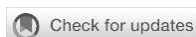




Building Sustainable Workforce Performance in Palm Oil Processing: Evidence from Competence, Commitment, and Incentive-Based Human Resource Practices



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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study examined the effects of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives on employee performance at PT. Anderson Unedo, a palm oil mill located in Petapahan Tapung, Riau, Indonesia. The study was motivated by the strategic importance of human resource performance in palm oil processing, where operational efficiency, safety compliance, and productivity depend substantially on employee capability, motivation, and organizational attachment.

Methodology: A quantitative explanatory survey design was employed. Data were collected from 65 employees using a structured, validated questionnaire covering competence, organizational commitment, incentives, and employee performance, measured on a five-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression, partial t-tests, a simultaneous F-test, and the coefficient of determination.

Results: Competence had a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.412$, $p = 0.001$), organizational commitment had a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.318$, $p = 0.014$), and incentives also had a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.276$, $p = 0.014$). Simultaneously, the three independent variables significantly affected employee performance ($F = 38.527$, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination indicated that competence, organizational commitment, and incentives explained 65.5% of the variance in employee performance ($R^2 = 0.655$).

Conclusions: Competence emerged as the most dominant predictor, followed by organizational commitment and incentives. Employee performance in palm oil mills can be improved through integrated human resource strategies that combine technical training, commitment-building practices, and fair, transparent incentive systems.

Keywords:

competence; organizational commitment; incentives; employee performance; palm oil mill; human resource management.

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INTRODUCTION

The palm oil industry is one of the most important agro-industrial sectors in Indonesia and remains highly significant in the global vegetable oil market. Indonesia has consistently been recognized as a major global palm oil producer and exporter, and the industry contributes substantially to export earnings, employment, rural livelihoods, and regional economic development (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2025; Jason & Robert, 2024). In this context, palm oil mills are required to maintain operational efficiency, production quality, occupational safety, and reliable workforce performance.

At the organizational level, employee performance is a strategic factor determining whether production targets can be achieved effectively. Palm oil mill operations involve technical processes, machinery operation, raw material handling, quality control, maintenance, safety compliance, and administrative coordination (Evianisa et al., 2021, p. 85; Sitorus et al., 2025). These activities require employees who are competent, committed, and motivated through appropriate incentive systems. Poor employee performance may lead to production delays, operational inefficiency, work errors, increased costs, and reduced competitiveness (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015; Nurlina et al., 2023, p. 2).

Employee performance is commonly conceptualized as the extent to which employees accomplish tasks and responsibilities according to organizational standards, encompassing work quality, work quantity, punctuality, discipline, cooperation, initiative, and responsibility (L. et al., 2011). In industrial organizations, employee performance is not only an individual outcome but also a collective determinant of organizational productivity and sustainability. (Widodo et al., 2024, p. 114)

Prior research has repeatedly identified competence as an important predictor of employee performance. Competence

represents the integration of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and behavioral characteristics that enable employees to perform work effectively (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). In the palm oil mill context, competence is reflected in employees' understanding of standard operating procedures, technical ability, problem-solving skills, work discipline, and safety awareness. Recent Indonesian manufacturing evidence corroborates this link: competence has been shown to significantly strengthen both organizational commitment and work productivity in industrial settings (Sutarman et al., 2024).

Organizational commitment is another factor frequently associated with employee performance. Meyer & Allen (1991) three-component model explains commitment through affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Employees with strong commitment are more likely to demonstrate loyalty, responsibility, organizational involvement, and willingness to support organizational goals (Meyer et al., 2002). Commitment is particularly important in production-oriented organizations where teamwork, discipline, and continuity of work processes are required, and its performance-enhancing effect has been confirmed across diverse occupational settings, including through mediated pathways such as job satisfaction (Jaramillo et al., 2004; Loan, 2020).

Incentives also play a central role in shaping employee motivation and performance. Incentives may include salary additions, bonuses, overtime pay, attendance rewards, productivity-based compensation, recognition, promotion opportunities, and non-financial rewards (Gerhart & Fang, 2015; Kuvaas et al., 2016). When incentives are perceived as fair and aligned with employee contributions, they may increase motivation, effort, discipline, and work productivity; conversely, inadequate or unfair incentives may reduce enthusiasm and weaken employee performance (Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Despite extensive studies on employee performance, several gaps remain. First, empirical studies focusing specifically on employee performance in Indonesian palm oil mills — as opposed to manufacturing, banking, or public-sector settings — are still limited (Ekasari et al., 2023). Second, competence, commitment, and incentives are often examined separately, whereas fewer studies integrate these variables into a single explanatory model. Third, palm oil mill employees work under specific operational conditions involving technical routines, safety risks, shift systems, production targets, and physical labor, which may produce different performance dynamics compared with office-based or service-sector employees (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013, p. 901; Nasution et al., 2025).

Novelty Statement

This research advances the existing literature by examining an integrated model of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives regarding employee performance within an under-researched setting: an Indonesian crude palm oil processing facility. In doing so, this study extends empirical evidence derived primarily from manufacturing, banking, and public-sector contexts to the agro-industrial workforce (Evianisa et al., 2021, p. 85; Firani et al., 2025; Loan, 2020).

Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the effects of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives on employee performance at PT. Anderson Unedo, Petapahan Tapung. The study aims to provide empirical evidence that can support human resource management policies in palm oil mill organizations. Specifically, the objectives are to analyze the partial effects of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives on employee performance; examine their simultaneous effect; and identify the dominant predictor of employee performance.

Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical and empirical review above, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H2: Organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H3: Incentives have a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H4: Competence, organizational commitment, and incentives simultaneously have a significant effect.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Participants and Sampling

The participants were employees of PT. Anderson Unedo, a palm oil mill located in Petapahan Tapung, Riau, Indonesia. A total of 65 employees participated in the study, selected through total/saturated sampling of the population meeting the inclusion criteria. The respondents represented production, maintenance, administration, and other supporting units. The inclusion criteria were active employment status, direct involvement in company work processes, willingness to participate voluntarily, and completion of the questionnaire. Employees who were on long-term leave or submitted incomplete questionnaires were excluded.

Research Design

This study used a quantitative explanatory survey design. The explanatory design was selected because the study aimed to test the causal relationships between competence, organizational commitment, incentives, and employee performance. A survey method was considered appropriate because it enabled standardized data collection from employees regarding their perceptions of work-related variables.

Study Organization

The study was conducted at PT. Anderson Unedo, Petapahan Tapung. The company operates in palm oil processing, particularly the processing of fresh fruit bunches into crude palm oil and related products. The organization was selected because palm oil mill operations require competent employees, strong organizational commitment, and effective incentive systems to maintain productivity and operational sustainability.

Variables and Operational Definitions

The independent variables were competence, organizational commitment, and incentives, while the dependent variable was employee performance. Competence refers to employees' knowledge, technical skills, abilities, problem-solving capacity,

discipline, and work attitude (Boyatzis, 1982). Organizational commitment refers to employees' psychological attachment, loyalty, sense of belonging, and willingness to contribute to organizational goals, encompassing affective, continuance, and normative dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Incentives refer to financial and non-financial rewards provided by the company to encourage work motivation and performance (Gerhart & Fang, 2015). Employee performance refers to the achievement of work targets, work quality, quantity, discipline, punctuality, cooperation, and responsibility (L. et al., 2011).

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from human resource management literature. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire consisted of respondent demographic information and items measuring competence (8 items), organizational commitment (8 items), incentives (8 items), and employee performance (10 items). Instrument validity was evaluated using corrected item-total correlation, and reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, validity testing, reliability testing, classical assumption testing, multiple linear regression, partial t-tests, a simultaneous F-test, and coefficient of determination analysis, using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of research variables. Validity and reliability testing were used to examine the quality of the questionnaire. Classical assumption tests included normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), multicollinearity (tolerance/VIF), and heteroscedasticity (Glejser) tests. Multiple linear regression was used to estimate the effects of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives on employee performance. The partial t-test was used to evaluate the significance of each independent variable, while the F-test was used to examine the simultaneous effect of all independent variables. The coefficient of determination was used to determine the percentage of employee performance variance explained by the model. The regression equation was formulated as follows: $Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$, where Y is employee performance, X_1 is competence, X_2 is organizational commitment, X_3 is incentives, α is the constant, β_1 – β_3 are regression coefficients, and ϵ is the error term.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with standard ethical principles for research involving human participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional/university ethics review board prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary; respondents were informed of the study purpose, confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any stage, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Data were used only for academic purposes and stored securely to protect participant privacy.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 65 questionnaires were distributed to employees of PT. Anderson Unedo and all were returned and considered suitable for statistical analysis (response rate = 100%). The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 65)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	51	78.46
	Female	14	21.54
Age	< 25 years	9	13.85
	25–34 years	27	41.54
	35–44 years	21	32.31
	≥ 45 years	8	12.30
Education	Senior High School	38	58.46
	Diploma	12	18.46
	Bachelor's Degree	15	23.08
Length of Employment	< 1 year	7	10.77
	1–5 years	31	47.69
	> 5 years	27	41.54
Work Division	Production	34	52.31
	Maintenance	13	20.00
	Administration	10	15.38
	Other supporting units	8	12.31

Source: primary data, processed (2026).

The respondent profile shows that the majority of participants were male employees, representing 78.46% of the sample. Most respondents were between 25 and 34 years old, indicating that the workforce was dominated by employees in a productive age group. In terms of education, most respondents had completed senior high school, reflecting the technical/operational nature of palm oil mill work. The majority of employees had worked for the company for one to five years, suggesting that most respondents had sufficient work experience to evaluate competence, commitment, incentives, and performance conditions within the organization.

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to determine the general tendency of respondents' perceptions toward competence, organizational commitment, incentives, and employee performance. Each variable was measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Competence	65	3.10	4.90	4.12	0.43	High
Organizational Commitment	65	2.90	4.80	3.96	0.47	High
Incentives	65	2.70	4.70	3.84	0.52	High
Employee Performance	65	3.00	4.90	4.08	0.45	High

The descriptive results indicate that all research variables were categorized as high. Competence obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.43$), suggesting that employees generally perceived themselves as having adequate knowledge, skills, and work ability to perform their duties. Employee performance also showed a high mean score ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.45$), indicating that employees tended to demonstrate good work quality, discipline, productivity, and responsibility. Incentives had the lowest mean score among the variables ($M = 3.84$), although it remained within the high category, signaling a relative area of managerial attention.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Validity testing was conducted using corrected item-total correlation. With 65 respondents, the critical r -value at a significance level of 0.05 was approximately 0.244. All questionnaire items had corrected item-total correlation values greater than 0.244; therefore, all items were declared valid. Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Taber, 2017).

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Competence	8	0.861	Reliable
Organizational Commitment	8	0.842	Reliable
Incentives	8	0.827	Reliable
Employee Performance	10	0.874	Reliable

The reliability results show that all variables had Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, indicating that the research instrument had strong internal consistency and was appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Classical Assumption Testing

Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, classical assumption tests were performed. The normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The result showed a significance value of 0.200, greater than 0.05, indicating that the residual data were normally distributed.

Table 4. Normality Test Result

Test	Statistic	Sig.	Decision
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.082	0.200	Normally distributed

The multicollinearity test showed that all tolerance values were greater than 0.10 and all VIF values were below 10; therefore, multicollinearity was not detected in the regression model.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Decision
Competence	0.614	1.629	No multicollinearity
Organizational Commitment	0.587	1.704	No multicollinearity
Incentives	0.672	1.488	No multicollinearity

The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser test. The significance values of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives were all greater than 0.05, indicating that heteroscedasticity was not present.

Table 6. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Variable	Sig.	Decision
Competence	0.312	No heteroscedasticity
Organizational Commitment	0.428	No heteroscedasticity
Incentives	0.276	No heteroscedasticity

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the influence of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives on employee performance. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Predictor	Unstd. β	SE	Std. β	t	Sig.	Decision
Constant	6.214	2.185	—	2.844	0.006	—
Competence	0.412	0.118	0.394	3.492	0.001	Significant
Organizational Commitment	0.318	0.126	0.286	2.524	0.014	Significant
Incentives	0.276	0.109	0.263	2.532	0.014	Significant

Based on the regression results, the regression equation can be formulated as follows: $Y = 6.214 + 0.412X_1 + 0.318X_2 + 0.276X_3$. The regression coefficient of competence was 0.412 with a significance value of 0.001, indicating that competence had a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Organizational commitment had a regression coefficient of 0.318 with a significance value of 0.014, indicating a positive and significant effect. Incentives had a regression coefficient of 0.276 with a significance value of 0.014, indicating that incentives also had a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Among the three predictors, competence had the highest standardized beta coefficient (0.394), indicating that it was the most dominant predictor of employee performance.

Partial Hypothesis Testing

Table 8. Summary of Partial Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Sig.	Result
H1	Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.	0.001	Accepted
H2	Organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.	0.014	Accepted
H3	Incentives have a positive and significant effect on employee performance.	0.014	Accepted

The partial t-test results confirm that competence, organizational commitment, and incentives individually contributed to employee performance. Competence had the strongest partial effect, followed by organizational commitment and incentives.

Simultaneous Effect Test

Table 9. Simultaneous F-Test Results (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	812.436	3	270.812	38.527	0.000
Residual	428.641	61	7.027	—	—
Total	1241.077	64	—	—	—

The F-test result showed $F = 38.527$ with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, competence, organizational commitment, and incentives simultaneously had a significant effect on employee performance; therefore, H4 was accepted. This result indicates that employee performance at PT. Anderson Unedo is determined by the combined influence of employee capability, psychological attachment to the organization, and the reward system implemented by the company.

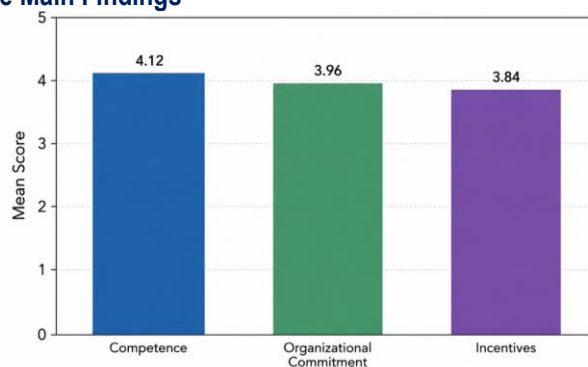
Coefficient of Determination

Table 10. Coefficient of Determination

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of Estimate
Regression Model	0.809	0.655	0.638	2.651

The R-value of 0.809 indicates a strong relationship between competence, organizational commitment, incentives, and employee performance. The R² value of 0.655 indicates that 65.5% of the variance in employee performance can be explained by competence, organizational commitment, and incentives. The remaining 34.5% is explained by other variables not included in this study, such as leadership style, work environment, occupational safety, job satisfaction, organizational culture, workload, supervision, and career development opportunities.

Graphical Presentation of the Main Findings



Note. Competence had the highest average score, followed by organizational commitment and incentives. Incentives remained in the high category but had the lowest mean score, indicating a possible area for managerial attention.

Figure 1. Mean Scores of Independent Variables

Figure 1 shows that competence had the highest average score among the independent variables, followed by organizational commitment and incentives.

This suggests that employees perceived their competence as relatively strong, while incentives, although categorized as high, still represented the lowest mean score and may require further managerial attention.



Note. Competence showed the strongest contribution to employee performance, followed by organizational commitment and incentives. This finding highlights the importance of technical and behavioral competence in improving employee performance in a palm oil mill environment.

Figure 2. Contribution of Independent Variables to Employee Performance

Figure 2 indicates that competence had the strongest contribution to employee performance, followed by organizational commitment and incentives. This finding emphasizes the importance of technical and behavioral competence in determining employee performance in a palm oil mill environment.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that competence, organizational commitment, and incentives significantly influence employee performance at PT. Anderson Unedo. These results support the theoretical assumption that employee performance is shaped by a combination of capability, psychological attachment, and motivational rewards. In the palm oil mill context, where employees face technical tasks, production targets, and safety requirements, these three factors are particularly important for maintaining productivity and operational reliability.

Theoretical Implications

Competence was found to be the most dominant predictor of employee performance. This finding indicates that employees with stronger knowledge, technical skills, work discipline, and problem-solving ability tend to perform better. Palm oil mill operations require employees to understand machinery, production procedures, maintenance practices, quality control, and occupational safety standards; competence development should therefore be treated as a strategic human resource priority. This finding is consistent with competency-based human resource theory (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer, 1993) and with recent Indonesian manufacturing evidence showing competence as a robust driver of workforce productivity and commitment (Halim et al., 2024; Sutarman et al., 2024).

Organizational commitment also had a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This result suggests that employees who feel emotionally attached to the organization, loyal to company goals, and responsible for organizational success are more likely to demonstrate discipline, cooperation, and sustained effort. The finding supports the three-component model of organizational commitment proposed by Meyer & Allen (1991) and corroborates evidence that commitment enhances job performance, including through mediating mechanisms such as job satisfaction (Loan, 2020; Riketta, 2002). In production-based organizations, commitment is especially important because work processes require coordination, reliability, and compliance with organizational rules.

Incentives were also found to significantly affect employee performance. This finding indicates that fair and motivating incentive systems can encourage employees to increase work effort, punctuality, productivity, and task completion, consistent with self-determination and reward-contingency perspectives on motivation (Deci et al., 2017; Kuvaas et al., 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Incentives are particularly relevant in industrial organizations where employees often associate additional effort and production achievement with financial and non-financial rewards. However, incentives must be designed transparently and linked to measurable performance indicators; if incentives are perceived as unfair or inconsistent, their motivational effect may weaken (Elamalki et al., 2024, p. 5; Zyl & Magau, 2024, p. 3).

The simultaneous effect of competence, organizational commitment, and incentives indicates that employee performance is multidimensional. High performance cannot be achieved only through financial rewards or only through technical skills; instead, organizations must combine employee development, commitment-building, and fair compensation systems, echoing integrated HRM-performance models (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Becker & Huselid, 2006; Boxall & Purcell, 2022).

Practical Implications

For PT. Anderson Unedo, the findings suggest management should strengthen regular technical and safety training programs, improve internal communication, reinforce fair leadership practices, and evaluate incentive policies based on measurable performance contribution. Three concrete actions follow from the results. First, competence should be improved through technical training, safety training, mentoring, and continuous evaluation, given its dominant contribution to performance. Second, organizational commitment should be strengthened through employee involvement, transparent communication, recognition, career opportunities, and fair treatment. Third, incentives should be aligned with attendance, productivity, work quality, safety compliance, and teamwork, and communicated transparently to preserve their motivational value.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in a single company, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other palm oil mills or industrial sectors. Second, the cross-sectional survey design cannot fully capture long-term causal relationships. Third, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Fourth, the model included only three predictors, while employee performance may also be influenced by leadership style, work environment, job satisfaction, organizational culture, occupational safety, workload, and career development (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Future research should involve larger and multi-site samples, longitudinal designs, and more complex models involving mediation or moderation analysis — for example, testing job satisfaction or safety climate as mediators, consistent with recent mediation-based evidence in similar Indonesian industrial settings (Ekasari et al., 2023; Loan, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that competence, organizational commitment, and incentives have positive and significant effects on employee performance at PT. Anderson Unedo, Petapahan Tapung. Competence emerged as the most dominant predictor, indicating that knowledge, skills, technical ability, discipline, and work attitude play a central role in improving performance in the palm oil mill context. Organizational commitment also contributes significantly by strengthening employee loyalty, responsibility, and willingness to support organizational goals. Incentives significantly enhance employee performance by encouraging motivation, work enthusiasm, and productivity.

The findings reinforce the concept that employee performance is not determined by a single factor but by the integration of capability, commitment, and motivation. Management should therefore prioritize competency development, strengthen organizational commitment, and improve incentive systems to support sustainable employee performance. The study has practical value for palm oil mill organizations seeking to improve productivity, operational efficiency, and workforce quality. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the model and examine additional variables such as leadership, work environment, job satisfaction, safety culture, and organizational climate.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the conduct, analysis, or publication of this study.

Ethical Approval

This study involved human participants and was conducted in accordance with institutional and ethical guidelines for social and behavioral research. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

Data Availability

The datasets analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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