

## Mediation Effect of Work Motivation on the Relationship between Soft Skills and Hard Skills, and Impact on Employee Performance in Skincare Clinical

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### ABSTRACT

Employee motivation serves as an indicator of the level of enthusiasm, commitment, and originality that employees direct towards their job responsibilities. This study aims to investigate the effects of both interpersonal skills and technical skills on employee performance, while also examining whether work motivation plays a role in the Clinical Skincare context in Pekanbaru. The study encompasses all personnel associated with the Skincare Clinic in 2019. Using a comprehensive approach, a total of 32 individuals from the clinic were chosen as the study's participants. Data essential for the research was gathered through surveys administered to the clinic's staff. To assess the hypotheses, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted utilizing the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. The results demonstrate that: (1) Interpersonal skills have a positive influence on work motivation. (2) Technical skills have a positive impact on work motivation. (3) Interpersonal skills positively affect employee performance. (4) Technical skills have a favorable effect on performance. (5) Work motivation significantly contributes to performance. (6) Motivation serves as a partial mediator between interpersonal skills and performance. (7) Work motivation does not act as a mediator in the relationship between technical skills and performance. As a suggestion, future researchers are encouraged to explore alternate mediating variables that could impact the association between technical skills and employee performance.

**Keywords:** Work Motivation, Hard Skill, Soft Skill, Employee Performance

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### INTRODUCTION

Riau holds a prominent position as a sought-after tourist destination in Indonesia, attracting a considerable number of international visitors. The concept of beauty has transcended being a mere trend and has evolved into a global lifestyle, extending beyond Indonesia's borders to numerous other nations. This shift has transformed beauty into an essential requirement, prompting the rapid growth of skincare and body care enterprises. The influx of foreign tourists to Riau presents a unique opportunity for these business ventures to showcase skincare products and offer body care solutions to individuals from around the world, all at reasonable prices. Operating within the service sector, beauty clinics are highly influenced by their human resources, which serve as a pivotal factor influencing their performance (Nyoto et al., 2023). The involvement of personnel significantly shapes the efficacy and success of beauty clinics.

Human resources hold a pivotal role in the dynamics of organizational activities. The advancement and triumph of an organization are inherently intertwined with the competence and contributions of its human resources. These personnel are the driving forces behind the execution of business operations within the organization, actively participating in its endeavors. In essence, human resources stand as integral components of the organizational structure. The achievements of the organization are profoundly influenced by the choices and conduct of its employees. Consequently, the organization's performance is intricately linked to the performance of its human resources. Therefore, the collective performance of employees significantly dictates the overall performance of the organization.

Employee performance is subject to the influence of diverse factors, among which lies the significance of abilities and skills. This notion is grounded in the understanding that a job necessitates employees to draw upon an array of skills, competencies, and knowledge domains. Having a diverse set of skills among employees in their positions can help reduce monotony, thus leading to increased job satisfaction and motivation (Kemboi, Biwott, Chenuos, & Rutto, 2013). Ahmed et al. (2018) emphasizes that achieving professional success isn't solely dependent on hard skills, which involve educational achievements, technical expertise, and academic abilities, but also involves soft skills, which include social and emotional competencies. The combination of both hard skills and soft skills in the workplace enables employees to foster positive performance results.

According to Mohamud et al. (2017), work motivation (Hafni et al., 2022; Isik et al., 2018; Ramadona et al., 2021) is a crucial determinant of employee performance. Employee motivation (Kersiati et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2023) encompasses a process whereby organizations employ various incentives such as rewards, bonuses, and other forms of recognition to stimulate employees towards achieving organizational objectives. Motivation holds a significant sway over an organization's human resources, harnessing their potential and enthusiasm to cultivate a proactive willingness to work. This approach allows companies to leverage their resources optimally, resulting in heightened productivity, reduced operational costs, and improved overall efficiency (Shahzadi et al., 2014). Motivation (Rafa'i et al., 2023; Tantular et al., 2023) serves as a driving force, propelling individuals to surmount challenges and hurdles in the workplace, functioning as an advantage that propels progress towards self-defined objectives (Omollo, 2015). Measuring motivation can involve assessing factors like salary increments, supervision, promotions, responsibilities, training opportunities, and fringe benefits (Ghaffari et al., 2017).

The influence of motivation on employee performance has been thoroughly investigated by numerous researchers. Studies conducted by Mohamud et al. (2017) and Ali et al. (2016) provide evidence that work motivation holds a substantial and positive sway over employee performance. However, contrasting findings have also emerged, such as Muogbo's (2013) assertion that intrinsic motivation doesn't substantially affect employee performance. Within the context of clinics, maintaining optimal employee attendance is envisioned to nurture the cultivation of both soft and hard skills, ultimately fostering self-motivation that fuels superior performance. Motivation functions as the impetus compelling employees to harness their capabilities, competencies, skills, energy, and time to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations, consequently steering the organization toward achieving its overarching goals (Pratama, Musadieq, & Nurtjahjono, 2017).

A leading skincare center in Riau focuses on delivering specialized skincare services. This clinic offers a wide range of treatments for the body, such as chemical peels, mesotherapy, facials, laser therapies, oxy skin treatments, light therapy, comprehensive facial treatments, and body whitening services. To ensure customer satisfaction, the clinic provides a comfortable waiting area, air conditioning, television, and other amenities, which contribute to an enhanced overall experience for customers seeking care and products at the MSC clinic in Pekanbaru. To maintain its competitive edge, the MSC Clinic employs effective human resource management practices while emphasizing the incorporation of cutting-edge technology. This involves employing advanced laser technology and a fresh approach to aesthetic integration, which includes anti-aging treatments aimed at preventing the aging process and minimizing facial wrinkles. The clinic boasts a comprehensive team comprising receptionists, beauty therapists, pharmacists, nurses, and specialized doctors. Each member of the team is equipped with the necessary skills, abilities, and positive attitudes to deliver professional services. Beyond its dedication to offering top-notch services and state-of-the-art equipment, the MSC Clinic also ensures accessibility by providing skincare treatments at affordable rates. This comprehensive approach aligns with the clinic's mission to cater to a wide range of customer needs while upholding high standards of quality and care.

Drawing upon the identified phenomenon and the research gaps illuminated by prior studies, this current research endeavors to explore the impact of both soft skills and hard skills on employee performance. Additionally, the study seeks to examine the role of work motivation as a mediating factor within the context of a Skincare clinic located in Pekanbaru. By conducting this study, a comprehensive understanding of how soft skills, hard skills, and work motivation interplay to influence employee performance within the clinic setting will be attained.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Effect of soft skills on work motivation

Samosir et al. (2019) argue that competencies, as measured by skills, have a positive and significant impact on work motivation. The more extensive the competencies provided to employees by the company, the higher their motivation tends to be, and conversely. This conclusion is consistent with findings presented by Mamuaya & Tumiwa (2019), Kurniawan et al. (2018), Heriyanto et al. (2018), and Murgianto et al. (2016). Gichure (2014) confirms that the skill requirements and employees' perceptions of skill development play a crucial role in shaping employee motivation. Intrinsic factors, including employee recognition, the level of skill demand, the influence of employee attitudes toward work, perceptions about skill development, and assessments of contributions to company progress, are identified as intrinsic drivers of employee motivation. With the workforce's diverse skill requirements, which also emphasize soft skills, these insights form the basis for the development of the following hypothesis:

H1: Soft skills have a significant and positive effect on employee work motivation.

### **Effect of hard skills on work motivation**

Samosir et al. (2019) argue that competencies, assessed through levels of skill, yield a positive and substantial influence on work motivation. The greater the competencies offered by the company to its employees, the more elevated their motivation becomes, and conversely. This viewpoint resonates with findings by Mamuaya & Tumiwa (2019), Kurniawan et al. (2018), Heriyanto et al. (2018), and Murgianto et al. (2016), who similarly discovered support for this connection. Gichure (2014) reinforces this perspective by underscoring how skill requirements and employee perceptions of skill development notably impact employee motivation. Intrinsic factors influencing motivation encompass employee recognition within the organization, the extent of skill demand, the influence of employee outlooks on work, their perceptions of skill development, and their assessments of contributions to the company's advancement. Given the diverse skills demanded within the workforce, including the prominence of hard skills, the aforementioned insights lay the groundwork for formulating the subsequent hypothesis:

H2: Hard skills have a significant and positive effect on employee work motivation.

### **Effect of soft skills on employee performance**

Anggiani (2017) asserts that soft skills have a substantial influence on employee performance, surpassing the coefficient value of hard skill variables. Particularly, individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to achieve better performance outcomes. Soft skills encompass behaviors that directly affect customer perceptions and emotions. These behaviors have the potential to elicit positive, negative, or neutral reactions, including various aspects such as communication styles (both verbal and non-verbal), attitudes, teamwork, self-awareness, authenticity, empathy, and even leadership qualities. Soft skills are evident in personal interactions and illustrate how team members utilize their attitudes, behaviors, and communication abilities to interact with customers. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Sitompul et al. (2017), who similarly concluded that soft skills have a significant impact on the quality of work. Given these insights, the development of the following hypothesis is evident:

H3: Soft skills have a significant and positive effect on employee performance.

### **Effect of hard skills on employee performance**

Hard skills encompass tangible and technical abilities such as expertise in reservation systems, customer check-in procedures, property maintenance protocols, banquet preparation workflows, and comparable proficiencies. These skills revolve around utilizing systems, tools, and methodologies to provide products and services to customers. The influence of hard skills on employee performance has been substantiated (Anggiani, 2017). This viewpoint is echoed in the findings of Sitompul et al. (2017), who also noted the substantial impact of hard skills on work quality. Building upon this comprehension, the construction of the ensuing hypothesis is justified:

H4: Hard skills have a significant and positive effect on employee performance.

### **The influence of work motivation on employee performance**

Motivation serves as the driving force propelling individuals to surmount challenges and obstacles encountered in the workplace, functioning as an impetus that propels them towards the realization of organizational goals and objectives. This intrinsic drive presents itself as an advantageous tool for propelling oneself forward on the path of personal progression. The quest for achievement inherently triggers an inclination to invest additional efforts in striving for excellence, coupled with an inherent aspiration for success. In the managerial realm, fostering employee motivation involves instilling a proactive mindset, prompting employees to initiate tasks without external prompts. Contrastingly, extrinsic motivation materializes from external rewards, encompassing elements like remuneration, tangible assets, prestige, and positive appraisals (Omollo, 2015). Another perspective posits that employees become motivated when they perceive their viewpoints as valuable, thereby cultivating a sense of purpose. This perspective resonates with the notion that incentives align with workers' demands and expectations, fostering a reciprocal exchange whereby individuals contribute effort and integrity in return (Ali et al., 2016). Supported by the research conducted by Ali et al. (2016) and Mohamud et al. (2017), which posit that work motivation exerts a considerable and affirmative influence on employee performance, the formulation of the following hypothesis is warranted:

H5: Work motivation has a significant and positive effect on employee performance

### **The role of work motivation mediates the relationship between soft skills and employee performance**

Mamuaya & Tumiwa (2019) present their research findings, indicating that competencies, particularly soft skills, exert both a direct influence on employee performance and an indirect impact through motivation. The mediation effect through motivation is considered to have a more pronounced influence. Employees possessing advanced skills, especially broad knowledge, demonstrate increased work motivation, subsequently enhancing their task performance efficacy. Parallel outcomes are echoed by Supriadi et al. (2018), Alexandri et al. (2019), Rijanti et al. (2017), and Kurniawan et al. (2018), all of whom conclude that work motivation can serve as a mediating factor in the connection between competencies (specifically soft skills) and employee performance. Given these findings, the construction of the ensuing hypothesis is justifiable:

H6: Work motivation mediates the relationship between soft skills and employee performance

### **The role of work motivation mediates the relationship between hard skills and employee performance**

Rumasukun et al. (2015) elaborate on their research findings, proposing that hard skills exert a direct impact on employee performance while also operating indirectly through motivation, functioning as a mediator or intervening variable. Employees equipped with competencies, which encompass abilities and hard skills, combined with positive employee attitudes, can experience enhanced work motivation, ultimately fostering improved employee performance. Increased employee motivation has been shown to elevate overall performance levels, influencing both work attitudes and performance outcomes. This standpoint is corroborated by findings from Haluk et al. (2016), Supriadi et al. (2018), Utoyo et al. (2019), and Wetipo et al. (2015), all of whom emphasize the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between competencies (specifically hard skills) and employee performance. Drawing from these insights, the development of the ensuing hypothesis is merited:

H7: Work motivation mediates the relationship between hard skills and employee performance.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The scope of this study involved all employees who were actively employed at the Skincare Clinic throughout the entirety of 2019. Utilizing the census method, the entire workforce was considered for inclusion in the sample, resulting in a total of 32 employees selected from the Skincare Clinic located in Pekanbaru. The collection of primary data was accomplished through the distribution of questionnaires to the employees, which constituted the dataset used for the research. To assess the hypotheses put forth, an analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed, employing the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique. This approach enabled the examination of the proposed hypotheses and their implications within the specific context of the Skincare Clinic in Pekanbaru.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Measurement Model/Outer Model**

Given that the indicators constituting latent variables in this study are reflective in nature, the assessment of measurement models assumes paramount importance. The aim of this assessment encompasses the validation and reliability evaluation of these indicators, considering the following key criteria:

- a. **Convergent Validity:** This criterion gauges the consistency of the indicators within a latent variable. Convergent validity is indicative of how well the indicators collectively measure the underlying construct. Higher levels of convergent validity suggest a stronger association between the indicators and the latent variable.
- b. **Discriminant Validity:** Discriminant validity examines the extent to which different latent variables are distinct from one another. It ensures that the indicators of each latent variable are more closely aligned with their respective construct than with other constructs, thereby avoiding potential confusion.
- c. **Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha:** Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha are metrics employed to assess the internal consistency of the indicators within a latent variable. Both indices offer insights into the reliability of the measurement model. Composite reliability reflects the extent to which the indicators collectively exhibit reliability, while Cronbach's alpha estimates the average inter-item correlation.

The utilization of a measurement model is particularly pertinent in this study due to the reflective nature of the indicators composing the latent variables. This approach facilitates a rigorous evaluation of the

measurement model's validity, reliability, and consistency in reflecting the underlying constructs in the context of the Skincare Clinic in Pekanbaru.

### Hypothesis Test

**Table 1. Path Analysis and Testing Statistics**

|                                | Original<br>Sample (O) | Sample<br>Mean (M) | Standard<br>Deviation (Stdev) | T statistics<br>( O/Stdev ) |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hard Skill -> Performance      | 0.223                  | 0.194              | 0.114                         | 2.614                       |
| Hard Skill -> Work Motivation  | 0.538                  | 0.531              | 0.118                         | 7.992                       |
| Work Motivation -> Performance | 0.527                  | 0.565              | 0.170                         | 5.383                       |
| Soft Skill -> Performance      | 0.464                  | 0.387              | 0.099                         | 4.881                       |

Source: Processed data, 2023

Work motivation is recognized as a partial mediator between soft skills and performance, indicating its involvement in mediating the connection between these two variables. All hypotheses have been validated. Nevertheless, the outcomes suggest that work motivation does not act as a mediator in the relationship between hard skills and performance. In summary, the findings provide insights into the complex interaction among soft skills, hard skills, work motivation, and employee performance within the specific setting of the Skincare Clinic in Pekanbaru.

### Discussion

#### Effect of Soft Skill on Work Motivation

The findings of the study emphasize a significant and positive correlation between soft skills and employee motivation at the MSC Clinic in Pekanbaru. This suggests that enhancing employees' soft skills at the clinic can lead to an elevation in their levels of motivation. These outcomes are in line with prior research conducted by Samosir et al. (2019), which revealed that competencies, including skills, have a favorable and meaningful influence on work motivation. When employees possess higher levels of competence, as acknowledged and supported by the organization, their motivation tends to increase. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Mamuaya & Tumiwa (2019), Kurniawan et al. (2018), Heriyanto et al. (2018), and Murgianto et al. (2016), who observed that employees' perception of skill development and its applicability to their job significantly impact their motivation. Intrinsic factors such as employee recognition, alignment of skill requirements, and the impact of skills on job tasks act as inherent motivators. These findings underscore the pivotal role played by various skill types, particularly soft skills, in shaping employee motivation within the organizational context.

#### Effects of Hard Skills on Work Motivation

The study's findings emphasize a significant and positive association between hard skills and employee work motivation at the MSC Clinic in Pekanbaru. This suggests that enhancing the hard skills of employees at the clinic can lead to an increase in their motivation levels. These outcomes align with prior research conducted by Samosir et al. (2019), which demonstrated that competencies, including skills, have a constructive and noteworthy impact on work motivation. The more substantial the competencies provided to employees by the organization, the higher their motivation tends to be. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Mamuaya & Tumiwa (2019), Kurniawan et al. (2018), Heriyanto et al. (2018), and Murgianto et al. (2016), all of whom observed that skill requirements and employee perceptions of skill development influence employee motivation. Intrinsic factors, such as employee recognition, alignment of skill requirements, and employee perceptions regarding skill development, contribute to intrinsic motivation. These findings underscore the essential role that various types of skills, including hard skills, play in shaping employee motivation within the context of the organization.

#### Effect of Soft Skill on Employee Performance

The study's findings underscore a significant and positive relationship between soft skills and employee performance at the MSC Clinic in Pekanbaru. This suggests that enhancing the soft skills of employees at the clinic can lead to an improvement in their overall performance. These results align with the conclusions drawn by Anggiani (2017), whose research emphasized that soft skills have a substantial impact on employee performance. Notably, the coefficient value of soft skills was found to be greater than that of hard skills, indicating their influential role. The study further highlighted that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to exhibit better performance. Soft skills encompass behaviors that directly influence customer perceptions and emotions. These behaviors can lead to positive, negative, or neutral reactions, influencing customer satisfaction. Soft skills

encompass various elements such as communication styles, attitude, teamwork, awareness, authenticity, empathy, and leadership. These skills are integral to providing personalized service and shape how team members interact with customers. The consistency of these findings with research conducted by Sitompul et al. (2017) further reinforces the significance of soft skills in enhancing the quality of one's work.

### **Effect of Hard Skills on Employee Performance**

The study's findings highlight a substantial and positive connection between hard skills and employee performance at the MSC Clinic in Pekanbaru. This indicates that enhancing the hard skills of employees at the clinic can result in an enhancement of their overall performance. These outcomes are in accordance with the conclusions drawn by Cimatti (2016), whose research emphasized the significant influence of hard skills on employee performance. Hard skills encompass a variety of systems and processes established to deliver services and facilities to customers. These may include tasks such as managing reservations, check-in procedures, property maintenance protocols, banquet preparations, and similar activities. Hard skills specifically pertain to the application of systems, tools, and methodologies used to provide products and services to customers. The study further revealed that hard skills play a crucial role in shaping employee performance, a finding echoed in the research of Anggiani (2017) and Sitompul et al. (2017), both of which underscored the substantial impact of hard skills on the quality of work.

### **Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance**

The outcomes of the hypothesis testing provide substantial support for the notion that work motivation exerts a significant positive influence on employee performance at the MSC Clinic in Pekanbaru. This confirms the validity of the hypothesis proposing a positive correlation between work motivation and employee performance, as evidenced by the study's analysis. In essence, enhancing the work motivation of employees at the MSC Clinic can result in an augmentation of their overall performance. These findings are in alignment with the results of earlier research conducted by Ali et al. (2016) and Mohamud et al. (2017), both of whom reached the conclusion that work motivation plays a significant and favorable role in shaping employee performance. Furthermore, the work of Omollo (2015) reinforces these results by underscoring the existence of a substantial and positive association between work motivation and employee performance. This indicates that a higher level of work motivation within an organization indeed has the potential to lead to an improvement in employee performance.

### **The role of work motivation mediates the relationship between soft skills and employee performance**

The findings suggest that work motivation acts as a partial mediator between soft skills and employee performance at the MSC Clinic. These results are in line with prior research conducted by Supriadi et al. (2018), Alexandri et al. (2019), Rijanti et al. (2017), and Kurniawan et al. (2018), all of whom demonstrated that work motivation can serve as a mediator in the relationship between competencies (including soft skills) and employee performance. Moreover, the study conducted by Mamuaya & Tumiwa (2019) supports these outcomes by asserting that competence has both direct and indirect impacts on employee performance through work motivation, with the indirect influence through motivation being of greater significance. Employees possessing high levels of competence and skills, particularly extensive knowledge, are likely to display heightened work motivation, which subsequently contributes to improved work performance. These findings align with the current study's results, highlighting the partial mediating role of work motivation between soft skills and employee performance at the MSC Clinic.

### **The role of work motivation mediates the relationship between hard skills and employee performance**

Contrary to some previous research findings, the results of this study indicate that motivation does not serve as a mediator between hard skills and employee performance at the MSC Clinic. These findings diverge from research conducted by Rumasukun et al. (2015) and other studies such as Haluk et al. (2016), Supriadi et al. (2018), Utoyo et al. (2019), and Wetipo et al. (2015), which collectively suggested that work motivation mediates the relationship between hard skill competencies and employee performance. It's worth noting that the difference in outcomes could potentially be attributed to the unique context and characteristics of the MSC Clinic. Employees at the clinic might execute their tasks with the skills and abilities derived from their professional training, delivering services to patients in a highly specialized manner. Therefore, the direct impact of their hard skills on performance could overshadow the mediating role of motivation. These results emphasize the significance of considering the specific organizational context and dynamics when interpreting research outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

### Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive analysis and discussion presented above, several key conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, the research findings indicate that higher levels of soft skills among employees at the Skincare Clinic in Pekanbaru are positively associated with improved work motivation. Similarly, employees with better hard skills exhibit higher levels of work motivation. This suggests that enhancing both soft and hard skills can contribute to fostering greater motivation among clinic employees.

### Implication

Furthermore, the study reveals that strong soft skills held by employees are instrumental in enhancing their performance at the Skincare Clinic in Pekanbaru. Similarly, the possession of proficient hard skills is correlated with improved employee performance. These findings underscore the importance of continuously nurturing and developing both types of skills to elevate the overall effectiveness and output of the clinic's workforce. Moreover, the results affirm that higher levels of work motivation are positively linked to enhanced employee performance at the Skincare Clinic. Employees who are more motivated are more likely to perform at a higher level, contributing positively to the clinic's overall success.

### Limitation

However, in contrast to some previous research, this study does not find work motivation to be a mediating factor between hard skills and employee performance at the Skincare Clinic. This divergence in findings emphasizes the uniqueness of the clinic's operational context and the potential dominance of direct hard skill effects on performance. In conclusion, this research highlights the pivotal role of both soft and hard skills in influencing work motivation and employee performance at the Skincare Clinic in Pekanbaru.

### Recommendation

It recommends a continuous focus on skill development to enhance motivation and ultimately optimize performance outcomes. Additionally, the study underscores the necessity of recognizing the specific context of an organization when interpreting research outcomes.

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