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Competency, Compensation, and Nurses' Performance: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement in Healthcare Settings

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study examines the effect of competency and compensation on nurses' performance, with work engagement as a mediating variable in a hospital context, addressing the limited integration of these variables in prior research.

Methodology: Utilizing survey data derived from 96 nurses chosen at random from Fikri Medika Hospital in Karawang, a quantitative method was used. The data was analyzed using SmartPLS 4, which stands for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling. This included both measurement and assessment of the structural model.

Findings: The results indicate that competency and compensation have a positive and significant effect on nurses' performance. Work engagement also significantly affects performance and partially mediates the relationships between competency, compensation, and performance.

Conclusion: The study concludes that enhancing nurses' performance requires integrated human resource strategies, including competency development, fair compensation systems, and the promotion of work engagement to improve healthcare service outcomes

KEYWORDS: competence; compensation; work engagement; nurse's performance; PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

Human resources play a crucial role in determining organizational effectiveness, particularly in highly competitive environments that demand continuous performance and high-quality service delivery. In healthcare organizations, despite rapid technological advancements, human capital remains the primary driver of service quality, as it is closely associated with employees' competence, motivation, and psychological engagement. Therefore, effective human resource management is essential to enhance nurses' performance and ensure sustainable organizational outcomes.

Hospitals, as professional service organizations, are responsible for delivering safe and high-quality healthcare services to society. Within this context, nurses represent a critical component of the healthcare system, as they are directly involved in patient care and significantly influence treatment quality, patient satisfaction, and overall organizational performance. Consequently, improving nurses' performance has become a strategic priority for healthcare institutions.

Factors at the individual and organizational levels impact nurses' productivity. An important personal asset is competence, which is the set of traits that allows one to do a job well. Financial and non-financial awards offered to workers in exchange for their efforts are ways in which remuneration shows organizational support. Furthermore, employee engagement has grown in importance as a psychological mechanism that connects organizational practices to business results. Improved output and service quality are common outcomes of engaged nurses' increased vigor, commitment, and concentration.

Despite prior research, the results are still contradictory when looking at the connections between competency, pay, and performance. While some studies report that compensation significantly enhances employee performance, others find weak or insignificant effects. Furthermore, research investigating work engagement as a mediating variable is still limited, particularly within the healthcare sector in Indonesia. Most prior studies have focused on other industries, thereby overlooking the unique characteristics of hospital environments. Because of this knowledge gap, an integrated framework is needed to study the effects of organizational and individual resources on nurses' performance.

As its theoretical basis, this research embraces the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) hypothesis. Work engagement, which in turn leads to better performance results, is influenced by both individual and organizational resources, according to the JD-R model. This research views remuneration as an organizational resource that shows support and recognition, and competence as a personal resource that boosts self-efficacy and professional aptitude. This connection between these resources and performance is mediated by work engagement, which acts as a motivating force.

In light of the lack of prior research, the current study intends to fill that knowledge gap by investigating the nexus between nurses' performance and competence, remuneration, and job engagement. This study examines the direct and indirect interactions among variables using data obtained from nurses at Fikri Medika Hospital, Karawang. It takes a quantitative approach and employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). We anticipate that the results will give light on how healthcare companies might boost their performance and add to the body of knowledge in human resource management.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical Background and State of the Art

According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) hypothesis, which is the basis of this research, the availability of personal and job resources that encourage engagement and motivation at work has an effect on employee performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources, like pay, provide external support that encourages workers and decreases stress associated with work, while personal resources, like competence, boost self-efficacy and the capacity to execute tasks successfully. One important psychological process that links these resources to performance results is work engagement.

There has been a lot of research looking at the connections between competency, pay, and output. But results are still mixed, especially when it comes to how pay affects productivity. Also, there is a dearth of research that integrates job involvement with other mediating factors in a single model, which is particularly problematic in healthcare settings. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge by expanding the JD-R model to include nurses' performance in relation to remuneration, job engagement, and competence.

Competence and Nurses' Performance

Competence refers to an individual's knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes required to perform tasks effectively. In healthcare settings, competence is essential for accurate clinical decision-making and adherence to medical procedures. Empirical studies show that higher competence improves service quality, clinical reasoning, and overall performance (Sanjaya et al., 2016; Agustian et al., 2018; Makkasau, 2016). Within the JD-R framework, competence is categorized as a personal resource that enhances employees' capacity to achieve higher performance.

H1: Competence has a positive effect on nurses' performance.

Compensation and Nurses' Performance

Compensation includes financial and non-financial rewards provided by organizations in return for employees' contributions. Incentive pay increases motivation, contentment in one's work, and loyalty to one's employer. Ardillah et al. (2020) and Ahmed and Ramzan (2014) are two studies that found that pay has a beneficial effect on productivity and performance in the workplace. Compensation is viewed as a job resource that helps employees, lowers stress levels, and improves performance outcomes in the JD-R model.

H2: Compensation has a positive effect on nurses' performance.

Work Engagement and Nurses' Performance

One definition of job engagement is an enthusiastic, committed, and fully absorbed state of mind that is positively and fulfillingly tied to one's work. With more enthusiasm, concentration, and dedication, engaged workers are able to do more. Previous research has shown that when employees are actively involved in their job, it greatly improves both productivity and service quality (Bakker et al., 2014; Anitha, 2014; Oebidat, 2016). Work engagement, as proposed by the JD-R theory, is a motivating process that converts resources into enhanced performance.

H3: Work engagement has a positive effect on nurses' performance.

Competence and Work Engagement

Competence contributes to psychological empowerment and self-efficacy, which are essential drivers of work engagement. Employees with higher competence tend to feel more confident and capable, leading to greater involvement in their work. Empirical studies demonstrate a positive relationship between competence and engagement (Sakdiyah & Widodo, 2018; Kim &

Park, 2017). From the JD-R perspective, competence as a personal resource enhances engagement by enabling individuals to meet job demands effectively.

H4: Competence has a positive effect on work engagement.

Compensation and Work Engagement

Compensation reflects organizational recognition and support, which strengthens employees' emotional attachment to their work. Fair compensation systems increase satisfaction, trust, and commitment, thereby enhancing work engagement. Previous studies indicate that compensation positively influences engagement levels (Putra & Supartha, 2019; Shuck et al., 2011; Bharadwaj, 2016). In the JD-R framework, compensation functions as a job resource that promotes engagement.

H5: Compensation has a positive effect on work engagement.

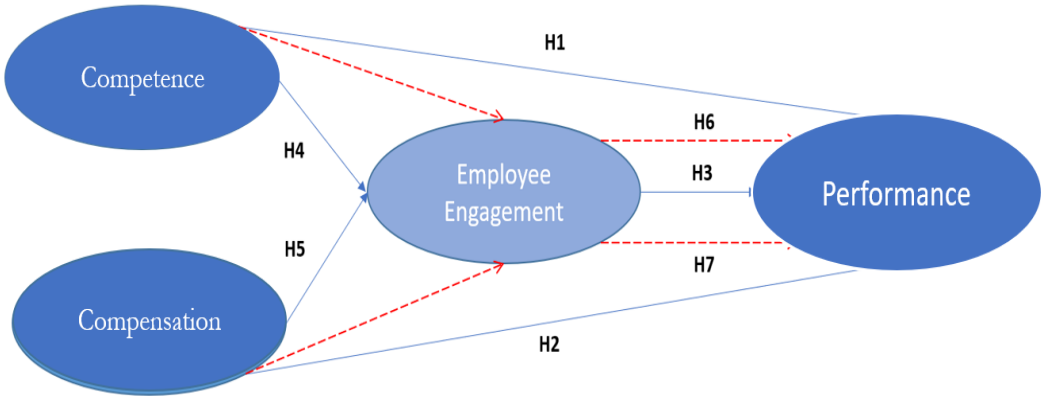
Mediating Role of Work Engagement

Work engagement, according to the JD-R hypothesis, acts as a mediator between two resources—competence and compensation—and performance. Workers' engagement and productivity are both boosted when they have access to sufficient resources. The mediating role of involvement between organizational practices and performance outcomes has been shown in earlier research. (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Saks, 2006; Omar & Mohammad, 2019).

H6: Competence positively affects nurses' performance through work engagement.
H7: Compensation positively affects nurses' performance through work engagement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research presents a conceptual framework based on theoretical considerations and empirical data. It states that as a mediating variable, work engagement influences the relationship between nurses' performance and personal resources such as competence and job resources. By combining human and organizational aspects into one model, this framework broadens the use of JD-R theory in the healthcare arena.



METHOD

Using job engagement as a mediator, this study uses a quantitative research technique to analyze the impacts of competency and remuneration on nurses' performance. In order to empirically investigate correlations among variables using statistical analysis, a quantitative technique was used.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study makes use of a survey research design, which enables the gathering of numerical data from participants using organized tools. This layout works well for investigating potential correlations and causal linkages.

Population and Sample

All registered nurses employed at Fikri Medika Hospital in Karawang make up the study's population. Respondents, who were all actively practicing nurses and eager to take part in the research, were chosen using a purposive sample approach. For this study, 96 participants were chosen at random from a pool of 116 registered nurses.

Data Collection and Instrument Development

Using indicators of the study variables—competence, remuneration, job engagement, and nurses' performance—a structured questionnaire was created to gather data. An tool that used a five-point Likert scale was used, with 1 being a strong disagreement

and 5 being a strong agreement. In this research, the factors that are being examined are nurses' performance, job engagement, competence, and remuneration. job engagement is seen as a mediating variable.

Data Analysis Technique

Utilizing SmartPLS version 4, data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Two phases of analysis were carried out. A review of the measuring model's (outer model) construct validity and reliability was conducted first, using convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. The second step was to assess the path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and coefficient of determination (R^2) in order to test the hypotheses and explore the connections between variables in the structural model (inner model).

RESULTS

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

To find out how trustworthy and reliable the indications were, we looked at the outer model. There are three components to this: reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity.

Convergent Validity

When evaluating convergent validity, the values of the load factors and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are used. As a rule of thumb, the AVE value ought to be higher than 0.50 and the loading factor value ought to be higher than 0.70.

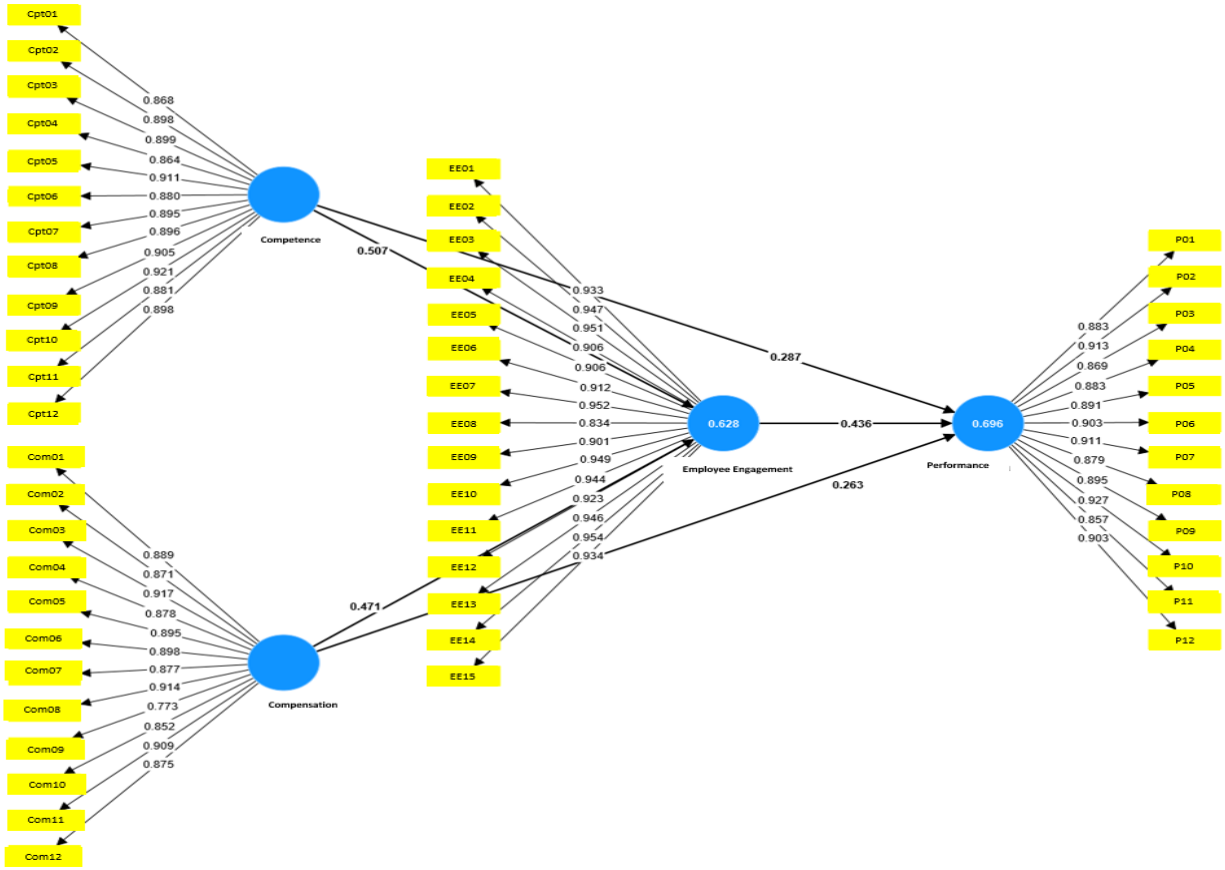


Figure 1. Loading Factor

Source: Authors processed data, 2025 (output from SmartPLS 4.0.9.6)

Table 1. Loading Factor Results

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	*Cut-Off*	Description
Competence	Cpt01	0,868	0,700	Valid
	Cpt02	0,898	0,700	Valid
	Cpt03	0,899	0,700	Valid
	Cpt04	0,864	0,700	Valid
	Cpt05	0,911	0,700	Valid
	Cpt06	0,880	0,700	Valid

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	*Cut-Off*	Description
Compensation	Cpt07	0,895	0,700	Valid
	Cpt08	0,896	0,700	Valid
	Cpt09	0,905	0,700	Valid
	Cpt10	0,921	0,700	Valid
	Cpt11	0,881	0,700	Valid
	Cpt12	0,898	0,700	Valid
	Com01	0,889	0,700	Valid
	Com02	0,871	0,700	Valid
	Com03	0,917	0,700	Valid
	Com04	0,878	0,700	Valid
	Com05	0,895	0,700	Valid
	Com06	0,898	0,700	Valid
	Com07	0,877	0,700	Valid
	Com08	0,914	0,700	Valid
	Com09	0,773	0,700	Valid
	Com10	0,852	0,700	Valid
	Com11	0,909	0,700	Valid
	Com12	0,875	0,700	Valid
Employee Engagement	EE01	0,933	0,700	Valid
	EE02	0,947	0,700	Valid
	EE03	0,951	0,700	Valid
	EE04	0,906	0,700	Valid
	EE05	0,906	0,700	Valid
	EE06	0,912	0,700	Valid
	EE07	0,952	0,700	Valid
	EE08	0,834	0,700	Valid
	EE09	0,901	0,700	Valid
	EE10	0,949	0,700	Valid
	EE11	0,944	0,700	Valid
	EE12	0,923	0,700	Valid
	EE13	0,946	0,700	Valid
	EE14	0,954	0,700	Valid
	EE15	0,934	0,700	Valid
Performance	P01	0,883	0,700	Valid
	P02	0,913	0,700	Valid
	P03	0,869	0,700	Valid
	P04	0,883	0,700	Valid
	P05	0,891	0,700	Valid
	P06	0,903	0,700	Valid
	P07	0,911	0,700	Valid
	P08	0,879	0,700	Valid
	P09	0,895	0,700	Valid
	P10	0,927	0,700	Valid
	P11	0,857	0,700	Valid
	P12	0,903	0,700	Valid

Source: Authors' processed data, 2025 (output from SmartPLS 4.0.9.6)

Since all of these indicators have a loading factor value above 0.70, can be said to meet the convergent validity criteria.

2. Discriminant Validity

Cross-loading criterion or Fornell–Larcker criterion is used to test discriminant validity.

Tabel 2. Fornell Larcker Criterion

	Employee Engagement	Performance	Compensation	Competence
Employee Engagement	0,927			
Performance	0,789	0,893		

Compensation	0,629	0,626	0,880	
Competence	0,654	0,654	0,312	0,893

Source: Authors' processed data, 2025 (output from SmartPLS 4.0.9.6)

As the square root of AVE for each construct is higher than correlations with other constructs, it can be remarked that model accomplishes the criterion of discriminant validity.

Composite Reliability

Composite reliability is used to assess the reliability of the constructs. The recommended value is greater than 0.70.

Table 3. Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variabel	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
Competence	0,977	0,979	0,797
Compensation	0,975	0,976	0,774
Employee Engagement	0,989	0,989	0,859
Performance	0,977	0,979	0,798

Source: Authors processed data, 2025 (output from SmartPLS 4.0.9.6)

In sum, since all the composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) of these 8 variables are greater than 0.70 & 0.50 respectively, the validity and reliability tests for research constructs indicated that the research constructs were valid and reliable.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Whereas, the inner model evaluation in this study is carried out to probe into relationships between latent variables. R-square value and path coefficients are used to evaluate the assessment.

1. R-Square

Table 4. R-Square Values

	R Square	Categori
Performance	0,696	Kuat
Employee Engagement	0,628	Kuat

The R-square value is used to assess how well the independent variables of our research model explain the variance of dependent variable. Based on result of analysis R-square Work Engagement 0.628 This means that competence and compensation can explain 62.8% of variance in the employement engagement, while the remaining 37.2% is explained by other variables not included for purpose of this research model.

The performance R-square value is 0.696, suggesting competence, remuneration and job attachment account for 69.6% of the variance in nurse's performance (Fig. 1). The other 30.4% is explained by the factors excluded from this study. The endogenous variables in this model are categorized as strong according to the R-square criteria. This means that the model of research can explain the gap between variables.

2. Path Coefficient (Hypothesis Testing)

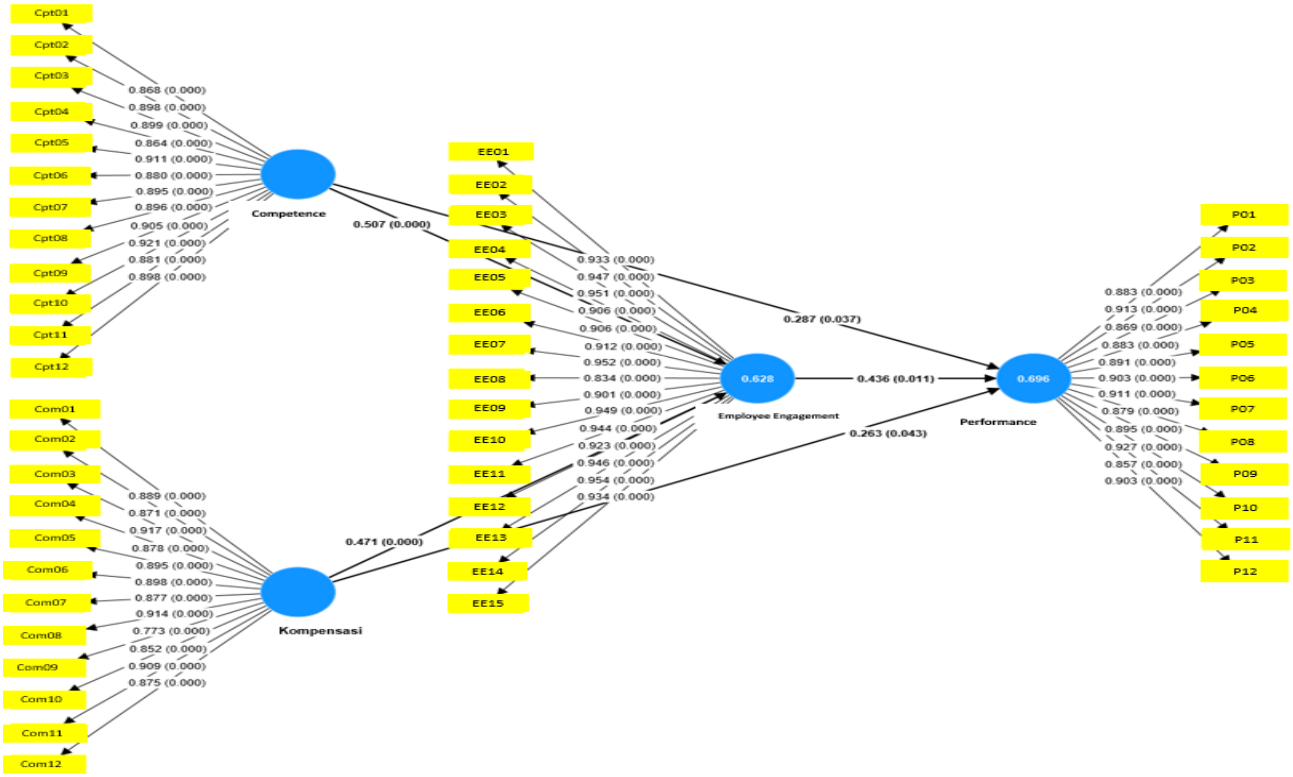


Figure 2. Loading Factor

Source: Authors' processed data, 2025 (output from SmartPLS 4.0.9.6)

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Description
Direct Effect				
Competence → Performance	0,287	2,088	0,037	Significant
Compensation →Performance	0,263	2,026	0,043	Significant
Work engagement→ Performance	0,436	2,559	0,011	Significant
Competence → Employee Engagement	0,507	4,210	0,000	Significant
Compensation → Employee Engagement	0,471	3,847	0,000	Significant
Indirect Effect				
Competence → Work engagement→ Performance	0,221	2,184	0,029	Significant
Compensation → Work engagement→ Performance	0,205	2,007	0,045	Significant
Competence → Compensation → Work engagement→ Performance	0,069	0,341	0,732	No Significant
Compensation → Competence → Work engagement→ Performance Competence	0,064	0,340	0,733	No Significant

Source: Authors' processed data, 2025 (output from SmartPLS 4.0.9.6)

Objective: this study aims to analyze the effect of competence and compensation on nurse's performance, with work engagement as a mediating variable. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was employed for analysis using SmartPLS 4.0.9.6 package [45]. Results indicated that most direct and indirect paths between the study model variables were statistically significant except for 2 relationships. The result of the study counselor determines on competency and compensation nurse employee are role the determinant in improvement work engagement dan performande tamu state hospital. This result reinforces the explanation put forward by strategic human resource management, which contends that high quality human resource practices improve individual and organizational performance (Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995).

Competency, Compensation, and Nurses' Performance: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement in Healthcare Settings

The Effect of Competence on Nurses Performance (H1)

The results of hypothesis testing indicated that competence had a positive and significant effect on nurses performance (β = 0.287; t = 2.088; p = 0.037 < 0.05), thus H1 is supported This discovery reveals that when nurses have a higher competence, they tend to achieve better performance results.

Competence refers to the knowledge, skills and work attitudes necessary to handle a task effectively. Competent nurses can accomplish tasks faster, respond to problems more accurately, and adapt more smoothly to ever-changing healthcare settings. These findings strengthen the case for the idea that competence is a key driver of performance.

Competence was characterized by Spencer and Spencer (1993) as an underlying trait related in a causal way to effective or superior performance. Similarly, Campbell and Wiernik (2015) identified performance outcomes as the result of a combination of individual ability and that persons effort on their work. Hence, improving nurses' capacity through ongoing training and education as well as professional development programs is a strategic way to enhance healthcare performance.

The Effect of Compensation on Nurses Performance (H2)

The H2 is supported since the analysis indicates that compensation positively and significantly effects nurse's performance (β = 0.263; t = 2.026; p = 0.043 < 0.05). Compensation refers to organizational benefits offered in return for employees' efforts and acts as an important motivational tool.

An equitable retention and remuneration system is a good source of motivation, job satisfaction as well as organizational loyalty. These results are consistent with the conclusion of Gerhart and Fang (2014) that performance-based compensation can boost motivation when rewards are tied to productivity outputs. Huselid (1995) similarly established that effective people management practices (including compensation systems), have a positive impact on firm performance.

These outcomes highlight how transparent and fair compensation policies are an imperative for enhancing nurses performance and ensuring that their commitment to the workforce is maintained.

The Effect of Work Engagement on Nurses Performance (H3)

Thus, H3 was evidenced by the positive and statistically significant effect of work engagement on nurse's performance (β = 0.436; t = 2.559; p = 0.011 < 0.05). Work engagement engages nurses at a psychological and emotional level in their work roles.

Also, highly-engaged nurses show excitement enthusiasm and are committed to go above and beyond formal job responses, which positively impacts the quality of service excellence and productivity. Engagement is the condition of people who are fully engaged with their cognitive, emotional and physical energies into their work (Rich et al 2010). Saks (2006) also found higher productivity and performance levels among engaged employees.

These findings underline work engagement as an important underlying psychological mechanism which affects performance outcomes in healthcare organizations.

The Effect of Competence on Work Engagement (H4)

As a result, the results indicated that competence significantly improves work engagement (β = 0.507; t = 4.210; p = 0.000 < 0.05), so H4 was supported. More confident, self-efficacy increased, contributes more enthusiasm and commitment to work activities.

JD-R theory recognizes competence as a personal resource, one that promotes engagement because it supports individuals in meeting job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Personal resources as well as job resources were highlighted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) to be crucial in the development of engagement. So competence helps us not only in direct ways, by making our performance better, but also indirectly through greater engagement.

The Effect of Compensation on Work Engagement (H5)

Moreover, compensation showed a positive and significant influence on work engagement (β = 0.471; t = 3.847; p = 0.000 < 0.05), therefore confirming H5. This result means that fair compensation enhances nurses feeling of appreciation, and organizational support.

Employees feel more emotionally attached and committed to their organization when they believe rewards are fair. Organizational recognition and support were identified by Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2011) as key antecedents of engagement. In short, a well-designed reward system creates a more productive work environment with contributing to higher engagement levels.

Mediating Role of Work Engagement (H6 and H7)

Table 5 shows that there was a substantial indirect impact of competence on performance via job engagement (β = 0.221; t = 2.184; p = 0.029), thereby supporting H6. Work involvement somewhat moderated the direct impact, which was nevertheless substantial. Accordingly, competence boosts performance both directly and indirectly via engagement.

Pay also showed a significant indirect influence on performance via job engagement (β = 0·205; t = 2.007; p = 0·045), lending credence to H7, in a similar vein. A moderating role for engagement suggests that remuneration has effects on performance that go beyond mere motivation and manifest as increased emotional investment in one's job.

This provides strong evidence for JD-R theory that suggests personal resources (competence) and job resources (compensation) both work to enhance engagement, thereby providing better performance outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Saks, 2006).

Serial Mediation Analysis (H8 and H9)

The serial mediation model including competence and compensation through work engagement was not statistically significant (p-values = 73.2 and 73.3 > 0.05). Which led to rejection of H8 and H9. For this reason, you may need a direct effect and pendular mediation rather than multiple serial mediations to explain the relations between variables.

Generally, this study confirmed the critical role of competence and compensation as key determinants of nurse's performance directly and indirectly through work engagement. Such findings are consistent with JD-R theory, which highlights that individual possess both personal and organizational resources that can create engagement processes that contribute to motivation and performance.

Several managerial implications arise from the practical perspective. First, hospital management will be focused on the development of competence through continuous clinical training aligned with technological advances and international standards for health care. Facilitating professional certification and continuing education programs for nurses can improve clinical decision-making and service quality.

This way, hospitals will provide transparent and performance-based compensation systems based on measurable performance indicators such as service quality, discipline, and contribution to the organization. In addition to being a potent motivator, fair compensation plays an important role in the retention of skilled healthcare professionals and reducing high turnover rates.

Ideally, organizations need to cultivate work engagement by creating supportive leadership practices, active communication channels, employee involvement opportunities and co-creating organizational settings. Increased involvement leads to followers being more committed to their organization and patient care outcomes.

By combining this with competence development, fair compensation practice and initiatives that increase engagement, hospitals can steadily improve the quality of healthcare services delivered by nurses.

CONCLUSION

Examining the mediating function of job engagement in a healthcare setting, this study seeks to answer the research question of how nurses' competence and remuneration affect their performance on the job. If hospitals want to improve their human resource management procedures, they must understand these linkages.

The results show that nurses' performance is positively and significantly impacted by both competence and pay. The link between competency, pay, and performance is further strengthened by job engagement, which acts as a partial mediator. The significance of both individual and organizational resources in boosting engagement-based performance is underscored by these findings, which lend credence to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) paradigm.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that hospitals should adopt integrated human resource strategies. Key solutions include strengthening competency development through continuous training, implementing fair and transparent compensation systems, and fostering a supportive work environment that enhances work engagement. These efforts are essential to improve nurses' performance and overall healthcare service quality.

There are a number of caveats to this research that make it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about causality or generalizability, such as the fact that it only included data from one hospital and that it used a cross-sectional methodology. To provide a fuller picture of nurses' performance, future studies should use longitudinal designs, include different healthcare facilities, and integrate factors like leadership style, organizational culture, and work happiness.

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