

The Role of Teacher Satisfaction in Mediating the Effect of Professional Competence on Teacher Performance at State High School 1 Bukit Bener Meriah Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of teacher satisfaction in mediating the influence of professional competence on teacher performance at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit, Bener Meriah Regency. This study is motivated by the importance of improving teacher performance as a key determinant of educational quality, particularly in addressing the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum, the use of learning technologies, and the development of active and relevant learning approaches tailored to students' needs. Teachers' professional competence is viewed as a critical factor in enhancing the quality of their instructional delivery, while teacher satisfaction serves as a psychological condition that can encourage teachers to work more effectively. This study employs a quantitative approach with an associative research design. The population consists of all 71 teachers at State Senior High School 1 Bukit, so a saturated sample was used. Data were collected via a questionnaire using a Likert scale and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method through the SmartPLS software. The results indicate that all indicators met the criteria for validity and reliability. The R-square value indicates that professional competence explains 22.4% of teacher satisfaction, while professional competence and teacher satisfaction together explain 49% of teacher performance. Hypothesis testing results show that professional competence does not have a significant direct effect on teacher performance. However, professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher satisfaction, and teacher satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. The results of the indirect testing indicate that teacher satisfaction mediates the effect of professional competence on teacher performance in a positive and significant manner. Thus, improving teacher performance requires not only strengthening professional competence but also enhancing teacher satisfaction through a supportive work environment, managerial support, recognition, and opportunities for professional development.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Teacher Satisfaction, Teacher Performance

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Introduction

The quality of education is largely determined by the quality of teachers' performance. Teachers do not merely serve as conveyors of subject matter, but also as instructional designers, student mentors, classroom managers, assessors of learning outcomes, and drivers of academic culture in schools. Good teacher performance is evident in a teacher's ability to plan instruction, conduct the learning process effectively, assess learning outcomes objectively, and follow up on student progress. Therefore, improving teacher performance is a critical issue in educational management, particularly at the high school level, where students are expected to be prepared to continue their education or enter independent adult life.

One of the key factors influencing teacher performance is professional competence. Professional competence relates to a teacher's ability to master subject matter, understand the academic structure of their field of study, develop instructional materials, utilize educational technology, and update their knowledge in line with curriculum developments. Teachers with high professional competence tend to be better prepared to design lessons, explain material in depth, select appropriate methods, and adapt teaching strategies to students' characteristics. Research by Yulia, Salamah, and Hadiyanto found that teachers' professional competence has a significant effect on teacher performance, and that teacher performance is also related to student learning outcomes. The study used a survey and path analysis approach on 94 teacher respondents.

Although professional competence is important, improvements in teacher performance are not always determined solely by teachers' technical and academic abilities. Competent teachers still require supportive psychological and organizational conditions to be able to perform at their best. One factor that can bridge the relationship between professional competence and teacher performance is job satisfaction or teacher satisfaction. Teacher satisfaction reflects a state in which teachers feel valued, comfortable, have opportunities for growth, receive support from leadership, and feel that their work is meaningful. Teachers who are satisfied with their work typically have stronger motivation to carry out their duties, improve the quality of learning, and demonstrate professional responsibility.

Research by Mustaqim, Nurhayati, and Riyanto shows that teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on performance; teacher competence also has a positive effect on job satisfaction; and job satisfaction has a positive effect on teacher performance. The study also found that job satisfaction can serve as a mediating variable between teacher competence and performance. This finding reinforces the view that professional competence not only has a direct impact on performance but can also enhance performance through teachers' satisfaction with their work.

Other research findings also support the importance of teacher satisfaction as a mediating variable. Widiyaningrum, Kholiq, and Pratiwi investigated the effects of professional competence, workload, and job commitment on teacher performance through the lens of job satisfaction. The results indicate that professional competence can influence teacher performance, both directly and indirectly, through job satisfaction. The study also recommends the need for support from schools and the government in developing teachers' competencies through training, workshops, professional development programs, and periodic surveys regarding teacher job satisfaction.

However, the findings of previous studies have not been entirely consistent. Fitriah found that professional competence does not have a direct effect on teacher performance, but that professional competence influences performance through job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Sari, Aima, and Elfiswandi found that competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance and job satisfaction, but job satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between competence and teacher performance. These differing results indicate a research gap that warrants further examination, particularly in the context of different schools, regions, and teacher characteristics.

This phenomenon is worth studying at Bukit 1 Public High School in Bener Meriah Regency. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Bukit 1 Public High School is a public high school located in Bukit District, Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh Province, with NPSN 10105183. The school holds an A accreditation and implements the Merdeka Curriculum. School data also indicates that State High School 1 Bukit had 134 students as of the data update on May 10, 2026. The A accreditation status indicates that the school has a strong institutional reputation; however, this must be balanced with consistent teacher performance, adequate job satisfaction, and the continuous strengthening of professional competencies.

The key issues of concern in this study include the demands placed on teachers to adapt to curriculum changes, utilize educational technology, manage instructional administration, and improve the quality of the teaching-learning process. Teachers are expected not only to master the subject matter but also to develop active, creative, and relevant learning experiences tailored to students' needs. In practice, not all teachers have the same level of readiness in developing learning materials, using digital media, conducting data-driven assessments, or updating teaching strategies. These differences in professional competence can influence variations in teacher performance within schools.

In addition, teacher satisfaction is also a critical issue. Teachers with strong professional competencies may not necessarily perform at their best if they feel they lack support, opportunities for professional development, recognition, or a supportive work environment. Research by Rudiatna, Affandi, and Rusyani indicates that teacher competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher job satisfaction, while teacher job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. This means that schools need to pay attention to the psychological and managerial aspects of teachers, not just technical competence alone.

Based on the above discussion, it is important to conduct research on the role of teacher satisfaction in mediating the influence of professional competence on teacher performance at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit, Bener Meriah Regency. This study not only examines whether professional competence influences teacher performance but also analyzes whether teacher satisfaction can strengthen or mediate that influence. The research findings are expected to provide insights for school principals and education stakeholders in designing strategies to improve teacher performance through the development of professional competence and the creation of greater job satisfaction.

The research problem in this study can be formulated as follows.

1. Teachers are required to master the subject matter and be able to adapt their teaching to the Merdeka Curriculum, but their levels of professional readiness may vary.
2. Teacher performance is influenced not only by professional competence but also by teacher job satisfaction, the school environment, leadership support, recognition, and opportunities for professional development.
3. Previous studies have shown varying results. Some studies have found that professional competence has a direct effect on teacher performance; others have shown that this effect is amplified through teacher job satisfaction.
4. SMA Negeri 1 Bukit holds an A accreditation status, making it worth examining whether the school's reputation is supported by professional competence, teacher satisfaction, and optimal teacher performance.

The research gap lies in the inconsistent findings regarding the role of teacher satisfaction as a mediating variable. Some studies indicate that job satisfaction can mediate the influence of competence on teacher performance, as found by Mustaqim, Nurhayati, and Riyanto, as well as Widiyaningrum, Kholiq, and Pratiwi. However, the study by Sari, Aima, and Elfiswandi found that job satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between competence and teacher performance. These differing results open up new avenues for research in the context of SMA Negeri 1 Bukit, Bener Meriah Regency.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Teacher Performance

Definition of Teacher Performance

Putra et al. (2022): Teacher performance is a teacher's ability to apply knowledge, skills, and pedagogical strategies in the classroom to improve student learning outcomes, adapt teaching methods to students' needs, and demonstrate creativity and innovation in teaching.

Indicators of Teacher Performance

Teacher Performance Indicators according to Putra et al. (2022):

- 1) **Instructional Planning**
Teachers are able to develop systematic lesson plans, including setting objectives, materials, methods, and media appropriate to student characteristics.
- 2) **Instructional Delivery**
Teachers conduct instruction effectively according to the plan, using appropriate strategies and methods, and adapting to students' needs.
- 3) **Classroom Management**
Teachers manage the classroom to create a conducive learning environment, maintain discipline, foster positive interactions, and optimize classroom facilities.
- 4) **Learning Assessment**
Teachers accurately assess student learning outcomes, provide feedback, and adjust teaching methods based on evaluations.
- 5) **Continuous Professional Development**
Teachers participate in training, workshops, or professional development activities, thereby improving their competencies and the quality of their teaching.

Job Satisfaction

Definition of Job Satisfaction

Sari & Hidayat (2021): teacher job satisfaction is a teacher's feeling of joy or contentment with their work, encompassing recognition of achievements, support from the school, a conducive work environment, and the attainment of professional goals. Teachers who are satisfied with their work tend to be more motivated, dedicated, and actively involved in improving the quality of learning.

Job Satisfaction Indicators

Teacher Job Satisfaction Indicators (Sari & Hidayat, 2021):

- 1) **Satisfaction with the Work Environment**
Teachers feel comfortable and motivated by working conditions at school, including facilities, classrooms, and support resources.
- 2) **Satisfaction with Managerial Support**
Teachers feel supported by the principal and school administration in carrying out their professional duties.
- 3) **Satisfaction with Recognition and Appreciation**
Teachers feel valued for their achievements and contributions to learning and school activities.
- 4) **Satisfaction with Professional Development**
Teachers are satisfied with the opportunities to participate in training, workshops, or other professional development activities.
- 5) **Satisfaction with Social Relationships**
Teachers are satisfied with their social relationships with fellow teachers, colleagues, and students, as well as with a work environment that fosters collaboration.

Professional Competence

Definition of Professional Competence

Rahman & Sulistiyo (2023): professional competence is a teacher’s ability to carry out their professional duties effectively, including planning, implementing, and evaluating learning, as well as professional development to improve the quality of teaching.

Indicators of Professional Competence

Indicators of Teachers’ Professional Competence (Rahman & Sulistiyo, 2023):

- 1) **Mastery of Subject Matter**
Teachers possess in-depth knowledge of the subject matter they teach, enabling them to explain concepts accurately and comprehensively.
- 2) **Instructional Planning**
Teachers are able to develop systematic lesson plans and set objectives, strategies, methods, and media appropriate to the students’ characteristics.
- 3) **Implementation of Learning Strategies**
Teachers are able to apply learning strategies and methods effectively, innovatively, and in accordance with students’ characteristics.
- 4) **Evaluation and Assessment**
Teachers are able to accurately evaluate student learning outcomes, provide feedback, and adjust learning strategies based on such evaluations.
- 5) **Professional Development**
Teachers actively participate in training, workshops, and professional development activities to improve the quality of their teaching.

Conceptual Framework

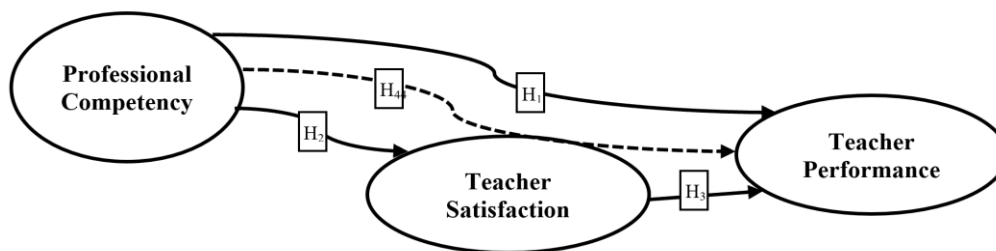


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at Bukit State High School 1.
- H2: Professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher job satisfaction at Bukit State High School 1.
- H3: Teacher job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit.
- H4: Teacher job satisfaction mediates the effect of professional competence on teacher performance in a positive and significant way at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

The type of research used is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research is defined as a method based on the philosophy of positivism, used to study a specific population or sample; sampling techniques are generally conducted randomly; data collection uses research instruments; and data analysis is quantitative/statistical in nature, to test established hypotheses. This type of quantitative research was conducted to create a study aimed at examining and analyzing the role of teacher satisfaction in mediating the influence of professional competence on teacher performance at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit, Bener Meriah Regency.

Research Location and Timeframe

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit, located on Jalan Bale Atu Simpang Tiga Redelong, Hakim Tunggul Naru Village, Bukit Subdistrict, Bener Meriah Regency, Aceh Province. The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, from April to July 2026.

Population and Sample

According to Arikunto (2025), if the population is less than 100, it is better to include all members so that the study constitutes a population study. In this study, the population consists of all teachers at Bukit State High School 1, totaling 71 teachers, and the entire population was used as the sample.

Research Data Sources

The data source used in this study is primary data.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires to respondents using a Likert scale as the primary data source.

Results

Outer Model Analysis

The *Outer Model* analysis using *the PLS Algorithm* yielded the following:

Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings

	Professional Competency	Teacher Satisfaction	Teacher Performance
X1.1	0.824		
X1.2	0.847		
X1.3	0.874		
X1.4	0.811		
X1.5	0.818		
Y.1			0.857
Y.2			0.866
Y.3			0.890
Y.4			0.856
Y.5			0.729
Z.1		0.672	
Z.2		0.858	
Z.3		0.834	
Z.4		0.863	
Z.5		0.772	

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, the results of the outer model testing through factor loadings/outer loadings indicate that all indicators for each variable have loadings ≥ 0.60 . This indicates that each indicator is measured validly and strongly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire have met the validity criteria, as shown in the following figure.

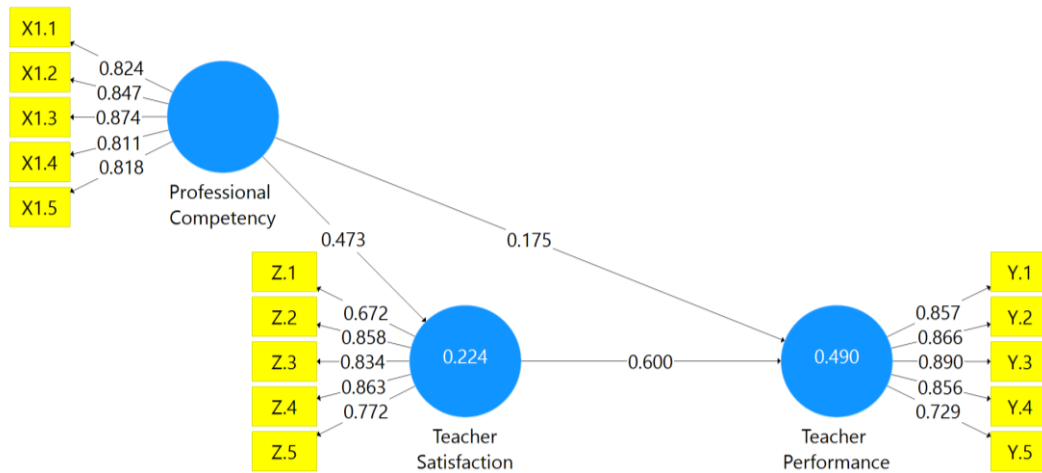


Figure 1. Outer Loadings

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Professional Competency	0.891	0.892	0.920	0.697
Teacher Satisfaction	0.860	0.873	0.900	0.645
Teacher Performance	0.896	0.907	0.923	0.708

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

From Table 2 above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable in measuring their respective constructs. Therefore, the research instrument is deemed reliable and suitable for use in structural equation modeling.

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

When evaluating a model using PLS, the process begins by examining the R-squared for each latent dependent variable. The table below presents the estimated R-square values obtained using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R-Square Results

	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Teacher Satisfaction	0.224	0.213
Teacher Performance	0.490	0.475

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

In Table 3, there are R-squared values for both dependent variables. For the teacher satisfaction variable, the R-squared value is 0.224; this means that the influence of professional competence is 0.224 or 22.4%. The remainder is attributed to other variables outside the model. The R-squared value for teacher performance is 0.490, meaning that professional competence explains 0.490 or 49% of teacher satisfaction; the remainder is attributed to other variables outside the model.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

Hypothesis Testing

Direct Effects Between Variables

Direct effects between variables are reflected in the *path coefficient* values. The data analysis results show that the direct effect values can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
Professional Competency -> Teacher Performance	0.175	1.591	0.112	Accepted
Professional Competency -> Teacher Satisfaction	0.473	5.109	0.000	Accepted
Teacher Satisfaction -> Teacher Performance	0.600	6.438	0.000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Table 4 shows the following direct effect values:

1. Professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, with a t-statistic value of 1.591 below 1.96 and a significance level of 0.112 above 0.05. This means that professional competence does not have a significant effect on teacher performance because the significance level is above 0.05. These findings do not align with previous research, which indicated that professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Razak et al., 2024).
2. Professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher satisfaction, with a t-statistic of 5.109 (above 1.96) and a significance level of 0.000 (below 0.05). This means that professional competence has a significant effect on teacher satisfaction because the significance level is below 0.05. These findings align with previous research, which also found that professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher satisfaction (Widiyaningrum et al., 2024).
3. Teacher satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, with a t-statistic of 6.438 (above 1.96) and a significance level of 0.000 (below 0.05). This indicates that teacher satisfaction has a significant effect on teacher performance because the significance level is below 0.05. These findings align with previous research, which indicates that teacher satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Fatimah et al., 2025; Pratama et al., 2025; Hutabarat et al., 2025; Cahya & Kholik, 2024).

Indirect Effects Between Variables

The indirect effects between variables can be seen from the *specific indirect effects* values. The data analysis results show that the indirect effect values are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Professional Competency -> Teacher Satisfaction -> Teacher Performance	0.284	3.767	0.000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 5 shows an indirect relationship between the variables: professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance through teacher satisfaction, with a t-statistic of 3.767 ($p < 0.000$) and a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This means that teacher satisfaction acts as an intervening variable between professional competence and teacher performance. These findings are also consistent with those of previous research (Rosmawati et al., 2025).

Conclusion

1. Professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit.
2. Professional competence has a positive and significant effect on teacher job satisfaction at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit.

3. Teacher job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit.
4. Teacher job satisfaction mediates the effect of professional competence on teacher performance in a positive and significant way at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit.

Recommendations

1. Teacher performance needs to be continuously improved as it is a key indicator of the success of the educational process at the school. The school is advised to conduct regular training, monitoring, and evaluation of teacher performance, particularly regarding instructional planning, lesson delivery, assessment of learning outcomes, classroom management, and the completion of instructional administrative tasks. Additionally, teachers should be encouraged to enhance their professional responsibility, work discipline, teaching creativity, and ability to adapt instructional strategies to students' needs. Efforts to improve teacher performance should also be supported by a fair and objective reward system to motivate teachers to work more effectively.
2. Teacher satisfaction must be a key priority, as this factor serves as a bridge between the school's internal conditions and teacher performance. Schools are advised to enhance teacher satisfaction by fostering a comfortable work environment, maintaining harmonious working relationships, ensuring a fair distribution of tasks, and recognizing teachers' achievements and contributions. Additionally, school leaders must foster open communication, listen to teachers' aspirations, and provide tangible support for teachers' professional needs. The higher the level of teacher satisfaction, the greater the likelihood that teachers will demonstrate loyalty, work enthusiasm, and improved performance quality.
3. Teachers' professional competencies must be continuously strengthened so that they can perform their duties effectively and in line with educational developments. Schools are advised to provide teachers with broader opportunities to participate in training, workshops, seminars, learning communities, and ongoing professional development activities. Teachers also need to be encouraged to deepen their mastery of teaching materials, improve their ability to select appropriate learning methods, utilize learning technologies, and develop themselves in line with curriculum requirements and student needs. The higher a teacher's professional competence, the greater the opportunity for better job satisfaction and sustained improvement in teacher performance.

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