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The Influence of Ability on Rewards Through Study Performance of RT And RW Heads in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City

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ABSTRACT: The primary objective of this research is to examine the influence of ability on reward, mediated by performance. The study employed a census method involving 368 participants, consisting of all RT and RW heads in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), assessing both outer and inner models. The findings indicate that while ability significantly impacts performance, it does not have a direct effect on reward. However, performance was found to significantly influence reward and successfully mediates the relationship between ability and reward.

KEYWORDS: Ability, Performance, Reward

INTRODUCTION

The role of government officials at the grassroots level, such as the Head of the Neighborhood Association (RT), is a crucial pillar in realizing effective governance, where the success of tasks depends heavily on individual managerial and administrative abilities. Theoretically, optimal performance is achieved through the combination of ability and motivation, often expressed by the formula: Ability x Motivation = Performance (Blumberg & Pringle, 1982; Vroom, 1964). Individual capabilities, such as the Administrative Capability of the RT Head, serve as absolute prerequisites that determine the upper limit of Performance, which must be articulated through actual Performance such as task completion and accountable reporting.(Sudiantini et al., 2023)This achieved performance then serves as the basis for determining rewards or incentives. In line with Reinforcement Theory, performance that is measured and followed by positive consequences (rewards) will be reinforced and tend to be repeated in the future.(Luthans & Stajkovic, 1999; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1997). Thus, this linear relationship is key: Ability drives Performance, and Rewards are not only the end result, but also an effective mechanism for maintaining motivation and encouraging the continued application of Ability in both public and private work environments (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

The Palembang City Government has implemented a policy to provide incentives to RT (Neighborhood Association) heads as a token of appreciation for their service, with a maximum amount of IDR 1,000,000 per month. This reward is based on a comprehensive evaluation of the performance reports prepared by the RT heads. Ideally, all RT heads in Ilir Barat I District should have adequate managerial and administrative skills to prepare performance reports accurately and timely, so that work performance is achieved and maximum incentives can be received. However, the phenomenon observed in the field shows a serious gap. Many RT heads still face significant obstacles in preparing their performance reports, indicating a deficit in administrative capabilities. This inability has a direct impact on the quality and quantity of reports submitted, which then has implications for suboptimal performance assessments, so that the rewards received tend to be reduced or not optimal.

The gap between the ability and the demands of this performance report not only harms the RT Head individually due to reduced incentives, but also systemically can disrupt the effectiveness of public services in Ilir Barat I District. The quality of the performance report is a reflection of the accountability and transparency of the RT Head. If the basis for giving rewards (i.e., the performance report) is invalid due to limited ability to prepare it, then the existing incentive system becomes less effective as a motivational tool and performance control. Therefore, an in-depth study of the specific influence of ability and performance on rewards in the context of government administration in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang, is very urgent and relevant.

Previous research has examined the relationship between competence, performance, and rewards in the private sector.(Masruroh et al., 2023; Paska et al., 2024; Subandi et al., 2023)or at a higher bureaucratic level(Saraswati, 2022). Research by(Jatmiko, 2021), for example, focuses on training and its impact on performance, but does not address the administrative reporting dimension as a determining variable for rewards. Meanwhile, a study conducted by(Hutuely, 2025)does discuss the performance of public officials, but the context is more on policy implementation, not on the linear relationship between specific administrative capabilities at the RT level and the report-based incentive system. The research gap that will be filled by this thesis is the lack of studies that explicitly test the causal relationship between the Administrative Capability of the RT Head as an independent variable, Report-Based Performance as a mediating or intervening variable, and Incentives (Rewards) as a dependent variable, especially in the context of the Palembang City regional government. By filling this gap, this study aims to offer practical contributions to the Palembang City Government, particularly in designing training policies and establishing a more effective performance evaluation system for RT Heads

The problem formulation discussed in this study is whether ability influences rewards through the performance of the Study on the Heads of RT and RW in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City.? Based on the problem formulation, this research aims to determine and analyze the influence of ability on reward, as mediated by performance. The study focuses on RT and RW heads in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ability

This variable refers to the capacity of the RT Head to carry out his duties and responsibilities, especially those related to administrative aspects and performance reporting.(Mayor of Palembang, 2024). Ability is an individual's inherent and relatively stable capacity to perform different tasks within a job or role. In the context of an RT Head, ability includes a combination of technical skills (especially reporting), knowledge, and relevant expertise to support the achievement of work results.(Dessler, 2020; Robbins, Stephen P & Judge, 2013).

Dimensions and indicators of capability include(Katz, 1955):

1. Technical Skills
a. Understanding and mastery of procedures for preparing monthly performance reports
b. Ability to use administrative tools (e.g., computer, smartphone, or provided forms)
2. Conceptual Skills
a. Ability to understand the objectives and performance evaluation criteria set by the city government
b. Ability to analyze problems in the RT environment and integrate them into reporting
3. Human Skills
a. Ability to communicate and coordinate with residents or sub-district/district staff regarding report data
b. Ability to manage conflicts or sensitive information in reports
4. Administrative Skills
a. Accuracy and discipline in collecting data and supporting documents
b. Completeness of report contents according to the specified format

Performance

This variable measures the work results achieved by the RT Head, with particular emphasis on the quality and timeliness of reporting, as reporting is the primary basis for reward assessment. Performance is defined as the quantitative and qualitative outcomes achieved by an individual in fulfilling their assigned responsibilities. In the context of this study, performance is operationalized specifically by assessing the quality and accountability of work reports submitted to the city government (Dessler, 2020; Robbins, 2019; Schuler & Jackson, 2020).

Based on the RegulationsMayor of Palembang (2024)explained that there are several indicators in assessing the performance of RT and RW heads, including:

1. Population administration reporting consisting of:
a. Availability of population data reports every month; and
b. The Head of the Neighborhood Association (RT) and Citizens Association (RW) monitors guests/newcomers within 1 x 24 hours as mandatory reporting in their area.
2. Environmental and regional development consisting of:
a. Volume of mutual cooperation implementation every month;
b. Volume of coaching/socialization activities for residents regarding cleanliness / waste management / greening / environment;
c. Monitoring citizen activities that have the potential to disrupt public order and peace; and
d. Volume of implementation of religious development and community harmony.
3. Health and economic development consisting of:

a. Volume of integrated health post development activities / stunting prevention / anticipation of dengue fever (DHF) and other infectious diseases;
b. Activities in efforts to develop small and medium businesses;
c. Availability of land and building tax object data (Based on the Tax Payable Notification Letter (SPPT) and;
d. Volume of community development activities in order to increase participation in paying land and building taxes;

Reward

This variable is the final outcome influenced by the capability and performance of the RT head. The main focus is the monetary incentive received. A reward is a reward or recompense given by an organization (Palembang City Government) to an individual for their contribution and demonstrated performance. In this study, a reward is defined as a financial incentive (honorarium/allowance) received by the RT head, the amount of which is determined based on an evaluation of the performance report.(Dessler, 2020; Robbins, 2019; Schuler & Jackson, 2020).

Reward dimensions and indicators include:

1. Amount of Incentive (Monetary)

The nominal amount of monthly incentives received by the RT Head

2. Payment Consistency

Regularity and timeliness of incentive payments

3. Perception of Justice (Equity)

The RT Head's perception regarding the fairness of the nominal reward received compared to his workload and work results

4. Recognition

Formal or non-formal forms of recognition that accompany the awarding of rewards (for example, positive feedback from the sub-district)

RESEARCH MODEL

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in a synthesis of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organizational Behavior theories, designed to analyze the causal relationships among the variables. Guided by the literature review, this study positions Performance as a mediating variable that connects Ability with the Rewards received by RT Heads. Conceptually, the ability possessed by an individual (RT Head) is the main prerequisite for achieving optimal work results (Performance, especially reporting quality). Furthermore, the performance that has been achieved becomes a fundamental basis for the organization (Palembang City Government) to determine and provide financial rewards or incentives (Rewards). Thus, this framework argues that the ability of the RT Head influences the rewards received, and this influence occurs indirectly, namely mediated by the level of performance demonstrated.

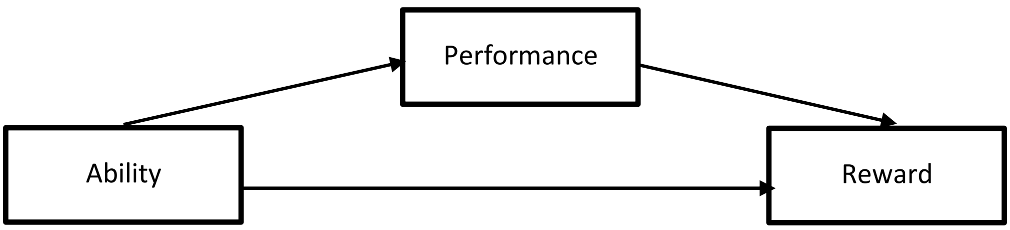

Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis

Expectancy Theory explains how individuals make choices among alternative behaviors based on expectations of the outcomes of those choices. Ability is closely related to the concept of Expectancy (Effort).→Performance). Individuals with high ability have confidence (self-efficacy) that their efforts will result in successful performance. Successful performance logically leads to valence or desired outcomes, namely rewards (financial incentives). Thus, greater ability increases confidence in performance, which ultimately increases the chances of obtaining rewards.(Vroom, 1964). Furthermore(Adams, 1965)His theory of fairness explains that an individual's perception of fairness is the comparison between the input they provide to their work and the output or reward they receive. Ability is one form of input that individuals bring to a role (such as being a neighborhood head). This theory states that output (reward) must be commensurate with input. Individuals who possess high abilities and apply them to their tasks are expected to receive higher rewards to maintain a sense of fairness. If rewards (honorariums) are based on evaluation, then high ability is considered an input that deserves a proportional output (reward).

H1 : Ability is hypothesized to have a positive and significant effect on rewards

Performance is conceptualized as a function of ability, motivation, and role or environment, expressed by the formula: P = f(A x M x O). In this model, Performance (P) is viewed as the product of Ability (A), Motivation (M), and Opportunity (O). This model explicitly places Ability as a fundamental prerequisite. Individuals (RT Heads) with high capacity, knowledge, and technical skills (Ability) inherently have greater potential to produce good work output (Performance, such as quality and timely reporting) compared to individuals with low ability, assuming their motivation and opportunity are equal.(Robbins, Stephen P & Judge, 2013). Abilities include technical skills (such as administration and reporting). If the RT Head's duties require specific technical skills, then individuals who possess these skills will be able to perform their duties (i.e., produce accurate and timely reporting) better, which directly results in higher performance.(Katz, 1955).

H2 : Ability serves as a significant positive predictor of Performance

This relationship is deeply rooted in classical motivation paradigms, specifically finding support in Vroom's, (1964) Expectancy Theory. The theory postulates that an individual's drive to exert effort is contingent upon the belief that such actions will lead to a desirable outcome. Specifically, the Instrumentality component (Performance)→The results) in Vroom's theory state that individuals (RT heads) will work hard and ensure high performance (quality and timely reporting) because they believe that this performance will be a tool to achieve valuable rewards (honorarium/financial incentives).(Vroom, 1964). Other support comes from the Reinforcement Theory of(Skinner, 1953), where the reward functions as a positive reinforcement given after the desired behavior (high performance) appears, thus encouraging the repetition of that behavior in the future.(Skinner, 1953)Empirically, various studies in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) consistently support this finding, confirming that a performance-based compensation and incentive system, such as that implemented by the City Government through reporting evaluations, directly links work results (Performance) with monetary rewards (Rewards).(Dessler, 2020; Robbins et al., 2021).

H3 : Performance exerts a positive and significant influence on rewards

The Classical Performance Model posits that performance is a function of Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity, represented by the formula: P = f(A x M x O). This places Ability as a fundamental prerequisite that determines the potential of an individual (RT Head) to achieve the required Performance.(Robbins & Judge, 2021). Expectancy Theory, particularly the Instrumentality component, asserts that individuals will be motivated because they believe that high performance (quality reporting) will be a means of producing valuable rewards (honorarium).(Vroom, 1964)The effect of Ability on Rewards can only be realized through actual Performance. Rewards are not given simply because the RT Head has the capacity, but rather because he uses his capacity to produce performance that is manifested in the quality and timeliness of reporting. Thus, Performance functions as an intermediary mechanism (mediation) that transforms potential (Ability) into valued results (Rewards). Empirical support is found in many Human Resource Management studies that show that individual competencies and abilities (as inputs) influence final outcomes (such as compensation or rewards) only after being mediated by measurable and evaluated work results.(Dessler, 2020).

H4: Performance mediates the positive and significant effect of Ability on Reward

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City, served as the specific setting for this study. The population comprised 301 RT heads and 67 RW heads, totaling 368 individuals, all of whom were selected as respondents using the census method. The data used were primary data collected through questionnaires regarding ability, performance, and rewards. The data analysis employed SEM-PLS path modeling, which involved the assessment of the measurement model and the structural model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model

The evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) in PLS-SEM is conducted to verify the validity and reliability of the indicators representing each latent construct. The following is the outer model testing performed.

1. Validity Testing

This test assesses whether the indicator actually measures the concept it is supposed to measure.

a. Convergent Validity

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test

Statement	Ability	Performance	Reward
S1	0.769	0.798	0.884
S2	0.824	0.753	0.698
S3	0.752	0.798	0.897
S4	0.781	0.728	0.880
S5	0.778	0.748	0.764
S6	0.740	0.743	0.668
S7	0.826	0.805	0.888
S8	0.794	0.790	0.743
S9	-	0.738	-
S10	-	0.752	-

The results of this analysis are presented in the figure below.

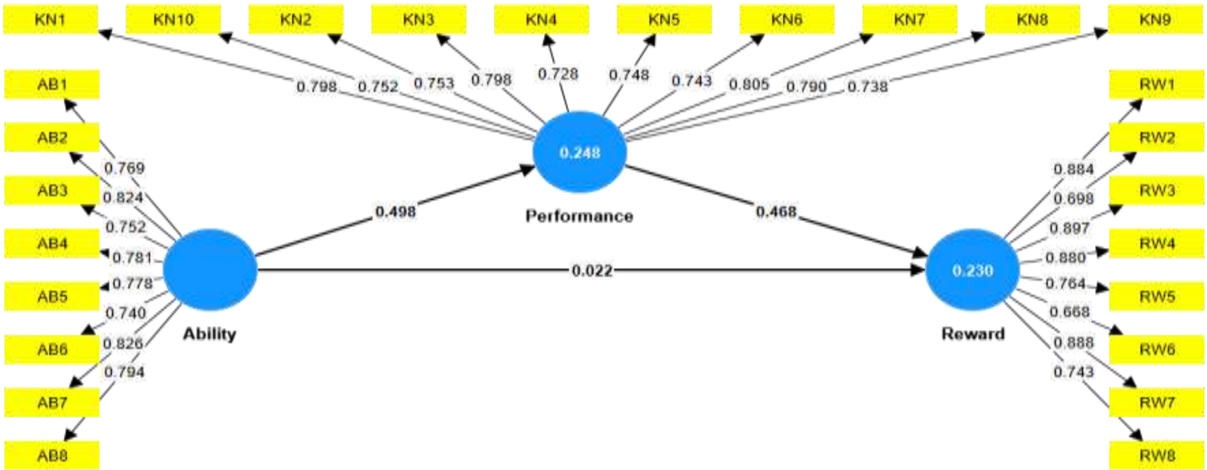

Figure 1. Convergent Validity Testing

Referring to Table 1 and Figure 1, the outer loadings for both Ability and Performance variables exceed the 0.7 threshold. Consequently, all indicators are deemed valid. Meanwhile, for the Reward variable, two indicators have values below 0.7, namely indicators RW2 and RW6, so they are excluded from this research model.

Subsequently, the second stage of convergent validity testing was conducted, with the results presented in Table 2 below

Table 2. Second Stage Convergent Validity Testing

Statement	Ability	Performance	Reward
S1	0.770	0.797	0.908
S2	0.825	0.754	-
S3	0.751	0.799	0.923
S4	0.782	0.727	0.910
S5	0.777	0.747	0.764
S6	0.739	0.745	-
S7	0.827	0.804	0.914
S8	0.793	0.791	0.744
S9	-	0.737	-
S10	-	0.754	-

The findings from this assessment are visually represented in the figure below

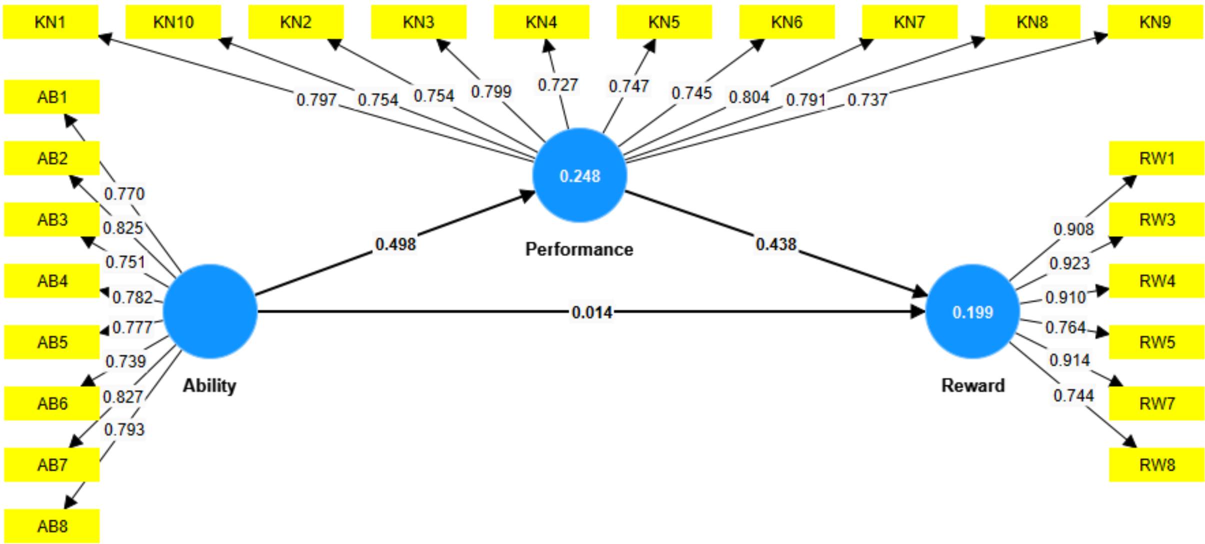

Figure 2. Second Stage Convergent Validity Testing

As demonstrated in Table 2 and Figure 2, the outer loadings for the Ability, Performance, and Reward variables all exceed the 0.7 threshold, confirming the validity of all indicators.

b. Discriminant Validity

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Assessment using Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Ability	Performance	Reward
Ability			
Performance	0.535		
Reward	0.248	0.482	

Based on Table 3, all HTMT values across the research constructs fall below the 0.9 threshold, thereby satisfying the recommended criteria.

2. Reliability Testing

Table 4. Reliability Testing

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Ability	0.910	0.913	0.927	0.614
Performance	0.922	0.923	0.934	0.587
Reward	0.930	0.932	0.946	0.746

As shown in Table 4, all constructs exhibit Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (rhoA) values exceeding 0.7, along with AVE values greater than 0.5. Consequently, all constructs are deemed reliable.

Inner Model

1. R Square

Table 5. R Square Test

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Performance	0.248	0.246
Reward	0.199	0.194

According to Table 5, the R-Square value for the Performance variable is 0.248. This indicates that the Ability variable accounts for 24.8% of the variance in Performance. Since this value is below the 55% threshold, the influence of the exogenous construct (Ability) is categorized as weak, leaving the remaining 75.2% attributed to other unobserved variables. Furthermore, the R-Square value for the Reward variable is 0.199, implying that Ability and Performance jointly explain 19.9% of the variance in Reward. This is also considered weak (below 55%), with the remaining 80.1% influenced by factors outside the model.

2. F Square

Table 6. F Square Test

	Ability	Performance	Reward
Ability		0.329	0.000
Performance			0.180
Reward			

The f^2 analysis reveals that Ability has a moderate effect on Performance ($f^2 = 0.329$), falling within the 0.15 to 0.35 range. In contrast, the effect of Ability on Reward is negligible ($f^2 = 0.000$), as it is below the 0.02 threshold. Meanwhile, Performance demonstrates a moderate effect on Reward with an f^2 value of 0.180 (exceeding 0.15)

3. Hypothesis Testing

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Ability→Reward	0.241	0.809
Ability→Performance	10,772	0.000
Performance→Reward	7,444	0.000
Ability→Performance→Reward	5,914	0.000

Based on Table 6, the influence of each exogenous variable on the endogenous variables can be detailed as follows

The Influence of Ability on Rewards

The calculation yields a T-statistic of 0.241 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.809 (> 0.05). Consequently, H0 is accepted and Ha is rejected, indicating that the Ability variable does not exert a significant influence on Rewards. Theoretically, rewards or awards in an organization are ideally based onActual performance (work results), not just potential ability. General performance models posit that performance is a function of ability multiplied by motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2017). In the context of giving rewards, Expectancy Theory(Vroom, 1964)emphasizes the importance of Instrumentality, namely the belief that good Performance will result in a certain Reward. If the organization does not explicitly link Ability (such as intelligence level or basic skills) as a direct input that is valued, but only values Performance output, then the direct effect of Ability on Reward will be weak or insignificant, in line with this finding. The context in this study is specific to the Head of RT/RW in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang, where the maximum Reward will depend on the ability to prepare a performance report, strengthening this statistical result. The Reward System established by the Palembang City Government is based on documented Administrative Performance (reports), not on the inherent assessment of individual Ability.(Dessler, 2020)Even if an RT/RW Head has high Ability, he/she will not receive the maximum Reward if he/she fails to meet the administrative output in the form of a Performance report according to standards. Therefore, Rewards function as incentives that are directly related to Reporting Performance (as a measurable output), making Ability (as an input) insignificant in the direct influence path.(Robert & Jackson, 2016).

The Influence of Ability on Performance

The calculated T-statistic for the Ability variable is 10.772 (> 1.96), accompanied by a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). These results warrant the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha), demonstrating that Ability significantly affects Performance. One of the classic models in management theory is the concept of performance proposed by John B. Miner where Ability is a fundamental multiplicative factor. Without adequate ability (knowledge and expertise), no amount of motivation will produce optimal performance. The ability of RT/RW in organizing, communicating, solving problems, and managing administration is a basic prerequisite for effective performance. Although the main focus (Vroom, 1964) In terms of motivation, this theory implicitly recognizes the role of ability. According to Vroom, an individual is motivated to exert effort only if they believe that such effort will lead to successful performance. This expectation is rooted in the individual's perceived capability—specifically, possessing the necessary skills and knowledge. In the context of RT and RW heads, motivation is contingent upon their confidence in executing assigned governmental and social duties. This theoretical perspective aligns with numerous empirical studies confirming that work ability (or individual competence) has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Dwiyanti et al., 2019; Febriansyah et al., 2020; Gilang & Festingtyas, 2020).

The Influence of Performance on Rewards

The statistical calculation yields a T-statistic of 7.444 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05) for the Performance variable. These results warrant the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha). Consequently, it is concluded that Performance has a significant effect on Reward. Substantively, these findings indicate that the higher the performance achieved by RT and RW heads, particularly as measured by their ability to prepare performance reports, the more guaranteed or maximized the monthly incentives (rewards) they receive. This finding aligns closely with the concept of Instrumentality in Expectancy Theory.(Vroom, 1964), which states that individuals will be motivated when they believe that high performance is a sure instrument for achieving desired outcomes (rewards). In this context, the RT and RW heads view good performance reporting as a structured path to financial incentives. Furthermore, these findings are supported by Reinforcement Theory.(Skinner, 1953) where the provision of rewards as a direct consequence of good performance serves as positive reinforcement, thereby encouraging such performance behavior (including compliance with reporting administration) to be maintained and improved in the future. Empirically, these results are also consistent with previous research in the field of human resource management, as expressed by(Rahardjo & Wibowo, 2017; Siregar, 2023), which emphasizes the principle that effective compensation and reward systems must be based on measurable levels of performance to ensure fairness and organizational effectiveness, including in the context of public administration and service.

The Influence of Ability on Rewards Through Performance

The calculation of the indirect effect yields a T-statistic of 5.914 (> 1.96) and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). These results compel the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha). Thus, it is confirmed that the Performance variable significantly mediates the influence of Ability on Rewards. This finding firmly confirms that the abilities possessed by the RT and RW Heads (such as managerial and administrative skills, especially in preparing performance reports) cannot directly influence the size of the rewards they receive. Instead, these abilities must be realized and proven first through real and measurable Performance, especially through the quality of reporting that serves as the basis for assessing their accountability. This mediation concept is strongly supported by the Law of Performance, which implicitly places Ability as a prerequisite, but Performance as the final result that determines the output or reward. Ability becomes an input resource, while Performance becomes a real process that transforms input into a valued output (incentive). This finding is also in line with various human resource management studies that focus on competency and rewards, as explained by(Mangkunegara, 2019), which emphasizes that increasing individual abilities (competence) must be reflected in increased work results (performance) in order to generate proportional recognition or rewards. Thus, the rewards received by the RT and RW heads in Ilir Barat 1 District, Palembang are truly a reflection of the implementation of their abilities translated into measurable performance, particularly in the aspect of administrative reporting.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

The capabilities of RT and RW heads (knowledge, skills, and expertise, particularly in reporting) have a significant and positive impact on their performance. This is consistent with the Law of Performance, which places capability as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving work results. Performance has a significant impact on rewards, indicating that the incentive system implemented is effective and based on measurable work results, in line with Expectancy Theory (Instrumentality). Capability does not directly influence rewards. This shows that having capability alone is not enough; rewards are only given if the capability is actualized into measurable work results. Performance is able to fully mediate the influence of Capability on Rewards. This confirms that Capability must go through Performance (such as the accuracy and completeness of performance reports) to be able to influence the amount of incentives received. Performance serves as a bridge that transforms individual potential into tangible, valued results.

A limitation of this study is that it was only conducted on RT and RW heads in one sub-district (Ilir Barat I) in Palembang City. This limits the generalizability of the results to other areas in Palembang or other regions that may have different reward systems and environmental leadership competencies. The measurement of the Ability variable may only use the subjective perceptions of respondents. This limitation can cause response bias, where respondents tend to overestimate their own abilities. This study only focuses on Ability as a predictor. However, RT/RW Rewards and Performance are also influenced by other factors. Future researchers are advised to add other independent or mediating variables, such as Work Motivation or Organizational Commitment, to test whether these psychological factors also influence RT/RW Performance and Rewards. It is recommended to expand the population coverage to all sub-districts in Palembang City to test the consistency of this mediation model in different work environments.

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