

The Influence of Achievement Needs and Employee Competencies on Career Achievement

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of achievement needs on career achievement and investigates the mediating role of employee competence among staff members of the Class I Correctional Institution in Malang. Employing an explanatory quantitative design, data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The findings reveal that the need for achievement has a positive and significant effect on both employee competence and career achievement. Furthermore, employee competence exerts a significant positive influence on career achievement and mediates the relationship between achievement needs and career outcomes. These results indicate that employees' intrinsic drive to excel not only enhances their career achievement directly but also indirectly through competence improvement. Theoretically, this study contributes to the extension of McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory by demonstrating its applicability in a high-stress, bureaucratic public organization such as a correctional institution. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of developing programs that simultaneously foster achievement motivation and enhance competencies through training, recognition, and structured career pathways. Strengthening these aspects can improve both individual career advancement and organizational performance within correctional settings.

Keywords: achievement needs; employee competence; career achievements

JEL Classification: M12; M53

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1. Introduction

Correctional institutions have a strategic role in the criminal justice system, namely not only as a place to serve their sentences, but also as an institution for the development and rehabilitation of prisoners. The main purpose of the

existence of prisons is to return inmates to society as individuals who are able to behave according to legal and social norms. In carrying out this function, prison employees become the central actor responsible for ensuring that the coaching process runs effectively and humanely.

Their role is not only limited to the security aspect, but also includes mentoring, moral coaching, and skill development of inmates. However, the reality in various correctional institutions in Indonesia shows that the implementation of this function is faced with complex challenges. Excess capacity of residents, limited facilities and infrastructure, and high workload have become issues that continue to emerge (Ravena & Mahmud, 2019). This condition has a direct impact on the psychological welfare and work performance of prison employees, which ultimately has the potential to reduce the quality of coaching for inmates. In this stressful situation, the need for employees who have a high work ethic, adequate competence, and a clear career development orientation is very urgent.

An important factor that is believed to affect the career development of employees in a challenging work environment such as prisons is the need for achievement and individual competence. The need to excel is a person's intrinsic drive to achieve optimal performance, set high work standards, and show dedication in carrying out complex tasks (Kurniawan et al., 2020). Employees who have high achievement needs tend to have greater fighting power in facing obstacles, and are more proactive in finding solutions to various problems that arise in the implementation of duties, including in the context of inmate development (Seppänen et al., 2021).

On the other hand, employee competencies also play an important role in determining the effectiveness of their work. Competencies in the context of correctional institutions include not only technical skills such as understanding of laws and regulations, but also include social and emotional skills, such as communication skills, conflict management, and psychological understanding of inmate behavior (Han,

2024). Employees who have high competence are better able to adapt to the dynamics of the work environment, handle critical situations wisely, and establish productive working relationships, both with fellow employees and with inmates.

Although the importance of achievement needs and competencies has been extensively discussed the importance of achievement needs and competencies has been widely discussed in organizational and motivational literature, most existing studies have been concentrated in business enterprises, education, or general public institutions (Kurniawan et al., 2020; Werdhiastutie et al., 2020). Very few have examined how these two factors interact within high-risk and bureaucratic environments such as correctional institutions, where work structures, psychological pressures, and career advancement mechanisms differ substantially from other sectors. This gap is important because correctional institutions represent a distinctive organizational setting characterized by rigid hierarchies, emotional strain, and limited extrinsic rewards that may alter the dynamics between intrinsic motivation and competence development. Employees in such environments often rely more heavily on personal drives and adaptive competencies to achieve professional progress Fletcher et al., (2021). Consequently, testing McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory and competency frameworks in this context provides an opportunity to expand their explanatory scope beyond conventional organizational settings.

Therefore, this study offers a clear novelty by developing and empirically testing a motivation–competence–career achievement model within the correctional environment. This approach contributes theoretically by contextualizing McClelland's achievement theory under conditions of limited autonomy and structural constraints, and empirically by

demonstrating how intrinsic motivation can be transformed into measurable career outcomes through competency enhancement. By addressing this theoretical and contextual gap, the present study enriches the understanding of career development processes in public sector organizations where psychological endurance and competence interplay more critically than in private-sector workplaces.

2. Literature review

Theory of achievement

The theory of achievement needs by David McClelland within the framework of human motivation theory. McClelland posits that the need for achievement is a person's internal need to achieve something that is considered important, overcome challenges, and achieve a certain standard of excellence (McClelland, 1976). Individuals with high achievement needs have characteristics such as strong determination, a tendency to take personal responsibility for the results of work, as well as the ability to set specific and realistic goals. McClelland's theory is in line with research conducted by Werdhiastutie et al., (2020) Individual motivation varies based on the strength of the need to achieve goals. This motivation is important to improve individual performance and the quality of human resources in the organization through the fulfillment of individual needs and desires.

Employee competency theory

Employee competence refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform a particular task effectively (Riyanti & Diwanti, 2023). Competencies can be categorized into three main types: technical, social, and personal competencies. Technical competencies include specific abilities that are relevant to the job, such as skills in using certain tools or in-depth knowledge of a particular field (Suikkala et al., 2023).

Career achievement theory

Career achievement is the cumulative result of a person's work journey that includes promotion, professional recognition, and fulfillment of personal goals (Oliveira-Silva, 2019). Career achievement is often the main indicator of a person's success in the world of work. Factors such as education (Tuononen & Heidi, 2022), Work Experience (Vos et al., 2019), and professional networking (Berardi et al., 2019) contribute to the career achievement of individuals. Career achievement depends not only on individual abilities but also on external factors such as organizational support. This support can be in the form of training programs, mentoring, and self-development opportunities (Tamilselvan, 2024).

Hypothesis Development

The effect of achievement on career achievement

The need for achievement encourages individuals to work harder, set challenging goals, and look for ways to keep improving. Individuals with high achievement needs tend to be more focused on results, have a strong motivation to achieve higher standards, and are able to overcome obstacles in creative ways. Research conducted by Sanders et al (2020). The need for achievement has a positive and significant effect on job performance, both directly and indirectly, through budget participation, highlighting its importance in improving employee performance in organizations. The research is supported by research conducted by Listyanti & Dewi, (2021) which reveals that the need to excel, or the motivation to excel, has a positive and significant effect on job performance. Higher achievement motivation correlates with improved work performance, suggesting that employees with strong motivation tend to achieve better results in their tasks.

In contrast to research conducted by Wang et al (2024) which states that the effect of performance on motivation is insignificant, suggesting that the need to perform does not have a strong cause-and-effect relationship with job performance, unlike the effect of work motivation on performance. The construction of work motivation has been found to show a clearer correlation with performance outcomes than previously understood. Individuals who have a high sense of motivation are generally characterized by an intense determination to achieve their professional goals, which can include a variety of aspirations including the achievement of awards, the desire to feel valued and recognized, or the pursuit of other personal ambitions that contribute to their overall sense of fulfillment (Darsiah, 2023). This intrinsic motivation serves to increase the energy level and concentration that individuals apply when carrying out assigned tasks, thus exerting a significant influence on the caliber and volume of their work output (Subedi & Ghimire, 2022). As a result, the impact of motivation on performance is often easier to observe, as it is driven by a strong internal drive to improve the quality of one's work and achieve superior results. This phenomenon underscores the importance of understanding motivational dynamics in the workplace, as they play an integral role in shaping not only individual performance but also the overall effectiveness of organizational operations (Swiatczak, 2021).

H1: Achievement Ability has an influence on Career Achievement

The Influence of Employee Competence on Career Achievement

The competencies and skills acquired through a comprehensive training program allow employees to carry out their duties with greater efficiency and precision, thus leading to an improvement in the overall quality of the work produced, which

ultimately fosters an environment conducive to recognition and paves the way for potential promotional opportunities within the organizational structure. It is through this continuous cycle of skill development, confidence building, and performance improvement that individual employees and organizations can thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape. Muzakky & Wulansari, (2024). According to research from Das & Chandrasekaran (2022) showed participation in competency development initiatives was positively correlated with self-perceived employability, which in turn was related to career satisfaction and perceived marketing ability, suggesting that competency development has a positive relationship with professional success. Good competencies allow individuals to overcome work challenges more effectively (Sarithiraa, 2024). Technical competence helps individuals complete complex tasks, while social competence allows them to build positive working relationships. These two types of competencies complement each other and are essential for career success. In addition, employee competence can also increase individual confidence. By having adequate skills, they feel better prepared to take on new challenges. This can give them the courage to take the risks necessary to advance in their careers.

H2: Employee Competencies affect Career Achievement

Achievement Needs Affect Career Achievement

Achievement needs or Achievement Motivation It is an internal drive that individuals have to achieve excellence and the best results in every task they undertake. McClelland, (1976) states that individuals with high achievement needs have a tendency to set challenging goals, take responsibility for achieving results, and seek to obtain feedback as a basis for

self-evaluation and improvement. This drive ultimately stimulates individuals to increase their capacity in a sustainable manner. In the context of the organization, the need for achievement is one of the important driving factors in the development of employee work competencies. Employee competencies reflect individual abilities that include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform the job effectively (Encarnacion et al., 2023). Individuals who have high motivation to excel will be more motivated to develop competencies in order to support their success at work. They will show enthusiasm in participating in training, looking for new information relevant to their work, and making continuous self-improvement efforts. This shows that the need for achievement encourages employees to become active learners and adaptable to increasingly dynamic work demands. Therefore, the need for achievement can contribute positively to improving employee competence. Previous research results also support the relationship between the need for achievement and individual competence. Robbins & Judge, (2019) Finding that the need to achieve better results will motivate individuals to build higher work capacity. Damarwulan & Dibyantoro, (2022) It also explains that employees who have a high level of achievement motivation tend to show superior competence because of the internal drive to be better. These studies provide an empirical basis that strengthens the need for achievement can be a driving factor in competency development. Thus, it can be assumed that the higher the need for achievement that individuals have, the higher the competencies that can be developed in the implementation of their duties.

H3: The Need for Achievement has a positive effect on Employee Competence.

The Role of Employee Competencies in Mediating Achievement

In employee career development, the relationship between intrinsic motivation and individual abilities is an important factor that influences each other. One form of intrinsic motivation that plays a big role in the work environment is the need for achievement (Werdhiastutie et al., 2020). Individuals with high achievement needs tend to set high standards of work, show initiative, and constantly look for opportunities to grow. However, the motivation to perform alone is not enough to guarantee optimal career achievement, especially in complex work environments such as correctional institutions. It is also necessary to have competence as a real ability that employees have to actualize this motivation into measurable work performance and have an impact on career advancement (Mushthofa & Handoyo, 2023).

Competencies in this context include a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are relevant to the employee's duties and responsibilities. Competency plays an important role as a bridge between the drive to excel and actual achievement in the job. Employees who have high motivation to excel but are not supported by adequate competence will have difficulty in realizing the targets they set. On the other hand, employees who have high competence but without a strong drive to excel will also be less than optimal in pushing their careers in a higher direction. Therefore, competence is seen as a mediating variable that explains how the need for achievement can contribute to career achievement. Some research supports the role of competency mediation in the relationship between achievement motivation and career achievement. Research by Aurellia et al., (2024) shows that job competencies can strengthen the relationship between intrinsic motivation and long-term job success. Similar findings were also put forward by Han,

(2024), which states that competency development is key in realizing the ambitions and career goals of public sector employees. Therefore, in the context of this study, it is assumed that the need for achievement has an indirect influence on

career achievement through the competence of employees as mediators.

H4: Employee competencies mediate the influence of achievement needs on career achievement.

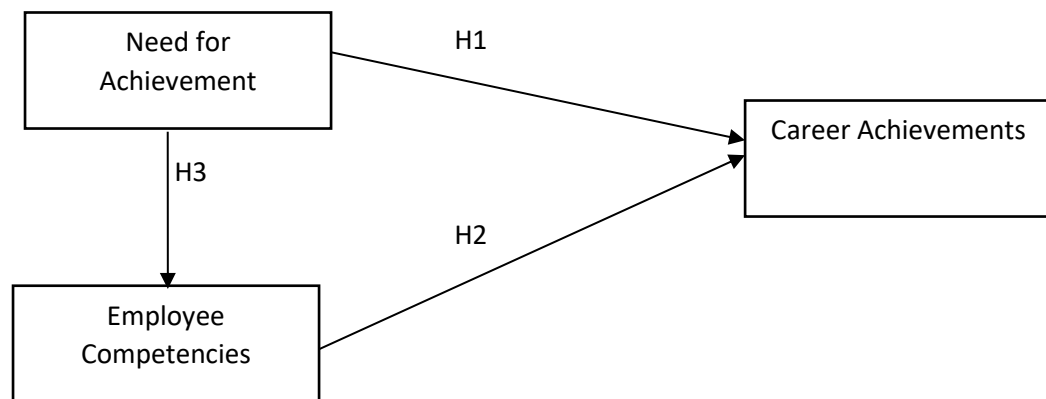


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

3. Research method

This research method uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research type that aims to examine the causal relationship between achievement needs, employee competencies, and career achievement. The research population was all employees of Class I Malang Prison, with a sample of 110 respondents who were selected purposively based on certain criteria, such as permanent employment status and a minimum working period of two years. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale, which has been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was

carried out using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the help of SmartPLS software. The analysis procedure includes the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to test the reliability and validity of the construct, as well as the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the relationship between variables, supported by descriptive analysis to describe the characteristics of respondents and research data.

The operationalization of variables and indicators is presented in Table 2.1 below

Table 1. Operational definitions and indicators

Variable	Indicators	Explanation
Needs to Excel. (Addressing needs involves identifying, prioritizing, and satisfying diverse human needs at all levels of individuals, organizations, and communities) (Human & Watkins, 2023)	Destination Orientation	Measure how focused employees are on setting and achieving goals to motivate career achievement.
	Encouragement to Improve Performance	Describe the level of motivation of employees to improve performance to achieve better results.
	Perception of Success	Shows how employees rate success and its impact on their efforts to achieve.
	Initiative and Willingness to Learn	Assessing how proactive employees are in taking initiative and willingness to learn new things as a form of career ambition.
Employee Competency (Employee competency is defined as an individual's ability to perform work effectively. It includes the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for successful job performance, serving as the basis for competency analysis within the organization)(Sarithiraa, 2024)	Technical Skills	Measuring the technical ability of employees in carrying out tasks according to the field of work, which is relevant for career progress.
	Interpersonal Skills	Describe the ability of employees to interact and cooperate with others, which plays a role in career achievement.
	Managerial Skills	Assess managerial skills that are important for employees who want to move up to higher positions.
	Creativity and Problem-Solving	Demonstrate employees' ability to come up with creative and effective solutions to problems in the workplace.

Career Achievement (career success as a dynamic concept influenced by a variety of factors, including personal values, education, demographics, and career capital, that has evolved over the past six decades.) (Jansen et al., 2022)	Promotion or Promotion	Measures how often employees receive promotions as an indication of success in career achievement.
	Increased Responsibility	Describe whether employees get additional responsibilities that indicate progress in their careers.
	Salary and Benefits	Assess changes in salary or benefits as indicators of success in a career.
	Job Satisfaction and Position Prestige	Measuring employee satisfaction with their position and prestige as a form of career achievement.

4. Result and discussion

Result

Convergent validity indicates how strong the relationships between indicators in a single construct are, as well as how well they reflect the construct in question. This validity test is usually carried out by looking at the value of the loading factor

and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Hair et al., (2014), An indicator is considered to have convergent validity if its loading factor value is more than 0.70. Based on the results of data processing using SmartPLS, the loading factor values for each indicator in each variable are as follows:

Table 2. Loading factor

	Achievement Motivation	Career Achievement	Employee Competence
KB1	0,910		
KB2	0,842		
KB3	0,900		
KB4	0,772		
KP1			0,751
KP2			0,920
KP3			0,927
KP4			0,896
PK1		0,913	
PK2		0,934	
PK3		0,917	
PK4		0,942	

Based on the results of the analysis using SEM-PLS, all indicators in this

study were proven to meet the criteria of convergent validity very well. This can be

seen from the loading factor value that exceeds the threshold of 0.70, indicating a strong and significant relationship between each indicator and the construct it represents.

The AVE values for each construct are as follows:

Table 3. AVE value

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Achievement Motivation	0,735
Career Achievement	0,858
Employee Competence	0,768

The results of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test showed that all constructs in this study met the convergent validity criteria, namely the AVE value above 0.50.

Construct Reliability Test

Reliability tests are performed to see how consistent an instrument is in producing data, especially if measurements are repeated. In this study, the reliability of the construct was assessed through two indicators, namely Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). According to Hair et al., (2014), the construct is declared reliable if Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values are greater than 0.70. The results of the reliability test

for each construct are shown in the following Table 4:

Table 4. Reliability construct test

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Achievement Motivation	0,879	0,917
Career Achievement	0,945	0,960
Employee Competence	0,897	0,929

Based on the results in Table 4, all constructs in this study are proven to be reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70. Achievement Motivation has values of 0.879 and 0.917, Career Achievement of 0.945 and 0.960, and Employee Competence of 0.897 and 0.929. These values indicate that each construct has excellent internal consistency.

Structural Model Test

Internal model testing was carried out to see the causal relationship between variables, which was evaluated through several indicators such as determination coefficients, predictive relevance, model suitability, and the value of the path coefficient and its parameters. The hypothesis testing process is carried out using the bootstrapping method, and the full results are presented in the following sections.

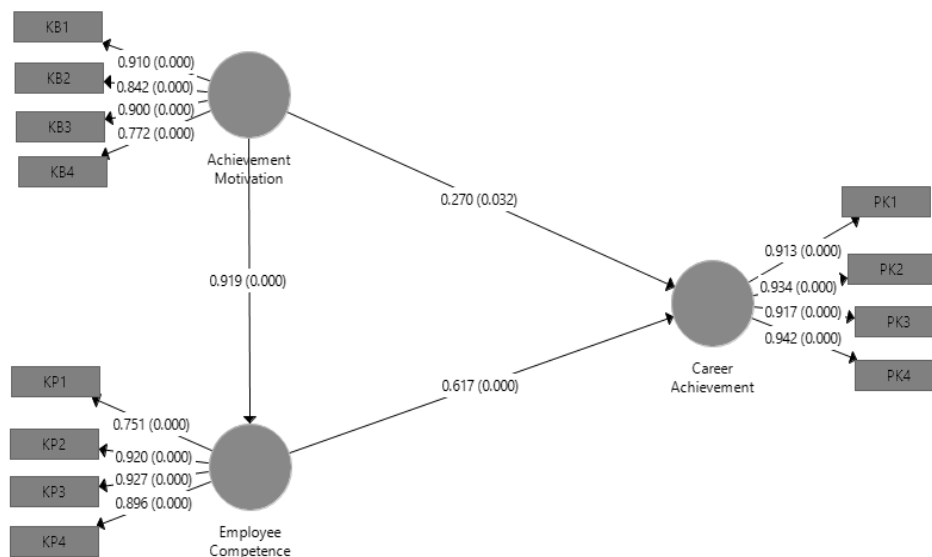


Figure 2. Path coefficient

R-Square

The results of the determination coefficient analysis (R-square) show that this research model can explain the dependent variables well. The Career Achievement variable can be significantly explained by the Employee Competence variable with the strength of the relationship that is classified as medium to strong.

Table 5. R-Square value

	R Square
Career Achievement	0,759
Employee Competence	0,845

Goddness of fit the right PLS can be found from the Q2 value. The value of Q2 has the same meaning as the determination coefficient (R-Squared/R2) in regression analysis. The higher the R2, the more models can be said to match the data. A Q-

Square value greater than 0 (zero) indicates that the model has Predictive Relevance, while a Q-Square value of less than 0 (zero) indicates that the model has no predictive relevance (Ghozali, 2014). From table 10, it can be seen that the Q2 values are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Q2 \text{ value} &= 1 - (1 - R21) (1 - R22) (1 - R23) \dots (1 - R2n) \\
 &= 1 - (1 - 0.759) (1 - 0.845) \\
 &= 0.962645 \text{ (96.2645\%)}
 \end{aligned}$$

In this research model, the R-squared value generated in the overall model equation is 96.2645%, which means that the structural model has high predictive relevance, the model is getting better and suitable for use in prediction.

Hypothesis Testing

Table the path coefficients to see the results of the following T-statistics:

Table 6. Path coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	P Values
Achievement Motivation -> Career Achievement	0,270	0,032
Achievement Motivation -> Employee Competence	0,919	0,000
Employee Competence -> Career Achievement	0,617	0,000

Based on table 6. There is a positive and significant direct influence of Achievement Motivation on Career Achievement. The path coefficient value (0.270) indicates that the higher a person's motivation to achieve, the higher their career achievement. A p-value (0.032) that is smaller than 0.05 indicates statistical significance.

There is a very strong, positive, and significant direct influence of Achievement Motivation on Employee Competence. A high path coefficient (0.919) indicates that a person's motivation for achievement has a huge impact on improving employee competence. A p(0.000) value much smaller than 0.05 confirms this significance.

There is a strong, positive, and significant direct influence of Employee Competence on Career Achievement. The path coefficient (0.617) indicates that higher employee competencies will significantly contribute to better career achievement. A value of p (0.000) indicates high statistical significance.

Achievement Motivation not only affects Career Achievement directly, but also indirectly through increasing Employee Competence. This means that a person's motivation to achieve will increase their competence, and it is this higher competence that then drives career achievement. Therefore, the role of Employee Competence is proven to be a mediating variable.

Discussion

The Effect of Achievement Motivation on Career Achievement

The results of the first hypothesis test showed that Achievement Motivation had a positive and significant effect on Career Achievement, with a path coefficient value of 0.270 and a p-value of 0.032 which was statistically significant between achievement motivation and career achievement. In other words, the higher the individual's level of motivation to

achieve achievements, the greater the individual's chances of achieving progress and success in his or her career.

Theoretically, these results support the framework developed by David McClelland through Need Theory, especially in terms of the need for achievement. McClelland, (1976), states that individuals with a high need for achievement tend to be goal-oriented, diligent in completing tasks, and have an internal drive to excel and achieve better results than previous standards. These characteristics directly affect an individual's ability to build a progressive and successful career path. Practically, individuals who have high motivation to excel usually set challenging personal goals, dare to take initiative, and are not easily satisfied with the achievements that have been achieved. They actively seek opportunities to learn and grow, as well as are responsive to feedback as a means to improve the quality of work. This characteristic then encourages career achievement, both in the form of promotions, increased responsibilities, and professional recognition from the organization.

This research also strengthens the results of previous studies, such as those conducted by (Beara & Muratović, 2022; Lissa, 2020), which concludes that achievement motivation is one of the main predictors in determining the direction and success of a person's career. Motivation to excel has been shown to improve individual performance, expand competency capacity, and strengthen commitment to long-term goals, all of which lead to increased career achievement. In an organizational context, these findings provide important implications for human resource management, particularly in employee career development planning. Organizations need to create a work environment that can stimulate and strengthen motivation to achieve, through

the preparation of clear performance targets, a fair reward system, professional development opportunities, and the granting of autonomy in the workplace. Thus, the organization not only encourages employees to develop individually, but also strengthens collective achievement in the long run.

Overall, these results confirm that Achievement Motivation is an internal psychological factor that is essential in encouraging individuals to achieve Career Achievement. Therefore, both from an individual and organizational perspective, it is important to continue to cultivate and maintain the motivation to excel as a foundation in building a successful and sustainable career.

The Effect of Achievement Motivation on Employee Competence

The results of testing the second hypothesis show that Achievement Motivation has a positive and significant effect on Employee Competence. The path coefficient value of 0.919 and the p-value of 0.000 showed a very strong and statistically significant influence. This means that the higher a person's motivation to achieve, the higher the competence they have in carrying out their duties. These findings reinforce the suspicion that an individual's internal drive to achieve achievement has a direct impact on the mastery of knowledge and job skills. Therefore, Achievement Motivation is an important factor in shaping the quality and capabilities of an employee (Werdhiastutie et al., 2020).

Theoretically, these findings support the view that motivation plays a driving role in the development of individual competencies. Self-Determination Theory explains that intrinsic motivation encourages individuals to learn and develop independently (Ryan & Deci, 2020). High Achievement Motivation triggers proactive behavior in mastering new abilities and improving one's

weaknesses. The drive to achieve higher standards makes individuals more open to various learning processes. This shows that improving competence often starts from the strength of internal motivation that a person has.

Practically, highly motivated employees tend to show a continuous passion for learning. They will be more enthusiastic about participating in training, looking for work challenges, and actively asking for feedback on their performance. This spirit gradually improves the skills, knowledge, and work attitude needed in the organization. Thus, individuals not only become more competent, but also better prepared to deal with changes and pressures in the work environment. This competency improvement then becomes an important foundation in supporting performance achievement and career development (Firdaus et al., 2023).

This research is also in line with previous findings that show that motivation to excel is positively correlated with self-development behavior. Individuals who are driven to succeed will usually take active steps in improving their professional capacity. They not only wait for opportunities, but consciously create opportunities to learn and grow. Previous studies have emphasized that this kind of behavior is characteristic of highly motivated individuals. Thus, the achievement of work competencies is highly determined by the level of achievement motivation possessed by each employee.

These findings provide important implications for organizations, especially in human resource development strategies. Organizations need to pay attention to psychological aspects such as motivation, not just technical skills. Competency development will be more optimal if it is supported by a system that encourages the growth of achievement motivation, such as recognition of performance and a clear career path. A work culture that supports

achievement will create an ecosystem that stimulates sustainable self-development. Thus, organizations will have human resources that are competent, adaptive, and ready to compete in an era full of change.

The Influence of Employee Competence on Career Achievement

The results of the path analysis showed a positive coefficient of 0.617 for this relationship. This figure indicates that improvements in employee competencies are significantly correlated with improvements in career achievement. Furthermore, the significance value (p-value) found was 0.000, which is well below the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, this data strongly supports the hypothesis, confirming that Employee Competence has a direct and significant influence on Career Achievement (Khaer & Hidayati, 2023). Conceptually, employee competencies include the combination of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes necessary to carry out job duties effectively. Employees who have high competence will be more efficient in completing work and able to adapt to changing job demands. This ability allows them to make a greater contribution to the organization. Individuals also tend to be more innovative and able to solve complex problems. The accumulation of this superior performance will naturally attract management's attention and open up career advancement opportunities (Marlina et al., 2024). High competence is often seen in the quality of work and adaptability of an employee. Competent employees can complete projects to a high standard and meet deadlines consistently. They also demonstrate the ability to learn quickly and apply new knowledge in work situations. In addition, good interpersonal competence allows them to collaborate effectively with colleagues and superiors. All of these attributes increase their value in the eyes of the organization, making

them prime candidates for greater promotions and responsibilities.

The practical implications of these findings are crucial for human resource development in organizations. It is important for companies to invest in ongoing training and development programs. These programs should be designed to enhance key competencies relevant to the organization's strategic objectives. In addition, the performance management system must effectively identify competency gaps and provide support for improvement. Thus, the organization can ensure that its employees have the necessary capacity to reach their maximum career potential.

Thus, the positive and significant relationship between Employee Competence and Career Achievement confirms that individual capabilities are the primary foundation for professional success. While other factors such as networking or luck also play a role, having solid competencies is an essential prerequisite. This research provides strong empirical evidence that investing in employee competency development is an effective strategy to encourage career advancement. It also highlights the importance of accurate competency assessments to identify and nurture talent who will become future leaders (Musfiratun et al., 2024).

Employee Competence as a Mediator between Achievement Motivation and Career Achievement

Based on the results of the analysis using SmartPLS, it is known that Employee Competence significantly mediates the influence of Achievement Motivation on Career Achievement. The mediation pathway showed a coefficient value of 0.566 with a p-value of 0.001, which was below the significance limit of 0.05. This shows that the motivation to achieve achievement not only has a direct effect on career achievement, but also has

a strong indirect influence through improved competence (Dwiningtyas et al., 2024). This means that individuals who have high achievement motivation tend to improve their competencies first, and these competencies are then an important factor in encouraging career achievement. In contrast to research conducted by (Syamilah et al., 2024) which shows that employee competence does not significantly affect work motivation, contrary to the idea of achievement motivation which has a strong indirect effect through competence improvement. Thus, Employee Competence plays an important role as a mechanism in bridging the relationship between motivation and career achievement.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce a model of motivation and performance processes, in which individual motivation drives self-development behaviors that impact competency improvement, ultimately influencing performance and career outcomes (Widisono et al., 2021). Achievement Motivation serves as an initial trigger that encourages individuals to put in more effort in mastering relevant knowledge and skills. As competencies increase, individuals will be better able to meet job demands and demonstrate superior performance, which is the basis for career achievements. In this context, Employee Competence is a crucial variable in converting potential from motivation into tangible results in the form of career advancement. This process shows that career achievement is a cumulative result of interrelated motivations and competencies.

Practically, these results provide an understanding that organizations need to direct employee achievement motivation towards strategic competency development. Motivation without strengthening through competence will not have the maximum impact on career

development. Therefore, companies must provide training facilities and programs that are able to bridge the spirit of individuals with improved employability. With the support of the right work environment, the motivation to excel can be used to create competent and highly competitive employees. This process will directly accelerate the pace of an individual's career while improving organizational performance. These findings also make an important contribution in the field of human resource management, especially in terms of career development planning. It is not enough for the development program to assess motivation or final performance, but it is also necessary to pay attention to the competency aspect as a transition path from potential to achievement. Organizations that understand the role of competency mediation will be able to design training and development strategies that are more targeted. This will help in identifying employee needs as well as facilitating more structured and measurable career achievement. Thus, competency mediation is key to optimizing the impact of motivation on career success. Overall, this mediation analysis shows that Achievement Motivation affects Career Achievement both directly and indirectly through Employee Competence. This means that to achieve an optimal career, motivation alone is not enough, competence is needed as the main support. These findings confirm the importance of integration between psychological aspects (motivation) and capability aspects (competencies) in career development models. By strengthening both, individuals have a greater chance of developing and succeeding in their career path. Therefore, organizational and individual strategies in career development should pay serious attention to the existence of this mediation relationship.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the influence of achievement needs on career achievement, with employee competence serving as a mediating variable among employees at the Class I Correctional Institution of Malang. The findings confirm that achievement motivation significantly enhances both employee competence and career achievement, while competence itself exerts a strong mediating effect. This indicates that employees' intrinsic motivation to achieve is not only a direct predictor of career success but also operates indirectly through competence development.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the refinement of McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory by demonstrating its validity within a high-stress and rule-bound public organization. Unlike previous studies conducted in business or educational contexts, this research shows that achievement motivation in correctional institutions manifests primarily through skill mastery and adaptive competence, rather than external performance rewards. This finding advances the understanding of how intrinsic motivation operates under constrained organizational structures, offering a nuanced view of the motivation–competence–career linkage.

From a practical standpoint, the study provides actionable insights for human resource management in correctional institutions. Managers should focus on cultivating both achievement motivation and competency development simultaneously. Programs such as performance-based recognition, structured career paths, and continuous training aligned with individual aspirations can foster sustainable motivation and professional growth. Building a supportive environment that values initiative, learning, and competence will not only improve employee career achievement but also enhance institutional performance and

the overall quality of inmate rehabilitation programs.

Future research is recommended to expand this model across different public institutions or regional correctional facilities to validate its generalizability and explore potential moderating factors such as organizational climate, leadership style, or emotional resilience.

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