

Service Quality and Working Motivation: Empirical Evidences of Freight Forwarding for Shipping Companies in Indonesia

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Abstract

Some problem questions could be formulated, including the operational delays caused by inconsistent service speed, long loading-unloading duration, less equipment for loading-unloading as well as skilled manpowers that could disrupt smooth operation and reduce customer satisfaction. The aim of this research was to know and analyze both the direct and indirect influences of the service quality of container loading-unloading on the job satisfaction in the freight forwarding companies in Banjarmasin City. The research method used the Partial Least Square-based Structural Equation Model approach. The sample of this research was the employees of three Freight Forwarding companies in South Kalimantan, namely Indo Container Lines Banjarmasin, Fajarindo Trans Logistics, and Golden Trans Banjarmasin as many as 53 persons. Directly, the result of hypothesis testing between job satisfaction and employee performance was found influence positively and significantl . summary, service quality and work motivation positively impact employee performance only through the mediation of job satisfaction. While these factors work indirectly, work motivation alone shows no significant direct influence on performance, highlighting that job satisfaction is the essential bridge required to turn motivation into actual results.

Keywords: container loading-unloading, job satisfaction, employee performance, service quality, working motivation

Abstrak

Beberapa permasalahan dapat dirumuskan, termasuk keterlambatan operasional yang disebabkan oleh kecepatan layanan yang tidak konsisten, durasi bongkar muat yang lama, kurangnya peralatan untuk bongkar muat serta tenaga kerja terampil yang dapat mengganggu kelancaran operasional dan mengurangi kepuasan pelanggan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui dan menganalisis pengaruh langsung dan tidak langsung kualitas layanan bongkar muat kontainer terhadap kepuasan kerja di perusahaan pengiriman barang di Kota Banjarmasin. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan Structural Equation Model berbasis Partial Least Square. Sampel penelitian ini adalah karyawan dari tiga perusahaan pengiriman barang di Kalimantan Selatan, yaitu Indo Container Lines Banjarmasin, Fajarindo Trans Logistics, dan Golden Trans Banjarmasin sebanyak 53 orang. Secara langsung, hasil pengujian hipotesis antara kepuasan kerja dan kinerja karyawan ditemukan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan. Kesimpulannya, kualitas layanan dan motivasi kerja berpengaruh positif terhadap kinerja karyawan hanya melalui mediasi kepuasan kerja. Meskipun faktor-faktor ini bekerja secara tidak langsung, motivasi kerja saja tidak menunjukkan pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap kinerja, yang menyoroti bahwa kepuasan kerja adalah jembatan penting yang dibutuhkan untuk mengubah motivasi menjadi hasil nyata.

Kata kunci: Bongkar muat kontainer, kepuasan kerja, kinerja karyawan, kualitas layanan, motivasi kerja

INTRODUCTION

Container ships play a vital role in international trade by enabling efficient logistics and goods distribution through standardized containers. Service quality in container loading-unloading is crucial for smooth operations, timely delivery, and avoiding supply chain disruptions or economic losses. The focus is on Indo Container Lines, Banjarmasin Branch, where issues include operational delays due to inconsistent service speeds, prolonged loading-unloading times, inadequate equipment, and insufficient skilled manpower, all of which reduce customer satisfaction and efficiency. Additional problems involve poor supervision, limited career development opportunities, and monotonous tasks that lower employee motivation and undermine loading-unloading processes. Delays and varying service speeds persist, despite positive aspects like officer friendliness and safety. Evaluations highlight security concerns during peak hours (14:00-16:00). In the port of Trisakti, South Kalimantan, three companies (Indo Container Lines, Fajarindo Trans Logistics, and Golden Trans Banjarmasin) manage sea transportation, providing thousands of containers. However, stacking yard challenges—such as equipment malfunctions, long stacking times, and difficult container positioning—hinder cargo movement and safety.

Previous research emphasizes human resources factors like job satisfaction and motivation in logistics. Studies (e.g., Suntari et al., 2020) show positive correlations between equipment, workers, ship services, and loading-unloading performance. Work environments in logistics boost satisfaction and attract talent (Anandhi & Perumal, 2013; Andrejić et al., 2022). Retaining skilled employees improves performance (Shang et al., 2016), while consistent service quality fosters employee mastery and motivation (Ricardianto, 2018), contributing to overall success in freight forwarding. Another some previous researches relevant to the theory of each variable are illustrated as one theoretical gap and can be developed as hypothesis in this research. Starting from the first exogenous variable, concerning the phenomenon of service quality according to Kotler, (2018) and Lovelock & Wright, (2010), service quality must be started from customer need and finishes with customer satisfaction. Whereas according to Parasuraman, (2009), service quality can be defined as how far the difference between the reality and customer expectation on the service they receive. Service quality will be achieved through the fulfillment of customer needs and desires and accuracy of delivery in meeting customer expectations (Nurlina et al., 2020). In general, some researches state that service quality influences positively and significantly job satisfaction (Al-Refaei et al., 2023).

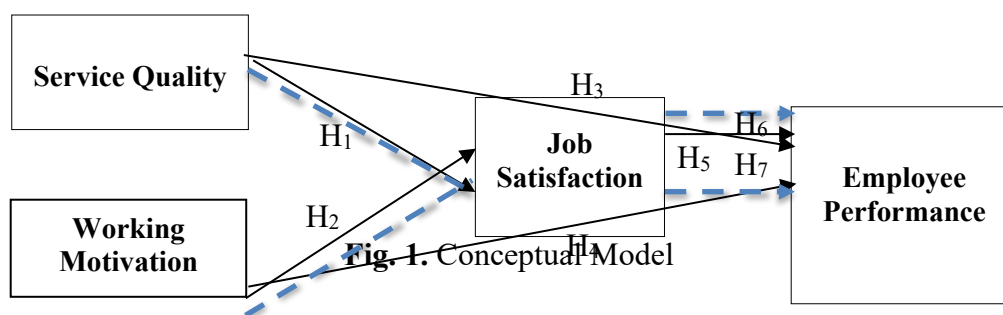
The findings by Yuen & Van Thai, (2015) prove that in partial, service quality influences positively and significantly the service user satisfaction, especially maritime companies in the port area. Particularly in the logistic service, Juga et al., (2010) confirm that the perception on the service has an influence of shipper satisfaction on service providers. In the second exogenous variable, motivation is theoretically a power that gives energy, spirit, continuously lead and support the behavior to achieve the goal (Ricardianto, 2018; Robbins, 2019). Based on other theoretical studies, Greenberg, (2014), describes that job satisfaction, which is conducted individually against their job, as a positive or negative attitude. Whereas in the third variable as the mediating variable, namely theoretical job satisfaction, according to Robbins, (2019) and Fritzsche & Parrish, (2005) as a common attitude toward someone's job that shows the difference of the amount of rewards being received. One of the factors that motivate employees to work is the satisfaction with various experiences showing the employees who are satisfied with what they have got (Ricardianto, 2018). The research by Ningrum & Oktaviannur, (2024) and Hitka et al., (2021) describes that the level of work motivation is positively and significantly correlated with the level of employee satisfaction. The discussion on the theory and some phenomena of the result of previous researches leads to

the development of the first and second hypotheses, namely service quality and job satisfaction, and also service quality and job satisfaction. The discussion on the theory and some phenomena of the result of previous researches leads to the development of the first and second hypotheses, namely service quality and job satisfaction, and also working motivation and job satisfaction.

H₁: *Service quality directly influences job satisfaction*

H₂: *Working motivation directly influences job satisfaction*

The aim of this research is to know and analyze the direct and indirect influences of the service quality of container loading-unloading activities and the influence of working motivation on job satisfaction through employee performance from the three Freight Forwarding companies in South Kalimantan. Therefore, based on the underlying theory, previous research, the problem formulation that has been established, it is continued to become the development of the first to seventh hypotheses, then a conceptual framework can be developed as follows (Figure 1).



METHODS

This research focuses on shipping and logistic, especially related to container transportation carried out in container companies such as Indo Container Lines Banjarmasin, Fajarindo Trans Logistics, and Golden Trans Banjarmasin. The size of sample to be taken from the employees of the Freight Forwarding companies in South Kalimantan, namely Indo Container Lines Banjarmasin, Fajarindo Trans Logistics, and Golden Trans Banjarmasin as population is as many as 53 employees, of which they all become respondents. This research has four variables; service quality as the first exogenous variable, with five operational dimensions, namely reliability, responsiveness, guarantee, empathy, physical evidence; whereas the second exogenous variable, working motivation, with two operational dimensions, namely external motivation and intrinsic motivation. Job satisfaction as the intervening variable with five operational dimensions, namely salary, satisfaction with promotion, satisfaction with colleagues, satisfaction with supervisor, and satisfaction with the job itself. The fourth variable is employee performance as an endogenous variable with three operational dimensions, namely individual factor, psychological factor, and organizational factor.

Research hypothesis testing is conducted with Partial Least Square-based Structural Equation Model approach. The model evaluation in PLS consists of two stages, outer model evaluation and inner model evaluation. The other measurement of convergent validity is the value of Average Variance Extracted. The discriminant validity of reflective model is evaluated through crossloading, then comparing the value of AVE with the square of the correlation value between constructs. The reliability test to be used in this research is seeing the internal consistency reliability of the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha and Composite Reliability. The next stage after evaluating the construct measurement model is evaluating the structural model or inner model or hypothesis testing. The steps to evaluate structural model are: Evaluating

structural model by seeing the significance of inter-construct or inter-variable relations. This can be seen from the path coefficient. The evaluation of the whole structural model uses the Goodness of Fit Index.

Hypothesis Development

Service Quality, Working Motivation and Employee Performance The third variable,

The third variable, service quality, has a significant influence on the employee performance and actions that are relevant to the organizational goals (Putri, 2023; Suryani et al., 2023). Working motivation as the fourth variable has been studied in the previous researches. According to Ryan & Deci, (2000), motivation has intrinsically and extrinsically been studied, and the difference between the two has given an important enlightenment to the practices of development and education. High motivation enhances productivity, efficiency, and employee's job satisfaction.

The result of other researches, Hadiwijaya et al., (2020), Mariana, (2022) and Ariati et al., (2023), is that motivation has a significant influence on employee performance. Türkistanlı & Kök, (2024), and Kawiana et al., (2023), mentions the positive influence of working motivation on employee performance, especially in logistic and freight forwarding through. Aulia et al., (2022) and Karim, (2021), indicates the significant influence of motivation variable on employee performance especially in the Indonesian port terminals. However, there is a research gap in the findings of research Nurasniar, (2022) namely that work motivation is not related to employee performances. The discussion on the theory and some phenomena of the result of previous researches leads to the development of the third and fourth hypotheses, namely service quality and employee performance, and also working motivation and employee performance.

H₃: *Service quality directly influences employee performance*

H₄: *Working motivation directly influences employee performance*

Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Whereas concerning the endogenous variable, employee performance, Pratama, (2016), Babalola, (2016), and Anandhi & Perumal, (2013) generally explain that the influence of job satisfaction on employee performance is very significant. They say that job satisfaction indirectly influences employee performance through its influence on employee's motivation and commitment. Job satisfaction theoretically has a significant influence on improving job performance, and increased job satisfaction tends to be accompanied by increased performance (Jufrizen et al., 2023; Syarifin & Atmaja, 2023). Sitepu et al., (2020), generally explain that the influence of job satisfaction on employee performance is very significant. Another research reveals the positive but not significant influence of job satisfaction on employee performance (Andreani & Petrik, 2016). There is a research gap in the result of the fifth hypothesis testing. The result is still different from the study by Berdiyana & Witjaksono, (2022), they state that job satisfaction does not influence significantly the employee performance. Other research findings also show a research gap, that job satisfaction does not have a significant impact on employee performance (Agustiar & Hazriyanto, 2024). The discussion on the theory and some phenomena of the result of previous researches leads to the development of the fifth hypotheses, namely Job satisfaction and employee performance. The discussion on the theory and some phenomena of the result of previous researches leads to the development of the fifth hypotheses, namely job satisfaction and employee performance.

H₅: *Job satisfaction directly influences employee performance*

Service Quality, Working Motivation, Employee Performance and Job Satisfaction

The sixth hypothesis plan such as service quality indirectly influences job satisfaction through employee performance. Researches related to these three variables have been done before. Specifically for the sixth hypothesis, the results of study Nazeer et al., (2014) indicate a significant positive impact on service quality on job significance and employee performance simultaneously. In general, Ramadhan & Fajarwati, (2024), and Zuhri et al., (2023) state that working motivation indirectly influences job satisfaction through employee performance. Whereas the seventh hypothesis plan is that working motivation indirectly influences job satisfaction through employee performance. Some previous researches by Soetirto et al., (2023) state that the quality of motivation influences positively and significantly on employee performance mediated by job satisfaction.

The variable of job satisfaction more dominantly influences employee performance. The discussion on the theory and some phenomena of the result of previous researches leads to the development of the sixth and seventh hypotheses, namely the influence of service quality and job satisfaction on employee performance and also working motivation and job satisfaction on employee performance.

H₆: Service quality indirectly influences job satisfaction through employee performance

H₇: Working motivation indirectly influences job satisfaction through employee performance

DISCUSSION

The result of Reliability and Validity Analyses

In the first stage of SEM-PLS analysis, the result of model measurement analysis is found as consisting of the results of instrument validity and reliability tests. The result of validity test consists of convergent validity test and discriminant validity test (Figure 2 and Table 1).

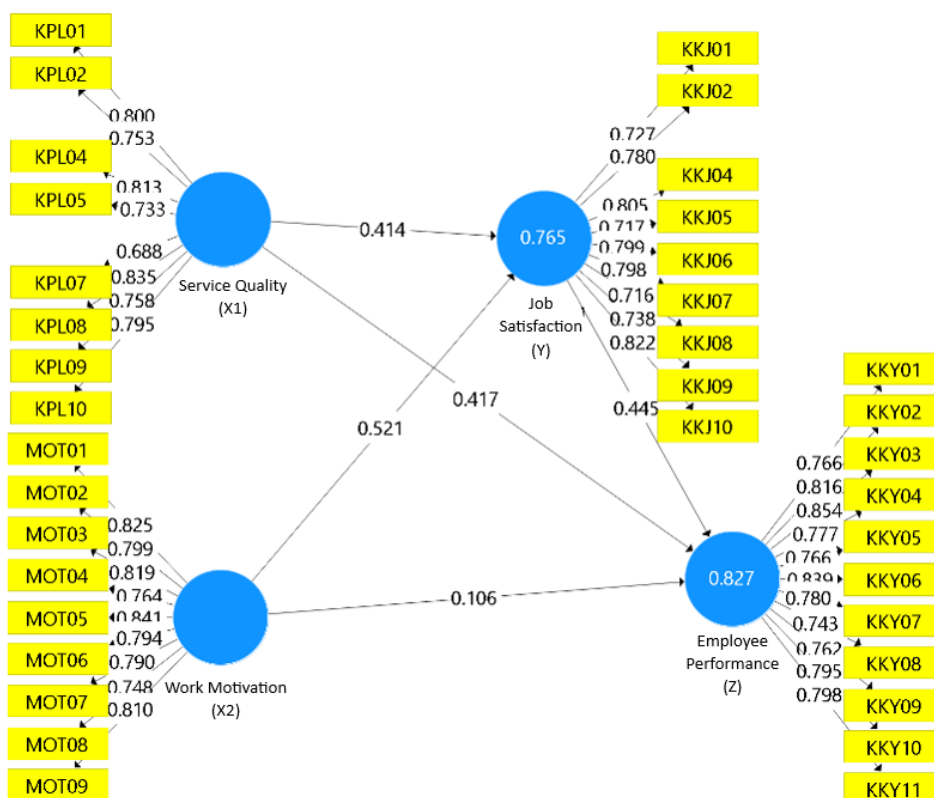


Fig. 2. The result of Inter-Variable Relations Model

Table 1. The Result of Discriminant Validity Test

	Job satisfactio n	Employee performanc e	Service quality	Motivati on
Job Satisfaction	0.768			
Employee Performance	0.869	0.791		
Service Quality	0.803	0.854	0.773	
Working Motivation	0.830	0.787	0.746	0.799

Source: Data processed, 2024

In the result of convergent validity test in Figure 2 and Table 1, there are some deleted indicators because of having loading factor < 0.60 , meaning that the indicators are invalid to measure the construct. After the invalid indicators are deleted, in the above diagram, all the indicators have loading factor > 0.60 , meaning that all the indicators are valid to measure the construct. Sunsequently, the criteria of discriminant validity in Table 1 indicate that the result of Fornell-Larcker Criterion test on the inter-construct correlation has a value bigger than the correlation with other constructs. Thus, it can be concluded that all the items forming the construct can measure validly the construct being formed. Then, the result of the item consistency measurement in measuring the formed construct can be indicated by the results of Alpha Cronbach and Composite Reliability mentioned in Table 1. The testing result indicates that the items measuring each construct have the value of alpha and CR > 0.7 , meaning that the variable being observed is reliably representing the construct. In short, all the constructs indicate high internal consistency and composite reliability. However, there is a difference in the convergent validity, with motivation indicates the strongest validity and job satisfaction indicates relatively weaker validity. Thus, the data can be used in the next step.

The Result of Hypothesis Testing

The result of structural model test is aimed to know the result of influence in the relation between endogenous variable and exogenous variable (hypothesis testing). The result of hypothesis testing can be seen in the following table and figure.

Table 2. Path Coefficient of Direct Influence Testing

	Coefficient	TStatistics	PValues	Results
H ₁ Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.445	3.577	0.000	Accepted
H ₂ Service Quality -> Job Satisfaction	0.414	3.622	0.000	Accepted
H ₃ Service Quality -> Employee Performance	0.417	3.341	0.001	Accepted
H ₄ Working Motivation -> Job Satisfaction	0.521	4.615	0.000	Accepted
H ₅ Working Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.106	1.055	0.292	Accepted

Source: Data processed, 2024

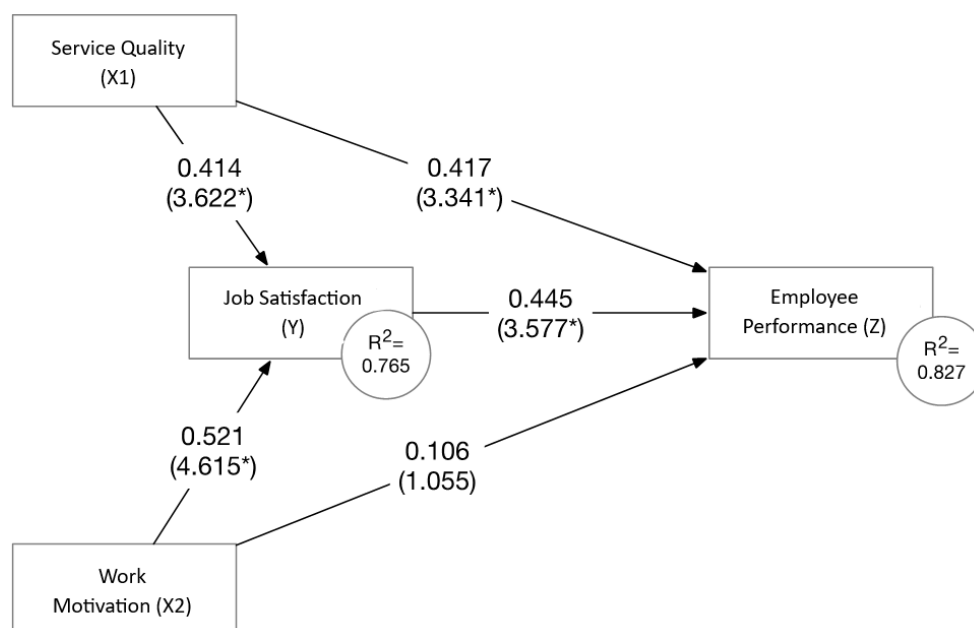


Fig 3. The Result of Path Analysis Testing

From Table 2 and Figure 3 it can be concluded that the results of hypothesis testing on the inter-variable correlation are as follows:

First hypothesis: service quality influences job satisfaction

The first hypothesis testing reveals a significant positive influence of service quality on job satisfaction, supported by a high T-value (3.622) and low P-value (0.000). Structural analysis shows service quality impacts job satisfaction by 0.414, with a t-statistic of 3.622, confirming statistical significance. This positive effect means that when employees perceive their services meet or exceed customer expectations, it boosts their job satisfaction. In the cargo delivery industry, where employees manage cargo coordination and ensure timely delivery, achieving this fosters a sense of accomplishment and pride.

The findings align with prior research, including Chang & Thai (2016) and Yeo et al. (2015) on leadership in maritime/port contexts, and Bupu et al. (2023) on how service perceptions affect shipper satisfaction with providers. Thus, the results support theoretical frameworks and previous studies.

Second hypothesis: working motivation influences job satisfaction

The second hypothesis testing revealed a statistically significant positive influence of working motivation on job satisfaction, with a high t-value (4.615) and low p-value (0.000). Structural analysis showed that motivation accounts for 0.521 of the variance in job satisfaction, with a t-statistic of 4.615. This highlights motivation's role in boosting satisfaction among employees in expedition companies, particularly in cargo delivery services. Key factors include extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation emerges as the primary driver, driven by opportunities for professional growth, awareness of facilitating global trade, and autonomy in decision-making related to cargo movement. Employees who find purpose and satisfaction in their roles are more engaged and content.

The first hypothesis results align with prior studies, such as Fadillah & Firmansyah (2024), Kumari et al. (2021), Pang & Lu (2018), Siregar et al. (2024), and Chatra (2024), all confirming a strong positive correlation between motivation and job satisfaction. These

findings have implications for shipping industry researchers and practitioners, supporting established theories and empirical evidence.

Third Hypothesis: service quality influences employee performance

The third hypothesis testing demonstrated a statistically significant positive influence of service quality on employee performance, evidenced by a high t-value (3.341) and low p-value (0.001). Structural analysis indicated that service quality accounts for 0.417 of the variance in employee performance, with a t-statistic of 3.341. This influence enhances effectiveness, efficiency, employee satisfaction, and motivation, while also boosting customer satisfaction and fostering a better work environment. Organizations are advised to improve service quality through training, process enhancements, and adequate resource provision to optimize performance.

These results align with prior studies, including Suryani et al. (2023), Nurlina et al. (2020), and Maharani & Nurhayati (2024), which confirm the positive and significant link between service quality and employee performance, particularly in logistics. The findings support theoretical frameworks and existing research.

Fourth hypothesis: working motivation influences employee performance

The fourth hypothesis testing found no statistically significant influence of motivation on employee performance, with a low t-value (1.055) and high p-value (0.292). Structural analysis showed a negligible effect size of 0.106, indicating motivation does not significantly enhance performance in this context. Despite this, motivation is crucial in the cargo delivery industry, where complex operations demand high commitment, efficiency, and creativity. Motivated employees are more engaged, while low motivation leads to reduced performance, absenteeism, and dissatisfaction. Companies should focus on motivators like rewards, recognition, and career growth to boost performance.

These results contradict studies by Fahriana (2022), Anggraini (2024), Choir et al. (2021), Ananda & Eriza (2023), Kawiana et al. (2023), and Rasyid et al. (2023), which link motivation to performance. However, they align with Chatra (2024), who found no effect in a national shipping company, supporting theoretical perspectives and select prior research.

Fifth hypothesis: job satisfaction influences employee performance

The fifth hypothesis testing revealed a significant positive influence of job satisfaction on employee performance, with an effect size of 0.445 and a t-statistic of 3.577. Job satisfaction emerged as the strongest predictor of performance among the variables examined. In the cargo delivery industry, this influence is amplified by factors like autonomy in decision-making and opportunities for professional growth, which align employee satisfaction with improved performance. Satisfied employees exhibit higher productivity, work quality, and organizational commitment, while dissatisfaction leads to reduced performance, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover.

Organizations should prioritize a conducive work environment that recognizes and appreciates contributions, such as facilitating global trade and smooth cargo operations, to enhance satisfaction and performance. These findings support studies by Maarif et al. (2024), Hartika et al. (2023), Khairunnisa et al. (2023), and Alias et al. (2020), confirming a significant link between job satisfaction and performance, in line with theoretical frameworks and prior research.

Therefore, it is important for the management to create a work environment that supports job satisfaction to boost optimum performance. Now, the result of indirect influence testing can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. The result of indirect influence testing

		Path Coefficien t	Standard Deviation	T _{statisti} c	P-Values
H ₆	Service Quality -> Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.185	0.081	2.272	0.023
H ₇	Motivation -> Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.232	0.078	2.975	0.003

From Table 3 it can be known the indirect influence through the mediation of job satisfaction
Sixth hypothesis: service quality indirect influence employee performance through job satisfaction

The sixth hypothesis testing showed a positive and significant indirect influence of service quality on employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.185 and a t-statistic of 2.272. This indicates that enhancing service quality boosts job satisfaction, which in turn improves performance, though the direct effect of service quality on performance is stronger.

In the cargo delivery industry, job satisfaction mediates this relationship by fostering a culture of open communication and continuous improvement, where employees use customer feedback to exceed expectations and enhance performance. These findings align with Suryani (2023), who noted service quality and performance positively affect customer satisfaction, and Agusantoso & Gunawan (2023), who found facility service quality and job satisfaction positively impact employee performance in logistics. The results support theoretical studies and prior research.

The seventh hypothesis testing revealed a positive and significant indirect influence of working motivation on employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.232 and a t-statistic of 2.975. This suggests that increased motivation elevates job satisfaction, leading to better performance.

In the cargo delivery context, motivation drives satisfaction in a fast-paced environment through challenges, teamwork, and collaboration with stakeholders, ultimately boosting performance. These results support Türkistanlı & Kök (2024), who linked employee performance, motivation, and satisfaction; Susanto et al. (2023), who found motivation and performance enhance satisfaction in logistics; and Putra (2024) and Budiono (2024), who confirmed motivation's positive effect on performance via satisfaction. The findings align with theoretical frameworks and previous studies.

Seventh hypothesis: working motivation indirect influence employee performance through job satisfaction

The seventh hypothesis testing demonstrated a positive and significant indirect influence of working motivation on employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.232 and a t-statistic of 2.975. This indicates that higher motivation enhances job satisfaction, which in turn improves performance.

In the cargo delivery industry, motivation fosters satisfaction in a dynamic, fast-paced setting through challenges, teamwork, and collaboration with stakeholders like customs officers and clients, ultimately boosting performance. These results align with Türkistanlı & Kök (2024), who found correlations among performance, motivation, and satisfaction; Susanto et al. (2023), who noted motivation and performance enhance satisfaction in logistics; and Putra

(2024) and Budiono (2024), who confirmed motivation's positive effect on performance via satisfaction. The findings support theoretical studies and prior research.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that high service quality plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee performance, primarily through the mediating effect of job satisfaction. In the context of freight forwarding companies, particularly those involved in cargo delivery and logistics, service quality is not merely about meeting customer expectations but also about fostering an internal environment where employees derive satisfaction from their work. For instance, when employees perceive that the services they provide—such as efficient container loading and unloading—align with high standards, it boosts their sense of accomplishment and pride, leading to improved performance metrics like productivity and efficiency. Companies must therefore adopt a dual focus: elevating service quality for external customers while simultaneously cultivating employee satisfaction through supportive work environments, adequate resources, and recognition of their contributions. This creates a virtuous cycle where satisfied employees are more likely to deliver superior service, further enhancing performance and organizational sustainability.

Additionally, the study reveals that strong working motivation significantly drives employee performance improvements, again mediated by job satisfaction. Motivation acts as a catalyst, transforming individual drive into tangible outcomes in a demanding industry like freight forwarding, where operations are fast-paced and involve complex logistics. To amplify this, companies should implement targeted strategies such as offering fair and competitive rewards (e.g., bonuses tied to performance), providing clear pathways for career advancement and skill development, and fostering a conducive work environment that includes work-life balance, open communication, and team collaboration. These elements ensure employees feel valued and motivated, which in turn heightens their job satisfaction and translates into higher performance levels, including reduced absenteeism, increased creativity in problem-solving, and greater commitment to organizational goals.

Overall, the research underscores that improving employee performance in freight forwarding companies requires a strategic emphasis on two key areas: enhancing the service quality of container loading and unloading processes, and boosting employee motivation. These factors indirectly elevate job satisfaction, which serves as a bridge to superior performance. By prioritizing these, companies can achieve broader benefits, such as increased operational efficiency (e.g., faster turnaround times for cargo handling), higher employee satisfaction (leading to lower turnover rates), and overall support for long-term business growth and success. Practical steps include conducting routine performance evaluations to provide constructive feedback, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and developing individualized growth plans for employees, such as training programs or mentorship opportunities. This research is poised to make a substantial contribution to the freight forwarding sector in Banjarmasin City by offering evidence-based insights into how integrating service quality, motivation, and job satisfaction can optimize employee performance, ultimately driving competitive advantage in the logistics industry. Such enhancements not only benefit employees through better job experiences but also position companies to better serve global trade demands and adapt to dynamic market conditions.

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