



Locus of control and its influence on employee performance the mediation role of work motivation

Tuti Setyorini¹, Janri D. Manafe², Helsi Zainuddin³

^{1,2,3}Business Administration, State Polytechnic of Kupang, Kupang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the influence of internal and external locus of control on employee performance, with work motivation as a possible mediator. Locus of control is a psychological concept that refers to the tendency of individuals to assess the extent to which they have control over events in their lives. Work motivation, on the other hand, is an internal or external drive that drives an individual to achieve goals and do a good job. Previous research has shown that individuals with internal locus of control tend to perform better in the workplace, but there is still a need to better understand how the locus of control affects employee performance, as well as the factors that may mediate those relationships. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that work motivation can act as a mediator in the relationship between locus of control and employee performance. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable insights for human resource managers and practitioners in designing policies and practices that support optimal employee engagement and performance. With a better understanding of the factors that affect employee performance, organizations can develop more effective strategies for motivating and retaining high-quality employees, positively impacting the company's overall productivity and success.

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Corresponding Author:

Tuti Setyorini,
Business Administration,
State Polytechnic of Kupang,
Jln. Adisucipto, Kota Kupang, 85258, Indonesia,
Email: tuti.setyorini@pnk.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and increasingly fierce competition, work engagement and employee performance are crucial for organizational success. Work engagement reflects an employee's level of commitment, motivation, and emotional attachment to their work and organization (Hadi et al., 2020; Tanjung, 2020). Employees who are actively involved tend to be more productive, creative, and have high loyalty to the company (Axel, 2023). Research in the field of human resource management has identified a variety of factors that affect employee engagement and performance, including psychological factors such as locus of control (Tyler et al., 2020; Wahyuni et al., 2016).

Therefore, research exploring the relationship between locus of control and employee performance has important significance in the context of human resource management.

Locus of control is a psychological concept that was first introduced by Rotter (1966). This concept refers to the tendency of individuals to assess the extent to which they have control over the events in their lives. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they have control over their own destiny, while individuals with an external locus of control tend to believe that events in their lives are more determined by factors beyond their control, such as luck or fate (Cameron & Rahman, 2022). Previous research has shown that individuals with an internal locus of control tend to be more motivated, responsible, and have better performance at work than those with an external locus of control.

However, the relationship between locus of control and employee performance is not fully understood. Given that employees with chronic levels of internal locus of control tend to impact their their work performance, such relationships are complex. One of the factors that may mediate the relationship is work motivation. Work motivation is an internal or external drive that drives an individual to achieve goals and do a good job (Jufrizen, 2021). Motivated employees tend to have higher performance and greater engagement in the workplace (Darwin, 2017; Fanggidae, 2022). Taking into account that individuals with internal locus of control tend to feel more in control of their lives, they may also have a higher motivation to work toward achieving goals and pursuing success.

Previous research has provided evidence that work motivation can act as a mediator between certain factors, such as work facilities and work discipline, and employee performance (Jufrizen, 2021; Setyorini & Yolandari, 2023; Wabang & Batilmurik, 2023). However, research specifically exploring the role of work motivation as a mediator in the relationship between locus of control and employee performance is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap by investigating whether work motivation mediates the relationship between locus of control and employee performance.

It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable insights for human resource managers and practitioners in designing policies and practices that support optimal employee engagement and performance. By better understanding the relationship between locus of control, work motivation, and employee performance, organizations can develop more effective strategies for motivating and retaining high-quality employees. This can have a positive impact on productivity, employee satisfaction, and the overall success of the company.

The internal locus of control is a psychological concept that refers to an individual's belief that they have control and influence over the events in their life (Kesavayuth et al., 2020). Previous research has shown that individuals with an internal locus of control tend to have higher work motivation compared to those with an external locus of control (Nasution et al., 2021; Tran, 2023). This theory is in line with the concept of personal control theory which posited that individuals tend to feel more motivated to achieve goals and do a good job when they believe that their efforts have a direct impact on the results they achieve (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the context of work motivation, individuals with an internal locus of control may feel more in control over the achievement of their career goals, so they are more motivated to take initiative, work hard, and persevere in the face of challenges.

Research also shows that individuals with an internal locus of control tend to have a more proactive orientation towards achieving goals, as they feel they have control over their own destiny. They tend to be more oriented towards personal achievement and feel more responsible for the results of their work (Wahyuni et al., 2016). Thus, the work motivation of individuals with internal locus of control is often driven by an intrinsic need to achieve personal success and fulfill their full potential (Norawati et al., 2022). They may also be more likely to seek new challenges and opportunities to learn and grow in their work.

Additionally, individuals with an internal locus of control often have a more optimistic attitude toward the future and believe that they have the ability to influence the course of their lives (Carifio & Rhodes, 2002). This belief can increase their intrinsic motivation to achieve ambitious career goals and overcome obstacles that may arise along the way. Thus, the internal locus of control not only directly influences work motivation, but also through its influence on the attitudes, beliefs and expectations of individuals towards the possible achievement of their goals in the future. Hypothesis 1 : Internal locus of control has a positive effect on work motivation

The external locus of control is a psychological concept that refers to the tendency of individuals to assume that the events in their lives are determined more by external factors such as luck or fate, than by their own actions or decisions (Lefcourt, 1991; Zulfa et al., 2017). Previous research has shown that individuals with an external locus of control tend to have lower work motivation compared to those with an internal locus of control (Zulfa et al., 2017). This can be explained by attribution theory, which suggests that individuals who feel they have no control over their own destiny tend to feel hopeless and less motivated to achieve goals (Weiner, 1985).

Additionally, individuals with external locus of control tend to experience a tendency to blame external factors for failures or difficulties they face at work, rather than taking full responsibility for the results of their own work (Wang & Anderson, 1994). This can lead to a passive attitude and a lack of initiative in finding solutions or development opportunities in the workplace. In the context of work motivation, the belief that success or failure depends entirely on external factors can dampen an individual's intrinsic motivation to achieve goals and perform high (Krause, 1986). This perception can influence their attitude toward work and their tendency to avoid challenging responsibilities or tasks. As a result, the work motivation of individuals with external locus of control tends to be negatively affected, as they may feel less motivated to pursue goals and achieve desired results at work. Hypothesis 2 : External locus of control has a negative effect on work motivation

Literature reviews on the relationship between work motivation and employee performance have become a major focus in the field of human resource management. Previous studies have revealed a significant relationship between work motivation and employee performance. Theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Herzberg's theory of motivation (Gawel, 2019) It has been used as a framework to explain how an individual's motivation can affect their performance. In this context, work motivation is considered an important factor that affects the level of engagement, productivity, and dedication of employees to their work.

Empirical studies show that there is a positive relationship between work motivation and employee performance. High motivation tends to result in better performance because individuals tend to be more passionate, initiative, and dedicated in performing their tasks (Iskandar & Yusnandar, 2021; Wahyudi, 2019). Factors such as recognition of achievements, opportunities for growth, and a supportive work environment can also increase work motivation and directly or indirectly affect employee performance.

However, some studies have also shown that the relationship between work motivation and employee performance is not always linear or direct (Kurniawan, 2021). Contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership, and incentive structures also play an important role in determining the extent to which work motivation can result in optimal performance. Therefore, to understand the deeper relationship between job motivation and employee performance, organizations need to adopt a holistic approach and consider the various factors that can influence those dynamics. Hypothesis 3 : Work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

These studies involved employees of the State Civil Apparatus in Kupang City as respondents. They must meet several conditions, such as being willing without coercion to fill out a questionnaire, having a permanent job in the past year, and not knowing the research hypothesis. This is done so that the answer results are not biased. They are not rewarded and are told that they can quit if they feel uncomfortable. The incomplete data were not included in the analysis. The number of respondents was 162 people.

Invitations to participate were sent online through social media and private messages with the information that the study aimed to understand the work environment of employees. The questionnaire is adapted from previous research that has been verified for validity and reliability. The internal and external locus of control, work motivation, and employee performance were measured using the 5-point Likert scale developed by previous researchers.

This study aims to determine the role of work motivation mediation in the relationship between locos of control and employee performance. This is a quantitative research using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the help of SmartPLS 3.0. The analysis stages include validation, reliability, and requirements for multivariate statistical tests on variable measurement scales. This analysis aims to test the hypothesis that has been built before.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Data

Respondents represent diverse backgrounds in terms of age groups, genders, and education levels. Sixty percent of the respondents were females. The majority of them were aged between 31-40 years old (41%).

Before testing the hypothesis, we assess the validity and reliability of all the variables present in the model. To evaluate the inner model, we start by examining the composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha (α values). The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
Internal Locus of Control (ILC)		.84	.87	.58
ILC1	.82			
ILC2	.69			
ILC3	.72			
ILC4	.78			
ILC5	.81			
ILC6	.77			
External Locus of Control (ELC)		.87	.83	.56
ELC1	.78			
ELC2	.76			
ELC3	.74			
ELC4	.80			
ELC5	.74			
ELC6	.74			
Work Motivation (MK)		.72	.77	.54
MK1	.68			
MK2	.74			
MK3	.78			
MK4	.81			
Employee Performance (KP)		.77	.81	.82
KP1	.84			
KP2	.84			
KP3	.87			

Table 1 presents Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and outer loading values, all of which exceed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60. Thus, the factors in this study are considered reliable. Furthermore, the validity of the measurement items is confirmed by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values in Table 2, which are all above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010).

To test the hypothesis, we conducted a mediation analysis with the help of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The analysis tool used is SEM (Structural Equation Modelling). The results of the study show that the role of work motivation mediation in the relationship between locus of control (internal and external) and employee performance shows almost the same pattern.

First, the internal locus of control affects work motivation positively and significantly ($b = 0.24$, $SD = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that the first hypothesis is supported by data. Second, we found that the external locus of control was significantly negatively correlated with work motivation ($b = -0.17$, $SD = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$). The findings confirm that the second hypothesis is supported. Third, it can be seen that work motivation positively affects employee performance ($b = 0.21$, $SD = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$). These findings support the third hypothesis.

In addition, we examined the direct and indirect effects of both locus of control on employee performance through work motivation. First, we found a significant direct relationship between the internal locus of control and employee performance ($b = 0.19$, $SD = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$). Second, we also found a direct relationship between the external locus of control and employee performance ($b = -0.19$, $SD = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$). Interestingly, the indirect influence of the internal locus of control on the performance of employees with work motivation as mediators turned out to be significant ($b = 0.31$, $SD = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$). Likewise, the indirect influence of external locus of control on employee performance through work motivation ($b = -0.21$, $SD = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$).

The results of this study provide important insights into the relationship between locus of control, work motivation, and employee performance in Kupang City. Based on the analysis that has been carried out, there are several key findings that need to be discussed further. First, the finding that the internal locus of control is positively related to work motivation shows that employees who feel in control of their work results tend to be more motivated at work. This is consistent with the locus of control theory which states that individuals with internal locus of control tend to feel capable of influencing the results they obtain, so they are more excited and motivated to achieve better performance. These results support the first hypothesis and are in line with previous research suggesting that individuals with internal locus of control have higher levels of work motivation.

Second, the finding that external locus of control is negatively related to work motivation confirms that employees who tend to believe that their work results are more determined by external factors, such as fate or forces beyond their control, are less motivated to perform. This may be due to feelings of helplessness and a lack of responsibility for the results of the work, thus reducing the urge to try harder. These findings support the second hypothesis and are in line with previous research that states that the external locus of control is often associated with low motivation.

Third, work motivation significantly affects employee performance, which supports the third hypothesis. Higher motivation encourages employees to work harder, focus on goals, and improve the quality of work. These findings are in line with motivation theory which states that intrinsically or extrinsically motivated individuals tend to perform better. Thus, it is important for organizations to continue to improve employee motivation as a way to maximize their performance.

In addition, mediation testing shows that work motivation mediates the relationship between the internal locus of control and employee performance, as well as the external locus of

control and employee performance. These results show that the locus of control affects employee performance both directly and indirectly through work motivation. This means that improved employee performance can be achieved not only by developing confidence that they have control over their work results (internal locus of control), but also by encouraging higher work motivation. This emphasizes the importance of the role of motivation in strengthening the impact of locus of control on employee performance, in accordance with previous research (Spector, 1988).

Overall, this study confirms that the internal locus of control and work motivation are key factors that encourage employee performance improvement, while the external locus of control tends to decrease motivation and performance. These findings have important implications for human resource management, especially in designing interventions that can increase work motivation and support the development of a more internal locus of control among employees, in order to improve overall organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals significant relationships between locus of control, work motivation, and employee performance among civil servants in Kupang City. The results show that internal locus of control positively influences both work motivation and employee performance, indicating that employees who believe they have control over their work outcomes are more motivated and achieve better performance. Conversely, external locus of control negatively affects motivation and performance, suggesting that when employees attribute their success or failure to external factors, they tend to be less motivated and perform poorly. Furthermore, work motivation mediates the relationship between locus of control and employee performance, highlighting its pivotal role in enhancing job outcomes. This finding emphasizes the importance of motivation in translating an individual's control beliefs into improved performance.

This study makes a theoretical contribution by enhancing the understanding of the relationship between locus of control, work motivation, and employee performance within the context of civil servants in Kupang City. It extends the existing body of knowledge by confirming the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between locus of control (internal and external) and performance. The findings support the view that internal locus of control is positively linked to work motivation and performance, while external locus of control negatively affects both. This highlights the importance of personal control beliefs in fostering motivation, providing a more nuanced understanding of how locus of control translates into performance outcomes through motivational processes. Moreover, the study deepens the theoretical dialogue on motivation as a key mechanism in shaping the impact of psychological traits like locus of control on job performance, offering insights for both motivation theory and locus of control frameworks in organizational settings.

In conclusion, fostering internal locus of control and strengthening work motivation are essential for enhancing employee performance. Organizations can benefit from creating environments that encourage personal accountability and motivation, thereby improving job performance and mitigating the negative effects of external locus of control. These insights have practical implications for human resource management and organizational development strategies aimed at improving overall employee effectiveness.

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