Social Sensitivity Effect to Public Service Competence and Its Impact on the Head of Sub-district Performance in West Java Province

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Existing literature has documented relationships between public service competence and performance as well as some of the mechanisms underlying these links. However, the pathways by which competence are associated with performance during performing the job in the government official circumstances require further investigation. This study examined a model of the roles of public service competence in performance with a focus on social sensitivity as mediators in the putative chain of events linking the competence with performance. The sample comprised 155 *camat* (sub-district head) in West Java, Indonesia. A cross-sectional design was used with measures of all variables that administered. In structural equations analyses, competence was associated with greater social sensitivity and greater job performance. Furthermore, public service competence was indirectly associated with performance via the social sensitivity. The findings of this study replicate existing theory concerning the direct and indirect relationships of competence and performance, and extend these theory by elucidating the pathways through which predictor is linked with outcome during a typically sensitivity condition.

Keywords: public service competence, performance, sensitivity, sub-district head

Introduction

Performance evaluation of government activities is essential in any democracy. Government, no matter the level (central/federal, state, or local), should be accountable and responsible to the electorate and a host of other stakeholders. Accountability involves, among other things, an assessment of policy outcomes, along with the means and processes used to deliver the policies. But the public service organizations are extremely complex: They serve multiple objectives; have a diversity of clients; deliver a wide range of policies and services; and exist within complex and uncertain socio-political environments (Jackson, 1993).

Indonesia is considered as the third largest democratic country in the world. The progress of democracy implementation in Indonesia is more rapid than other countries (Diamond, 2010). Indonesia is known as the largest archipelago in the world that has 17,508 islands, 6,000 of which are inhabited. Indonesia is also known for its diversity with 300 distinct native ethnic groups and 742 different languages and dialects.

Indonesia is divided into provinces (Indonesian: *Provinsi*). Provinces are made up of regencies and cities.

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Provinces, regencies, and cities have their own local governments and parliamentary bodies. Since the enactment of Law Number 23 Year 2014 regarding local government, local governments now play a greater role in administering their areas. Foreign policy, defence (including armed forces and national police), system of law, and monetary policy, however, remain the domain of the national government. Descending from the top tier (nation, province, and cities), there is next microsystem that is regencies. Regencies and cities are divided into: Kecamatan (sub-district) headed by a *camat*. A *camat* is a civil servant, responsible to the regent (in a regency) or to the mayor (in a city). Kecamatan are found in most parts of Indonesia. The things that have been mentioned show how complex and how challenging if someone are have “the role and responsibility” as government officials in Indonesia (especially: *camat*) that are very big, there is a “step like stairs in the bureaucracy” and their role is fundamental for the citizens. But what if their performance is not optimal?

Research in the broad field of social behavioral sciences has paid insufficient attention to public service performance (Boyne, 2004). There are authors, like Behn (2003) and Bird et al. (2005) who argued the necessity of performance measurement in the public sector. Bird et al. (2005) suggested that there are three main reasons for measuring the performance of public services: to see what works, to identify the functional competence, and to support public accountability. Behn (2003) suggested also eight reasons for the measurement of performance in public sector:

1. To evaluate how well is the government agency performing;
2. To control how can public managers steer their subordinates in the right direction so as to ensure excellent performance;
3. To budget the programs, people or projects for which the government should spend the public money;
4. To motivate, namely how can public managers motivate line staff, middle managers, non-profit and for-profit collaborators, stakeholders, and citizens to do the things necessary in view to improve performance;
5. To promote, namely how can public managers convince political superiors, legislators, stakeholders, journalists, and citizens that their agency is doing a good job;
6. To celebrate what accomplishments are worthy for the important organisational ritual of celebrating success;
7. To learn why is something working, or not working;
8. To improve, in other words, what exactly should be done differently to improve performance?

The performance of public service competences has very strong link with both of psychological factors and socio-economic factor, one of them is competence. This is probably the most important thing that predicts job performance. Measuring the job performance of public servant is essential, as it helps to ensure that citizens enjoy high quality services, enables governments to ensure that taxpayers receive value for their taxes, and also ensures democratic accountability (Pidd, 2012). The role of psychology and also psychological factors are very important in explaining performance, so we can used some psychological variables to predict the public service performance beside competence, one of them is social sensitivity.

The level of sensitivity is related to the level of influence and performance: The more sensitive someone is, the more influential she is and the better her followers perform. As Daniel Goleman, a thought leader in the area of emotional intelligence, explains in his book *Primal Leadership*,

Leaders high in emotional Sensitivity are attuned to their inner signals, recognizing how their feelings affect them and

their job performance. Leaders with high Sensitivity typically know their strengths and limitations and exhibit a gracefulness in learning where they need to improve. (Frisina, 2014, p. 76)

The importance of sensitivity goes beyond well-being and mental health to include substantial impacts on day-to-day functioning. It has important effects on performance, with reflection and mindfulness encouraging persistence with tasks despite performance-related stress (Feldman, Dunn, Stemke, Bell, & Greeson, 2014) and rumination related to interpersonal difficulties (Brinker, Chin, & Wilkinson, 2014). Becoming sensitive means discovering what works, what does not work, and what could use a little or a lot of work. In this process, change is almost always required. Change is neither easy nor popular, whether we want to make it happen for ourselves or inspire others to make a change. This current study examined a model of the roles of public service competence in job performance with a focus on social sensitivity as mediators in the putative chain of events linking the competence with performance of *camat*.

Theoretical Background

Job Performance

Public organizations are typically required to meet multiple and potentially conflicting organizational goals (Rainey, 2010). The citizens desire high quality services, and the public administrations wish to supply public services with a high degree of professionalism, in conditions of efficiency, effectiveness, and economy for using the resources. In supplying public services, the local public authorities and institutions have the duty to perform their activity in the achievement of the general interest, applying the principles of good governance.

The internal and external dynamics of the organization leads the changes in the performance approach, now performance is conceptualized more than just the work, but also includes workplace behavior (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000; Johnson, Cassell, Close, & Duberley, 2001; Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998). Initial concepts of the quantity and quality of work developed into dimensions of efficiency and quality (Johnson et al., 2001) can be observed in behavioral tasks and non-task related behaviors but add value to the organization (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994), resulting in organizational effectiveness. Katz and Kahn (1978) identified three types of behavior related to employee performance, i.e., (1) willingness to join the organization; (2) independently meet or exceed performance standards based on job roles; and (3) perform work outside the expected organizational work behavior.

Job performance is defined as an aggregated value to the organization of the discrete behavioural episode that an individual performs over a standard interval of time (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). Job performance is divided into two dimensions: Task performance consists of technical processed and contextual performance refers to interpersonal behaviours that directly benefit organization, i.e., helping others, cooperating with others, and following the stated rules and procedures to carry out task activities (Motowidlo et al., 1997). This research has used role-based performance initiated by Welbourne et al. (1998) to identify job performance. A role is generally defined as the total set of performance responsibilities associated with one's employment (Murphy & Jackson, 1999). In role-based performance, role theory and identity theory are used to develop a theory-based generalizable measure of performance. By using these two theories, a measure of performance includes five different roles, i.e., job, career, innovator, team member, and organization citizen. This theory is a combination of both psychological (individual contributions) as well as sociological

(organizational framework) perspective. *Camat*'s job performance define as work behavior to carry out task as task role, build relation with community and sub-ordinate as team role, effort to enhance competence to improve the quality of work as career role, develop new ideas and creative problem solving as innovative role, and voluntary action without expecting any formal rewards as organizational role. The roles included in the role-based performance scale as dimensions of work performance self report measure.

Public Service Competence

Competencies are the skills, knowledge, and behaviours. Competence defines as the mastery in apply of knowledge, skill, and attitude for performing task and produces something that lead to successful performance. In Sundanese culture, competence definition is similar to the "*buana pancaniti*" value. Competence concept comes from skill acquisition as process of human competence. Researchers Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus (1989) proposed a theoretical model of skill acquisition reflecting a progression from analytic behavior of a detached subject, consciously decomposing his/her environment into recognizable elements, and following abstract rules, involved skilled behavior based on an accumulation of concrete experiences and the unconscious recognition of new situations as similar to whole remembered ones (H. L. Dreyfus & S. E. Dreyfus, 1988). In Dreyfus' continuum, employee passes through five stages: Novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert as result of response-based practice, learn to recognize whole situations in terms of past concrete experiences.

Public service competence in *camat* plays an important role for public accountability and for their career development. The competences standard as state at Law 23 Year 2014 are implementing decentralization policy, management of general governance, manage regional finance, manage executive and legislative relation, manage relation with central government, manage the authority of local government, and public service ethics. Competence of *camat* defines as the application of knowledge, skill, and attitude to carry out the task as required by competence standard. As the Dreyfus' model suggests, competence will continue to the next level if only used in the new and various situation. So, recognize the situation will become key for competence development. *Camat* is facing the dynamic of community situation and their main task is to manage community. The psychological term for recognizing situation is sensitivity (American Psychological Association [APA], 2015).

Social Sensitivity

Sensitivity is awareness of and responsiveness to the feelings of others (APA, 2015). While sensitive is defined as a reaction to the stimulus. Orientation to feelings and awareness in the approach of psychology is part of the concept of interaction that leads individuals to be able to develop effective and efficient relationships orientation to others is an aspect of morality (Hoffman, 1987), key to interpersonal relationships (Davis, 1983), leadership qualities (Zaccaro, Mumford, Connelly, Marks, & Gilbert, 2000), service quality (Parker & Axtell, 2001), and problem-solving effectiveness (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). This view of sensitivity refers to the process of knowing and understanding both yourself and others.

In Sundanese philosophy, this is known as the *ngaji rasa*, which means "to knowing" other people's feelings by putting themselves in the circumstances of others. Social sensitivity is a variable proposed in this study by referring to the function of *camat* as the head of the region with the object of community work. So, if we use the terminology of sensitivity in the layman's sense, the *camat* "easily recognizes" the demands and needs of society through the problems that exist in the community within the scope of authority.

The use of the term sensitivity varies greatly in various contexts, for example, multicultural sensitivity (Fluck, Clouse, & Shoostari, 2007), environmental sensitivity (Kwallek, Woodson, Lewis, & Sales, 1997), and sensitivity related to the effects of drugs (Hutchison, Wood, & Swift, 1999). The term sensitivity also appears in individual discussions with high ability to touch, sound, or visual (Cohen & Leckman, 1992). In this research, social sensitivity defines as ability to recognize themselves and recognizes their role, the ability to interpretation reactions, situations, feelings of others, and understanding of the causes of social situations along with the problem-solving aspirations and anticipation of social situations that characterized by the availability of self-awareness, perspective taking, social perceptiveness, and empathy.

Methods

Participants

One hundred and fifty-five sub-districts head in West Java Province, Indonesia, participated in this study. Then, individuals who voluntarily participate in the project answered the questionnaire, including multiple-item measurement scales that were adapted and constructed to our specific research context from previous literature.

Measures

Public service performance. Employee performance measure was adapted from 20 items of the self-rating instrument of Welbourne et al. (1998). Each item is rated using 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = “Need much improvement” to 5 = “Excellent”.

Public service competence. A comprehensive description of all competencies aspects, including the assessment scale for each competency was suggested in which five points mean “excellent” and one point means “unsatisfactory”. This is a valid, measurable, and reliable competency model that developed closely following the standardized procedures which are consist 15 items.

Social sensitivity. To measure social sensitivity, we develop social sensitivity questionnaire for Indonesian (SQI), which is consist 15 items. They were arranged in random order and presented as a single questionnaire asking respondents to indicate how often they experienced each of the outcomes, with a 5-point frequency response scale from 1= “Never” to 5 = “Almost always”.

Data Analysis

The analyses involved confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and simple mediation analysis with structural equation modeling (SEM) framework. A 1-factor CFA model was specified to test the proposed measurement structure underlying the data for all instruments. The CFA and SEM analyses were performed using Mplus 8 (L. K. Muthen & B. O. Muthen, 1998-2017). All models were estimated using robust diagonal weighted least squares with a mean- and variance- adjusted test statistic, operationalized as the WLSMV estimator in Mplus, under theta parameterization.

An inclusive approach to the evaluation of model fit was used, incorporating an assessment of fit indices, parameter estimates, and alternative models. As the chi-square can be oversensitive to minor model misspecifications and contains a restrictive hypothesis test (i.e., exact fit), we relied on the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988). CFI and TLI values > 0.90 and 0.95 are indicative of acceptable and excellent fit, respectively, and RMSEA values < 0.05 and 0.08 are suggestive of close and reasonable fit, respectively (Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004).

For alternative model comparisons, we relied on changes in the CFI (DCFI), as the adjusted chi-square difference test appropriate for the WLSMV estimator, like the chi-square test itself, is typically oversensitive to minor differences in even moderate-size samples (Guay, Morin, Litalien, Valois, & Vallerand, 2014). A decrease in the CFI of less than 0.01 is suggestive of support for a more restrictive model (Chen, 2007; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A 1-factor CFA was conducted to test the expected measurement structure underlying the manifest indicators for three scales that used in this study. First, this model provided an acceptable fit to the data of public service competence measurement RMSEA = 0.055 (90%, CI = 0.051, 0.058), CFI = 0.915, and TLI = 0.903. Second, the model for job performance was in a good fit to the data with RMSEA = 0.036 (90%, CI = 0.032, 0.038), CFI = 0.954, and TLI = 0.951. And the last, the 1-factor model for social sensitivity are bound in the good fit with RMSEA = 0.040 and CFI = 0.943 with TLI = 0.936. For all of the instruments, the factor loadings were uniformly moderate to high and statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. So, we can conclude that all of the instruments used in this study are very good measurement scale, so we can rely into it.

Simple Mediation Analysis

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), four conditions must be met for a variable to be considered a mediator: (a) the predictor, X , must be significantly associated with the hypothesized mediator, M (letters refer to variables in Figure 1); (b) the predictor, X , must be significantly associated with the dependent measure, Y ; (c) the mediator, M , must be significantly associated with the dependent variable, Y ; and (d) the impact of the predictor, X , on the dependent measure, Y , is less after controlling for the mediator, M . A corollary of the second condition is that there first has to be a significant relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable for a mediator to serve its mediating role. In other words, if X and Y are not significantly associated, there is no significant effect to mediate.

Figure 1. Hypothesized model of simple mediation analysis.

Model equation(s): $Y = b_0 + b_1M + c'X$. Algebra to calculate total, indirect and/or conditional effects by writing model as $Y = a + bX$: $Y = b_0 + b_1M + c'X$. Hence, substituting in equations for M $Y = b_0 + b_1(a_0 + a_1X) + c'X$. Hence, multiplying out brackets $Y = b_0 + a_0b_1 + a_1b_1X + c'X$. Hence, grouping terms into form $Y = a + bX$: $Y = (b_0 + a_0b_1) + (a_1b_1 + c')X$. Hence, indirect effect of X on Y : a_1b_1 , direct effect of X on Y : c' .

Results

A general model that combines the expected relations between public service competence, social sensitivity, and job performance is presented in Figure 2. Social sensitivity is conceptualized as a mediator variable in the relation between public service competence as predictor and job performance as criterion variable.

To test the hypotheses of interest, a structural regression analysis was conducted. Table 1 shows the result of structural regression analysis that was computed. First, performance was regressed on competence. Second, sensitivity was regressed on competence. Third, performance was regressed on social sensitivity. Fourth, the mediation model was tested by regressing performance on competence with indirect effect through social sensitivity as mediator variable.

Figure 2. Result of hypothetical relation between all variables involved.

Table 1

Mediator Model Results

	Estimate	S.E	Est./S.E.	p-value
Performance ON				
Competence	0.347	0.079	4.416	0.000
Sensitivity	0.370	0.072	5.167	0.000
Awareness ON				
Competence	0.363	0.078	4.646	0.000
Intercepts				
Performance	13.463	4.466	3.015	0.003
Sensitivity	32.227	4.118	7.826	0.000
Residual variances				
Performance	56.291	7.571	7.435	0.000
Sensitivity	60.491	6.529	9.176	0.000
Effects from competence to performance				
Indirect	0.134	0.039	3.476	0.001

As predicted, social sensitivity was the largest predictor of *camat's* performance, $\beta = 0.347$, $z = 5.167$, $p < 0.001$. Public service competence was also a significant predictor, $\beta = 0.370$, $z = 4.416$, $p < 0.001$. Public service competence was the predictor of social sensitivity $\beta = 0.363$, $z = 4.646$. Table 1 shows the results of

the bootstrap tests of the indirect effects. The hypothesized indirect relations were in the expected directions and statistically significant.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Limitation

These data suggest competence and sensitivity is associated with public service performance. The present study yielded evidence supporting the postulated direct links from public service competence and social sensitivity to job performance. *Camats* with high competence and social sensitivity were more likely to have greater performance. Evidence was also obtained in support of the theoretical view that public service competence and social sensitivity fosters *camat*'s job performance. The mediational mechanisms examined in this study are also theoretically informative and contribute to the body of literature examining the processes linking competence with performance. Tests of mediation revealed a significant indirect association of public service competence with *camat*'s job performance via social sensitivity. We also note a few limitations of this study that guide the interpretation of results and provide avenues for future research. The limitation concerns the presence of unmeasured confounders that may threaten the validity of the present findings because there may be several unknown third variables that plausibly explain the associations of the competence with the mediators and outcome.

What is true of organizations is also true of individuals. *Camats* are not perfect beings, much like organizations are not perfect entities.

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