Strengthening Civil Servant Competency to Improve Public Service Performance: A Regulatory Evaluation Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the issue of suboptimal public service delivery, which is often attributed to gaps in the competencies of civil servants (ASN), especially in the areas of technical and managerial capacity. The main objective of the research is to evaluate the extent to which civil servant competencies influence public service performance, guided by Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019 on Civil Servant Performance Assessment. The study also aims to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that affect competency fulfillment in delivering effective services. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research was conducted at the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency. Subjects involved in this study included structural officials, functional staff, and administrative personnel. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while the analysis employed qualitative content analysis techniques. The findings reveal that civil servants demonstrate adequate socio-cultural competencies, such as empathy and adaptability in community interactions. However, deficiencies were identified in technical skills, especially among new employees unfamiliar with digital systems, and in managerial practices, including poor coordination and unclear delegation. Public service performance—measured through effectiveness, efficiency, and economy—was hindered by outdated infrastructure, excessive reliance on manual processes, and budget inefficiencies. Supporting factors include clear regulatory frameworks, committed leadership, and basic facilities. Meanwhile, constraints include limited training opportunities, inadequate staffing, and poor digital data management. The study concludes that enhancing civil servant competencies through targeted training, integrated digital systems, and strategic resource planning is crucial to improving public service performance. These findings have practical implications for strengthening human resource development policies in local government administration.

INTRODUCTION

The Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency serves as a regional government agency responsible for implementing social welfare policies and services. This office plays a vital role in executing regional authority, assisting the Regent in formulating and enforcing social policies, and addressing the needs of individuals facing social welfare issues (PMKS). The agency operates within the framework of the regional vision: "Gerakan Membangun Kotawaringin Barat Menuju Kejayaan dengan Kerja Nyata dan Ikhlas," which envisions a safe, peaceful, and dynamic society. As outlined in the official government website, this vision is pursued through inclusive and sustainable social welfare programs that align with local community dynamics and development needs.

Public service delivery in the field of social welfare is the core responsibility of civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara, or ASN) working within the Social Affairs Office. These civil servants are essential actors in implementing social assistance programs, social rehabilitation, empowerment, and protection of vulnerable groups. According to Law No. 5 of 2014 on State Civil Apparatus, ASNs are expected to uphold professionalism, integrity, and public accountability. They function as policy

implementers, public service providers, and unifying agents of the state (Prasojo & Rudita, 2014; Faedlulloh, 2015).

Ideally, civil servants are expected to perform their duties in accordance with the values of integrity, competence, and measurable performance as mandated by regulatory instruments such as Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019. This regulation outlines clear performance standards, including competency dimensions and evaluation indicators to ensure that ASN performance aligns with organizational goals and citizen expectations. However, in practice (*das sein*), the reality shows a persistent gap. Despite these clear mandates (*das sollen*), public service delivery in the field of social welfare remains far from optimal. Empirical studies and institutional reports consistently indicate limitations in staff competence, lack of coordination, outdated procedures, and insufficient resource support as ongoing barriers to achieving quality services (Mahmuda, 2021; Hayat, 2014; Damaiyanto et al., 2015).

This disparity between expected standards and actual field implementation highlights a critical competency gap among civil servants. For instance, performance data from the 2023 Government Agency Performance Report (LKIP) in West Kotawaringin revealed that the target for addressing PMKS

cases (86.5%) was only partially achieved (83.75%). While this achievement is categorized as "very high," significant unresolved issues such as human resource shortages and retirement-related vacancies continue to undermine performance. Such discrepancies justify the urgency to study and address civil servant competencies as a decisive factor in public service outcomes.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate two central issues: First, how do civil servant competencies influence public service performance at the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency, particularly through the lens of Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019? Second, what are the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the development of these competencies in achieving optimal service delivery?

The novelty of this study lies in its evaluative approach to linking civil servant competency with measurable public service outcomes using the evaluation framework set forth by Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019. By focusing on the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency, this research seeks to provide actionable recommendations for strengthening human resource capacity in regional public administration.

To analyze the competencies of civil servants in supporting public service performance at the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency based on the framework established in Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019 concerning Civil Servant Performance Evaluation. To identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in fulfilling civil servant competencies to ensure the delivery of high-quality public services in the field of social welfare.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to understand and evaluate the competencies of civil servants in relation to public service performance. The research was conducted at the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency, where civil servants are directly involved in delivering social welfare services.

1. Research Design

The study employs an evaluative descriptive method aimed at analyzing how competency dimensions align with service performance outcomes. This approach allows the researcher to explore and describe real conditions in the field and assess the effectiveness of civil servant performance through observation, interviews, and document analysis.

2. Data Collection Techniques

Three main techniques were used to gather data:

- Observation: Direct field observations of civil servant activities related to public service delivery.
- In-depth Interviews: Conducted with key informants including structural officials, functional officers, and staff of the Social Affairs Office.
- Documentation: Analysis of official reports, performance records, regulations, and other relevant administrative documents.

3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques. The analysis involved data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The evaluation framework of Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019 guided the thematic analysis of competencies and performance indicators.

4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the study applied triangulation across the three sources of data: observation, interviews, and documentation. Member checking and peer debriefing were also conducted to verify interpretations and conclusions.

This methodological approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the link between civil servant competencies and the quality of public services, offering insights for future policy and capacity development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings and their interpretation in the context of civil servant competencies and public service performance at the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency. The discussion is structured based on the three main competency dimensions outlined in Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019: technical, managerial, and socio-cultural competencies. Supporting and inhibiting factors are also explored.

1. Technical Competency Assessment

The technical competency of civil servants was found to vary significantly among individuals. Senior staff generally demonstrated a good understanding of procedures, regulatory frameworks, and reporting mechanisms. However, many junior staff, especially those recently assigned, lacked mastery of digital information systems, data processing tools, and standard operating procedures.

This disparity in technical capacity has led to inefficiencies in task execution, delays in administrative processes, and inconsistencies in data reporting. In several departments, the lack of digital literacy among junior personnel has placed additional burdens on senior staff, who are often compelled to supervise routine tasks or recheck completed work for accuracy. The situation highlights an urgent need for targeted capacity-building initiatives, including structured onboarding programs, regular in-service training, and mentorship schemes to bridge the competency gap and ensure institutional effectiveness.

Figure 1. Front Desk Interaction Area at the Social Affairs Office

This lack of technical proficiency created bottlenecks in service flow, particularly in areas such as data entry for PMKS cases, preparation of social assistance reports, and the handling of citizen complaints through online platforms.

Training records indicated that only 37% of staff had attended technical workshops in the past year.

2. Managerial Competency Assessment

Managerial competency was observed to be inconsistent across divisions. Department heads were generally capable of planning and organizing their units, but there were weaknesses in coordination and delegation practices. Staff feedback revealed that task assignments were often unclear, and work targets were not communicated effectively.

These shortcomings have contributed to confusion in role execution, overlapping responsibilities, and reduced accountability within teams. Moreover, the absence of clear performance indicators and regular monitoring mechanisms has made it difficult to evaluate progress or address bottlenecks promptly. To enhance managerial effectiveness, it is essential to strengthen internal communication channels, implement structured performance management systems, and provide leadership training focused on strategic delegation, team coordination, and feedback delivery.

3. Socio-Cultural Competency Assessment

Socio-cultural competency showed relatively better results. Most civil servants were able to communicate effectively with beneficiaries from diverse backgrounds. Interview results indicated a high level of empathy, responsiveness, and cultural sensitivity during field interactions.

Despite these strengths, there were still instances where implicit biases and assumptions influenced decision-making, particularly in service delivery to marginalized groups. Additionally, while interpersonal skills were strong at the individual level, institutional mechanisms to integrate socio-cultural considerations into program design and policy implementation remained limited. To sustain and enhance this competency, agencies should invest in continuous cultural competency training, promote inclusive practices, and encourage participatory approaches that involve community voices in planning and evaluation processes.

Figure 2. Waiting Area for Service Beneficiaries

Challenges remained in handling cases involving indigenous communities and persons with disabilities, where more specialized cultural and behavioral training was needed. This gap has led to occasional miscommunication and decreased trust from vulnerable community groups. Furthermore, the lack of standardized protocols and tailored service approaches for these groups has hindered the delivery of equitable and inclusive public services. Field staff often reported feeling

unprepared to address the unique needs and expectations of indigenous populations and persons with disabilities, resulting in reactive rather than proactive engagement. Addressing this issue requires the development of context-specific guidelines, collaboration with community representatives, and institutional support for capacity-building programs that emphasize inclusive governance and human rights-based approaches.

4. Performance Outcomes

Performance monitoring in the delivery of PMKS (Penyandang Masalah Kesejahteraan Sosial) services has become increasingly important in assessing the impact of government interventions on vulnerable populations. Regular assessments were conducted using a combination of quantitative indicators and qualitative feedback mechanisms. These evaluations aimed to capture not only the extent to which targets were met but also the quality and sustainability of outcomes. In particular, attention was given to frontline service delivery, institutional capacity, and the alignment of program implementation with broader social protection goals.

Aspect	Target	Achievement
PMKS Handling Issues include: 1. Lack of human resources in the division responsible for Minimum Service Standards (SPM) 2. The need to add staff to the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency due to the retirement of existing personnel	86,5%	83.75%

The actual performance, measured against effectiveness, efficiency, and economy indicators, revealed mixed results. While the achievement rate for PMKS handling was 83.75%, below the target of 86.5%, qualitative improvements were observed in staff responsiveness and beneficiary satisfaction.

Efficiency remained a concern due to heavy reliance on manual administrative procedures and paper-based documenttation. Budget execution was also suboptimal, with over 12% of the allocated funds for PMKS services unutilized by the end of the fiscal year.

Figure 3. Archive and Documentation Room Conditions

5. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Institutional analysis revealed that the success of PMKS service delivery was heavily influenced by both structural and operational factors within the implementing agencies. Organizational design, staffing patterns, and inter-unit coordination played a central role in shaping the effectiveness of field operations. While some units demonstrated adaptive management and innovation in service delivery, others struggled with rigid hierarchies and unclear lines of authority. Moreover, external collaborations with local governments and community-based organizations varied widely, affecting the consistency and reach of interventions across regions.

Key supporting factors identified include:

- Clear regulatory guidelines and SOPs
- Availability of core infrastructure (vehicles, communication tools)
- Strong leadership support for civil service reform

Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include:

- Limited access to regular training and capacity-building
- Retirement of skilled personnel without adequate succession
- Lack of digital system integration between units
- Inadequate documentation practices

6. Policy Implications and Recommendations

The findings suggest an urgent need for targeted intervention strategies to enhance ASN competencies. Recommendations include:

- Implementing mandatory technical and managerial training every semester
- Digitizing all documentation and workflows with a centralized information system
- Creating a mentorship program between senior and junior staff
- Strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework with real-time indicators

These strategies aim to foster a competent and responsive civil service In addition to the recommendations above, institutional culture and organizational learning also play a critical role in shaping civil servant behavior and performance. Establishing a continuous learning environment, where knowledge-sharing sessions, peer mentoring, and reflective evaluations are embedded into regular workflows, could significantly improve competency development across levels. Furthermore, aligning individual civil servant goals with organizational performance targets—through transparent appraisal mechanisms—can boost motivation and accountability.

Another aspect that requires attention is the integration of community feedback into performance appraisal systems. By systematically collecting and analyzing beneficiary satisfaction data, the institution can refine its service protocols and adjust training needs in a timely manner. Participatory feedback not only strengthens accountability but also encourages civil servants to develop empathy, cultural intelligence, and problem-solving skills tailored to real community needs.

Cross-agency collaboration is another dimension worth enhancing. Fragmentation between departments often leads to duplication of efforts, inconsistent data records, and communication breakdowns. Building an integrated digital ecosystem supported by interoperable data platforms can facilitate real-time coordination, resource optimization, and improved decision-making. When technical, managerial, and socio-cultural competencies are supported by structural reforms and a data-driven culture, the overall public service ecosystem becomes more adaptive, inclusive, and resilient.

Lastly, there is an urgent need to invest in succession planning, especially as many experienced civil servants are approaching retirement. Leadership development programs targeting middle-level managers can prepare the next generation of administrators to take on strategic roles. Such programs should not only cover technical knowledge and management theory but also emphasize ethical leadership, digital transformation, and citizen-centric innovation. capable of delivering inclusive, effective, and efficient public services. Aligning competency development with performance evaluation, as regulated by Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019, is critical to achieving this vision.

The next section will present the conclusion and suggestions based on the overall research findings.

In addressing the competency gaps identified, it is also important to recognize the role of contextual learning. Civil servants should not only be trained in abstract principles but must also be exposed to real-life case simulations, community immersion, and scenario-based exercises that reflect the unique demographic, socio-economic, and cultural dynamics of West Kotawaringin. Such experiential learning techniques have been proven to strengthen problem-solving abilities and reinforce core values like empathy, adaptability, and innovation.

In addition, performance-based incentives should be reconsidered as a tool for motivating competency development. When civil servants perceive a direct relationship between improved skills and recognition—whether in the form of promotions, bonuses, or public acknowledgment—they are more likely to engage in continuous self-improvement. This merit-based system should be clearly communicated and monitored transparently to avoid favoritism and maintain institutional integrity.

Monitoring and evaluation systems must also evolve to keep pace with reforms. Conventional top-down assessments often fail to capture day-to-day challenges faced by ASNs. Introducing 360-degree feedback mechanisms, including peer reviews and community input, can offer more nuanced insights into civil servant performance. Such systems promote accounttability and enable managers to identify targeted interventions more accurately.

Lastly, collaboration with academic institutions and professional training centers can help local governments design up-to-date modules tailored to current administrative challenges. Universities and policy think-tanks may assist in developing evidence-based curricula aligned with national competency standards. These collaborations not only foster innovation but also create a dynamic ecosystem of learning, practice, and policy-making that supports the continuous evolution of public sector competencies.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the competencies of civil servants (ASN) at the Social Affairs Office of West Kotawaringin Regency in relation to the quality of public service performance, guided by Government Regulation No. 30 of 2019 concerning Civil Servant Performance Evaluation. The findings revealed that although socio-cultural competence

among ASNs was generally strong—evidenced by effective community interaction—technical and managerial competencies remained underdeveloped, especially among new staff.

The assessment also identified critical issues in service implementation, such as low digital literacy, inconsistent managerial coordination, and limited resource planning. These factors hindered the achievement of performance targets, with the actual PMKS case resolution rate falling slightly below the target. Despite some improvements in responsiveness and beneficiary engagement, inefficiencies persisted due to outdated administrative practices and insufficient human resources.

Supporting factors, including clear regulatory frameworks, basic infrastructure, and leadership support, helped sustain certain service standards. However, barriers such as minimal training, unintegrated systems, and staffing gaps continue to limit optimal performance. The research underscores the importance of structured competency development programs, stronger inter-unit coordination, and digitization of workflows to enhance public service delivery.

In conclusion, strengthening the three core competencies—technical, managerial, and socio-cultural—among ASNs is essential to improving public service effectiveness, efficiency, and economy. The integration of performance evaluation mechanisms with competency development policies is key to achieving sustainable improvements in public administration. Strategic investments in training, technology, and organizational reform are strongly recommended to ensure the long-term enhancement of service delivery capacity at the local government level.

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