this process can be explained through the goal-setting theory proposed by Locke & Latham (2002), which states that specific and challenging goals, when accompanied by adequate feedback, will enhance individual performance.

Recent empirical studies reinforce the position of performance management as a strategic practice, but also show that its effectiveness is conditional. The research by Maake et al. (2021) positions performance management as a mechanism that drives employee engagement and work outcomes in the public sector, while the study by Rodrigues & Dias (2024) emphasizes that the positive impact of performance appraisal emerges primarily when the appraisal is conducted as a development tool and perceived

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as fair. Thus, performance management cannot be viewed as an administrative routine, but rather as an instrument that shapes employee behavior and work outcomes.

Professionalism of ASN

The professionalism of ASN is a measure of the quality of the apparatus expressed in the ASN Professionalism Index and encompasses four dimensions, namely qualifications, competence, performance, and discipline, as regulated in the Minister of PANRB Regulation Number 38 of 2018 and the National Civil Service Agency Regulation Number 8 of 2019. This concept can be based on the human capital theory proposed by Becker (1964), which views qualifications, competencies, and experience as an accumulation of human capital that enhances individual productivity. In this framework, professionalism not only reflects the fulfillment of administrative standards but also the reserve of capacity that determines the quality of work outcomes.

Empirical findings show that professionalism and the competence of officials are closely related to performance, although the direction and strength of this relationship are not always uniform. The research by Mainardes et al. (2024) proves that the competence of government employees has a significant impact on service quality and organizational performance, and the study by Darmi & Justian (2025) positions competence as a determining factor for performance in regional personnel agencies. On the contrary, the research by Zuraini & Hasyim (2026) found that competence does not always have a direct impact on performance, and its influence can operate through intermediary variables, thus the role of professionalism in explaining performance needs to be examined more carefully.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the work outcomes and work behavior that employees demonstrate in carrying out their duties. In the civil service context, Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019 divides performance into a work-outcome dimension encompassing quantity, quality, and timeliness, and a work-behavior dimension encompassing service orientation, initiative, and cooperation. Maitama (2025) enriches this understanding by showing that employee performance is multidimensional, encompassing task performance, adaptive performance, and contextual performance, which are not always influenced by the same factors. This complexity is reinforced by Das (2023), who emphasizes that the performance of public servants is shaped by many factors and cannot be reduced to a single practice, so that modeling performance must account for the mechanism linking organizational practices to individual outcomes.

As an outcome variable, employee performance serves as the ultimate benchmark of the success of human resource management, so many studies position it as the

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dependent variable. Syafirman and Syamsir (2024) show that the performance accountability system contributes to improving civil servant performance although not yet fully optimally, whereas Karvy et al. (2026) affirm that employee performance is influenced by competence, with organizational commitment as a reinforcing factor. In the judicial environment, employee performance concerns not only the quantitative resolution of cases but also demands administrative accuracy and adherence to procedures that require adequate workforce capacity. Modeling employee performance therefore needs to consider both organizational factors and the individual capacity that accompanies them.

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Framework as an Integrative Lens

The interrelationship among performance management practices, professionalism, and employee performance can be understood through the *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework proposed by Appelbaum et al. (2000). This framework holds that human resource practices affect performance through three pathways, namely enhancing ability, strengthening motivation, and opening opportunity, whose effect on performance generally operates through the formation of employee capacity rather than directly. This perspective is relevant for explaining why performance management is expected to affect performance not only directly but also through professionalism as a representation of workforce capacity. Geru et al. (2026) provide empirical support for this logic by demonstrating the mediating role of human capital in the relationship between strategic human resource practices and public sector performance.

The *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework also addresses the black-box problem in the relationship between human resource practices and performance, namely the question of the mechanism that bridges the two. In this perspective, human resource practices do not automatically produce performance but operate through the formation of employees' ability and motivation, so that capacity variables such as professionalism occupy the position of an intervening mechanism. This logic distinguishes the *ability-motivation-opportunity* view from the universalistic view that assumes a direct relationship, and is consistent with Das (2023), who emphasizes that the performance of public servants is shaped by complex factors. This framework therefore provides an appropriate basis for positioning civil servant professionalism as a mediator in this study.

Hypothesis Development

Adequately implemented performance management provides clarity of targets, continuous feedback, and consequences for achievement, all of which encourage employees to work in a more directed and consistent manner. Within goal-setting theory, specific and challenging goals accompanied by feedback have been shown to improve

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performance, while within the *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework this process strengthens employees' motivation and opportunity to perform. Maake et al. (2021) demonstrate that performance management drives employee engagement and work outcomes in the public sector, and Rodrigues and Dias (2024) affirm the positive impact of performance appraisal when conducted as a means of development.

H1: Performance management has a positive effect on employee performance.

In addition to directly affecting performance, performance management is expected to form the professionalism of the workforce through the setting of development targets, the provision of feedback, and development-oriented follow-up that directs the improvement of competence and discipline. The *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework positions such practices as a means of forming employee capacity, and Geru et al. (2026) show that strategic human resource practices can strengthen workforce capacity in public organizations.

H2: Performance management has a positive effect on civil servant professionalism.

Workforce professionalism comprising qualification, competence, performance, and discipline reflects an accumulation of human capital expected to increase productivity and the quality of work outcomes. Consistent with human capital theory, Mainardes et al. (2024) demonstrate the impact of public servants' competencies on performance, and Karvy et al. (2026) find a positive effect of competence on the performance of government employees.

H3: Civil servant professionalism has a positive effect on employee performance.

Based on the *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework and human capital theory, the effect of performance management on employee performance is expected to operate not only directly but also through the formation of professionalism as an intervening mechanism. Geru et al. (2026) and Karvy et al. (2026) support the existence of such a mediating pathway, although Pebrianti et al. (2026) caution that a mediating role is not always supported and depends on the strength of the relationships among the constructs.

H4: Civil servant professionalism mediates the effect of performance management on employee performance.

The interrelationships among the variables and the four hypotheses are depicted in the research model (Figure 1).

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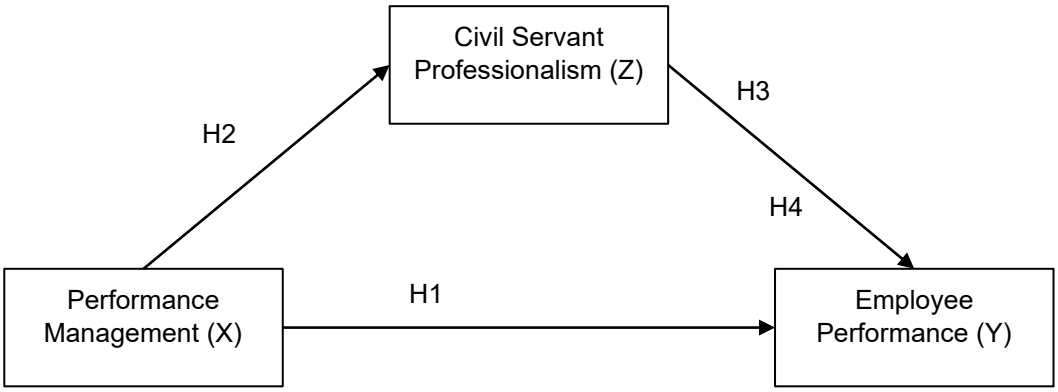


Figure 1: Benefits of Negotiation Skills

RESEARCH METHOD

Approach and Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory associative design aimed at testing causal relationships among latent variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Data were collected through a *cross-sectional* survey, namely data collection at a single point in time using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire as the main instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was chosen because the study aims to test the effect of performance management on employee performance and the mediating role of professionalism, thus requiring an analytical procedure capable of estimating the magnitude and significance of the relationships among constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

Population and Sample

The population of this study is all civil servants within the Gorontalo High Court. Sampling was conducted using a saturated sampling technique, in which all members of the population served as respondents. This technique was chosen because the relatively limited population size allows the involvement of all employees, while also increasing data representativeness and reducing generalization error. The number of respondents obtained was then checked for adequacy against the minimum sample size recommended for variance-based models using the *inverse square root* method (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). The PLS-SEM approach was selected in part because it can operate on relatively small sample sizes without requiring the assumption of multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2019).

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using variance-based *Structural Equation Modeling* (*Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling*) with SmartPLS 4 software. The analysis was conducted in two stages, namely evaluation of the measurement model (*outer*

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model) and evaluation of the structural model (*inner model*). In the measurement model evaluation, convergent validity was assessed from *outer loadings* and *average variance extracted*, while internal consistency reliability was examined through *composite reliability* and *Cronbach's alpha* (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity was tested using the *heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations* criterion (Henseler et al., 2015).

In the structural model evaluation, collinearity among constructs was examined through *variance inflation factor* values. The model's predictive capability was assessed from the coefficient of determination, effect size, and predictive relevance, while the significance of path coefficients was tested through a *bootstrapping* procedure (Becker et al., 2023). The mediation hypothesis was tested by examining the *specific indirect effect* and comparing it with the direct effect to determine the type of mediation that occurs (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULT

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model began with an assessment of convergent validity at the indicator level. According to Hair et al. (2019), an indicator meets convergent validity if its *outer loading* is not less than 0.70. The results for all indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Indicator Outer Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Outer loading
Performance Management (X)	X1	0.837
	X2	0.875
	X3	0.838
	X4	0.829
	X5	0.874
	X6	0.819
	X7	0.772
	X8	0.813
	X9	0.820
	X10	0.845
Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	Z1	0.948
	Z2	0.873
	Z3	0.941
	Z4	0.869
	Z5	0.901
	Z6	0.855

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Employee Performance (Y)	Y1	0.871
	Y2	0.929
	Y3	0.867
	Y4	0.866
	Y5	0.919
	Y6	0.923
	Y7	0.926

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 1, all indicators have *outer loadings* above 0.70, with the lowest value of 0.772 for indicator X7. It can therefore be concluded that all indicators meet the convergent validity criterion and are retained in the model.

Next, reliability and convergent validity were assessed at the construct level. A construct is considered reliable if its *Cronbach's alpha* and *composite reliability* are not less than 0.70, and it meets convergent validity if its *average variance extracted* (AVE) is not less than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	rho_a	Composite reliability	AVE
Performance Management (X)	0.951	0.952	0.958	0.693
Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	0.952	0.955	0.962	0.808
Employee Performance (Y)	0.961	0.964	0.968	0.811

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 2, all three constructs have *Cronbach's alpha*, *rho_a*, and *composite reliability* values all above 0.70, together with AVE values above 0.50. These findings indicate that all constructs meet the reliability and convergent validity requirements at the construct level.

The next examination addressed collinearity among indicators. Referring to Hair et al. (2019), an indicator is free from collinearity problems if its *variance inflation factor* (VIF) is below 5. A summary of VIF values is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Indicator Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values

Construct	Indicator	VIF
Performance Management (X)	X1	2.905
	X2	4.383
	X3	3.100
	X4	3.092

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	X5	4.221
	X6	2.882
	X7	2.459
	X8	2.547
	X9	2.567
	X10	3.268
Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	Z1	6.899
	Z2	3.345
	Z3	6.496
	Z4	3.113
	Z5	4.045
	Z6	3.002
Employee Performance (Y)	Y1	3.415
	Y2	5.657
	Y3	3.549
	Y4	3.253
	Y5	4.830
	Y6	5.676
	Y7	6.287

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 3, most indicators have VIF values below 5, while several indicators of civil servant professionalism, namely Z1 and Z3, and indicator Y7 of employee performance, slightly exceed this threshold. These values indicate similarity among indicators but remain within tolerable limits for reflective measurement and therefore do not compromise the validity of the estimation.

Discriminant validity was tested through two complementary criteria. The first is the *heterotrait-monotrait ratio* (HTMT), which, according to Henseler et al. (2015), must be below 0.85. The test results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Performance Management (X)	**Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)**	**Employee Performance (Y)**
Performance Management (X)	—		
Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	0.310	—	

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Employee Performance (Y)	0.734	0.773	—

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 4, all HTMT values are below 0.85, with the highest value of 0.773 for the pair of civil servant professionalism and employee performance. Each construct is therefore empirically distinct from the others.

The second criterion for assessing discriminant validity is the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is met if the square root of a construct's AVE is greater than its correlation with other constructs, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Performance Management (X)	Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	Employee Performance (Y)
Performance Management (X)	0.833		
Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	0.303	0.899	
Employee Performance (Y)	0.707	0.745	0.901

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 5, the square root of each construct's AVE on the diagonal is greater than its correlation with other constructs. This result reinforces the discriminant validity previously shown by the HTMT criterion.

Structural Model (Inner Model)

Before testing the relationships among constructs, collinearity in the structural model was first examined using the *inner VIF* criterion required to be below 5 (Hair et al., 2019). The *inner VIF* values in this study are around 1.10, so the structural model is free from collinearity problems. In addition, model fit is met with a *standardized root mean square residual* (SRMR) value of 0.060, which is below the maximum threshold of 0.08 recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to assess the ability of exogenous variables to explain endogenous variables. According to Hair et al. (2019), R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 respectively reflect substantial, moderate, and weak models. The R^2 values in this study are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous construct	R^2	R^2 adjusted	Category
Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	0.092	0.074	Weak

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Employee Performance (Y)	0.810	0.802	Substantial

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 6, the employee performance construct has an R^2 value of 0.810, which is substantial, so that performance management and civil servant professionalism together explain 81.0% of its variance. Conversely, the civil servant professionalism construct has an R^2 value of only 0.092, which is weak, indicating that performance management explains only a small portion of its variance.

Predictive relevance was evaluated through Q^2 values. As stated by Hair et al. (2019), a model has predictive relevance if the Q^2 value is greater than zero, while values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 respectively indicate small, medium, and large relevance. The results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Endogenous construct	Q^2	Category
Civil Servant Professionalism (Z)	0.072	Small
Employee Performance (Y)	0.645	Large

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 7, the Q^2 values of both endogenous constructs are above zero, namely 0.645 for employee performance and 0.072 for civil servant professionalism. These findings indicate that the model has predictive relevance, categorized as large for employee performance and small for civil servant professionalism.

Effect size (f^2) was assessed to determine the magnitude of each exogenous construct's contribution to the endogenous construct. According to Cohen (1988) and Hair et al. (2019), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 respectively indicate small, medium, and large effects. The f^2 values for each path are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Effect Size (f^2)

Path	f^2	Category
Performance Management → Civil Servant Professionalism	0.101	Small to medium
Performance Management → Employee Performance	1.338	Large
Civil Servant Professionalism → Employee Performance	1.628	Large

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 8, the path from performance management to employee performance at 1.338 and the path from civil servant professionalism to employee performance at 1.628 are categorized as having large effects, whereas the path from performance management to civil servant professionalism at 0.101 is categorized as

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small to medium. This pattern of effect sizes is consistent with the coefficient of determination of each endogenous construct.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted through a *bootstrapping* procedure. A hypothesis is considered supported if the t-statistic is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, and the 95% confidence interval does not include zero (Hair et al., 2019). The results of the direct-effect testing are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of Direct-Effect Testing (Path Coefficients)

Path	O	M	STDEV	t	p	Decision
Performance Management → Employee Performance (H1)	0.530	0.532	0.071	7.426	0.000	Supported
Performance Management → Civil Servant Professionalism (H2)	0.303	0.323	0.122	2.491	0.013	Supported
Civil Servant Professionalism → Employee Performance (H3)	0.584	0.578	0.073	7.971	0.000	Supported

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 9, all three direct effects are positive and significant because all t-statistics exceed 1.96, p-values are below 0.05, and the confidence intervals do not include zero. The first, second, and third hypotheses are therefore supported.

The testing of indirect effects was conducted to assess the mediating role of civil servant professionalism, with results presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Results of Indirect-Effect Testing (Specific Indirect Effect)

Path	O	M	STDEV	t	p	Decision
Performance Management → Civil Servant Professionalism → Employee Performance (H4)	0.177	0.184	0.069	2.551	0.011	Supported

Source: Researcher's Processed Data, 2026

Based on Table 10, the effect of performance management on employee performance through civil servant professionalism is significant, with a t-statistic of 2.551 and a p-value of 0.011, and a confidence interval that does not include zero. The fourth hypothesis is therefore supported, and civil servant professionalism acts as a partial mediator given that its direct effect is also significant.

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DISCUSSION

The Effect of Performance Management on Employee Performance

Based on the research results, performance management has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a path coefficient of 0.530 and an effect size of 1.338 categorized as large, so the first hypothesis is supported. This result shows that performance management cannot be regarded merely as an administrative obligation but as a determinant factor that genuinely drives employee work outcomes at the Gorontalo High Court work unit. Mechanistically, this effect can be traced through the four stages of the performance management cycle, namely target setting that provides direction, monitoring and feedback that enable early correction of deviations, and appraisal and follow-up that provide consequences to maintain consistency of performance. This mechanism is consistent with goal-setting theory proposed by Locke and Latham (2002), which holds that specific and challenging goals, when accompanied by adequate feedback, improve individual performance. Within the *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework, these four stages operate primarily through the motivation and opportunity dimensions, as employees gain clarity of expectations along with support to achieve them.

This finding reinforces Maake et al. (2021), who position performance management as a mechanism linking work engagement and employee work outcomes in the public sector, and is deepened by Rodrigues and Dias (2024), who show that the positive impact of performance appraisal emerges when the appraisal is conducted as a means of development rather than mere ranking. Nevertheless, the strength of this effect must be interpreted critically, because Maitama (2025) finds that performance appraisal is significant only for task performance, whereas its effects on adaptive and contextual performance are not significant. In the judicial context, employee performance indicators are largely based on the quantity and timeliness of case resolution, so performance management is most effective in driving the measurable task dimension. This condition explains the strong effect found while also implying that the behavioral dimension of performance is not yet fully captured, so leaders must ensure that an orientation toward quantitative achievement does not displace attention to service quality and work behaviors that are more difficult to measure.

The Effect of Performance Management on Civil Servant Professionalism

Based on the research results, performance management has a positive but much weaker effect on civil servant professionalism, with a coefficient of 0.303 and a coefficient of determination of only 0.092, so the second hypothesis is supported although with limited strength. This value means that performance management explains only 9.2% of the variance in civil servant professionalism, while more than 90% of the remainder is

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determined by factors outside the model. This pattern can be explained through the composition of the Civil Servant Professionalism Index, because of its four dimensions, namely qualification, competence, performance, and discipline, only the performance dimension is directly supported by the performance management cycle. The qualification dimension rests on formal education, the competence dimension depends on training and development activities, and the discipline dimension is shaped by organizational culture, so that most professionalism is formed outside the annual appraisal process. The research setting reinforces this explanation, because the court's performance documents show that competence is the weakest dimension and the budget allocation for human resource development is relatively limited, so the horizontal link between performance management and competence development is structurally weak.

This finding is consistent with Fitriady and Asropi (2026), who note that civil servant performance appraisal instruments have not been optimized to cultivate workforce professionalism, and is reinforced by Das (2023), who emphasizes that the quality of public servants is shaped by complex factors that cannot be reduced to a single practice. Theoretically, this result corrects the universalistic view that assumes a single good human resource practice automatically produces good outcomes, and instead supports the configurational perspective, namely that the effectiveness of performance management on professionalism depends on its integration with competence-development practices. Practically, appraisal results need to be explicitly linked to development plans so that this pathway is strengthened.

The Effect of Civil Servant Professionalism on Employee Performance

Based on the research results, civil servant professionalism has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with the largest effect among all paths, namely a coefficient of 0.584 and an effect size of 1.628, so the third hypothesis is supported. This magnitude affirms that professionalism is the strongest determinant of performance, even exceeding the direct effect of performance management. This finding can be explained through human capital theory proposed by Becker (1993), which views qualification, competence, and experience as an accumulation of human capital that increases individual productivity. Thus, high professionalism reflects greater human capital, which in turn translates into higher performance, and this mechanism becomes increasingly relevant in the judicial environment that demands accuracy, mastery of procedures, and adherence to standards.

This finding is reinforced by Mainardes et al. (2024), who demonstrate that public servants' competencies have a substantial impact on service quality and organizational performance, and by Karvy et al. (2026), who show a positive effect of competence on the performance of regional government employees. Nevertheless, this relationship is not

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universal, because Zuraini and Hasyim (2026) find that competence does not significantly affect civil servant performance directly, and its influence only emerges through work motivation. This difference can be explained through the *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework, namely that ability is not always sufficient without the support of motivation in certain contexts, whereas in the judicial environment whose procedures are standardized and whose workload is measurable, ability and professionalism translate more readily into performance without having to pass through a motivational mechanism. Based on this, investment in strengthening workforce professionalism makes the largest contribution to performance, so that human resource policies focused on improving competence and qualification are worthy of priority.

The Mediating Role of Civil Servant Professionalism

Based on the research results, civil servant professionalism acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between performance management and employee performance, because the indirect effect of 0.177 is significant and accounts for about 25% of the total effect, while the remainder constitutes the direct effect, so the fourth hypothesis is supported. This mediation pattern is complementary because the direct and indirect effects are both significant and in the same direction, which theoretically indicates that professionalism explains part, but not all, of the mechanism linking performance management with employee performance, so there remain other mechanisms operating directly, among them through clarity of targets and feedback. This mediating role is consistent with the *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework proposed by Appelbaum et al. (2000) and human capital theory proposed by Becker (1993), which both hold that human resource practices affect performance through the formation of employee capacity, and is empirically reinforced by Geru et al. (2026), who show the mediating role of human capital in the relationship between strategic human resource practices and public sector performance.

Similar support is obtained from Karvy et al. (2026), who find a partial mediating role of an intervening variable in the relationship between competence and performance, and from Zuraini and Hasyim (2026), who affirm that the effect of competence on performance can operate through a mediating variable. Conversely, Pebrianti et al. (2026) find that mediation is not always supported when the conditions for mediation are not met, so the existence of mediation depends on the strength of the relationships among the constituent constructs. Further analysis shows that the weakness of the indirect pathway in this study does not lie in the relationship between professionalism and performance, which is in fact very strong, but in the relationship between performance management and professionalism, which is weak, so the main constraint on the mediating pathway is the capacity of performance management to form professionalism.

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Thus, the partial mediation pattern found reinforces the relevance of the *ability-motivation-opportunity* framework and human capital theory in explaining the relationships among performance management, professionalism, and employee performance. Practically, efforts to improve performance through professionalism will be most effective if focused on strengthening the link between performance appraisal and competence development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that performance management has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through civil servant professionalism, so the four proposed hypotheses are supported. Civil servant professionalism acts as a partial mediator, with a relatively small contribution of the indirect pathway compared with the direct effect. Another important finding is the low ability of performance management to explain civil servant professionalism, which indicates that professionalism is largely shaped by factors outside performance management practices.

Practically, leaders and the personnel division need to link performance appraisal results to competence-development plans so that the indirect pathway can be optimized. This study has limitations because it was conducted at a single work unit with a limited number of respondents and a cross-sectional design that relies on perceptual data, so the results cannot be broadly generalized. Future research is encouraged to expand the setting to several courts, add antecedent variables of professionalism, and employ a longitudinal design.

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