

The role of interpersonal communication in moderating the effect of work competence and stress on employee performance

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the role of interpersonal communication in moderating the influence of work competence and work stress on employee performance. The research object was the employee of PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. in Rengat branch. The samples of this research were 103 employees and the sampling was applied using saturated sampling technique. This study used a closed questionnaire and the data from the questionnaire were processed using SmartPLS 3.0. The results of this study were: (1) Competency variable had a significant effect on employee performance, (2) Work stress variable had no effect on employee performance, (3) Interpersonal communication variable did not moderate the influence of work competence on employee performance, and (4) Interpersonal communication variable moderated the influence of work stress on employee performance of PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. in Rengat branch.

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1. Introduction

The results of empirical research by several researchers concluded that competence has an effect on employee performance (Xu & Ye, 2014; Choi & Moon, 2015; Flotmann, et al., 2018; Shet, et al., 2019; Shah & Prakash, et al., 2018; Adam & Kamase, 2019). Otherwise there are different results which conclude various results due to the competence parameter; competence has no effect on employee performance whatsoever (Poovathingal & Kumar, 2018, Kurniasari, et al., 2018; Resubun et al., 2013; Noel, et al., 2017). Research results from previous researchers concluded that Work Stress has an effect on employee performance (Foy, et al., 2019; Kalyar & Kalyar, 2018; Khuong & Yen, 2016; Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013; Fatikhin et al., 2017). However, there are different research results from the empirical research which state that Work Stress has no effect on employee performance (Manzoor et al., 2012; Turangan, et al., 2017; Apriliani & Gentari, 2016; Enshassi, et al., 2015). The researcher concluded that there is no consistency in the results of research from previous researchers and this is a research gap regarding work competence and work stress variables on employee performance in a certain company so that further research is needed to determine the research gap mentioned. The determined of variables in this study is done based on previous research studies which still show a research gap. As a solution to the research gap, the researcher uses a moderation approach. It is based on empirical and theoretical studies and is supported by phenomena in the field. The researcher suspects that there are other variables that are exclusive moments and can fill this research gap, namely the interpersonal communication variable. It is

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expected that the interpersonal communication variable as moderation can strengthen the influence of competence on employee performance and can reduce or neutralize high work stress to improve employee performance. It is the novelty in this study.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 *The Effect of Work Competence on Employee Performance*

Spencer and Spencer (1993: 9) state that competence is a characteristic underlying a person and is related to the effectiveness of individual performance in a job. To cite the source, competence is an underlying characteristic of individuals which is causally related to criterion - referenced effective and or superior performance in a job or situation. "Underlying Characteristics" means that competence is part of a deep and inherent personality and predictable behavior in various situations and job tasks due to the job description. "Causally Related" means that competence is something that causes or predicts behavior and performance. "Criterion Referenced" implies that competence actually predicts who will perform well, measured by the criteria or standards used. Spencer and Spencer (1993) state that employee competence can be measured by these indicators: (1) Achievement drive, (3) Customer service orientation, and (3) Work integrity.

H₁: Work competence has a significant effect on employee performance.

2.2 *The Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance*

Robbins (2008) states that work stress is "a dynamic condition in which an individual is faced with an opportunity, demand or resource related to environmental conditions, organizational conditions and in a person". Furthermore, in Siagian (2015: 45) it is undeniable that unresolved stress definitely affects work performance. It's just that in this connection there are a number of things that need attention. **First**, the ability to deal with stress alone is not the same for everyone. Unresolved stress can result in what is known as "burnout", a mental and emotional condition as well as physical exhaustion due to ongoing and unresolved stress. If this happens, the impact on work performance will be negative. **Second**, at some level stress is necessary. Experts argue that if there is no stress at work, employees will not feel challenged so that the result of the work performance will be low. Conversely, with stress, employees feel the need to give all their abilities to achieve high and thus be able to complete tasks well during the work hour. Ivancevich et al. (2007: 261) argue that from the perspective of ordinary people, stress can be described as feelings of tension, or anxiety or worry. All feelings are a manifestation of stressful experiences, a complex program to perceive threats that can lead to positive or negative results. Positive stress is called eustress while excess stress and is detrimental is called distress. In a job, employees who are given excessive loads or jobs that are not in accordance with their abilities, they will experience stress in carrying out their work, stress here is a way for these employees to contribute to satisfying work for the company. Pareek (1983) states that employee work stress can be measured by these indicators: (1) Role expectation conflict, (2) Role erosion, (3) Role overload, (4) Personal inadequacy, and (5) Self-role distance.

H₂: Work stress has a significant effect on employee performance.

2.3 *Interpersonal Communication Moderates the Effect of Work Competence on Employee Performance*

Bungin (2008: 32) explains that interpersonal communication is interpersonal communication that is personal, either directly (without medium) or indirectly (through medium). For example, face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, and personal correspondence are the form of interpersonal communication. The focus of his observations is the forms and nature of relationships, conversations or discourse, interactions, and characteristics of communicators. The quality of interpersonal communication in organizations is very important. People with good communication skills help groups to make more innovative decisions and are promoted more often than individuals with less developed abilities (Wibowo, 2017: 171). Interpersonal communication, which is essentially a process of delivering clear directions and information from leaders to employees, is relating to work that must be done due to the job description. Interpersonal communication should not be done harshly. It can be overcoming work problems that are below standard. It is expected to be able to strengthen employee competencies to improve performance.

H₃: Interpersonal communication moderates the influence of work competence on employee performance.

2.4 *Interpersonal Communication Moderates the Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance*

Suranto (2011: 71) states that interpersonal communication is communication that has a big effect in influencing other people, especially individuals. This happens because the parties usually involved in communication meet directly and both parties do not use the media in conveying the message. So, there is no distance between the communicator and the communicant (face to

face). In direct communication, each party can immediately know the response given and reduce the level of dishonesty when there is communication. DeVito (2011) states that interpersonal communication is a verbal and nonverbal interaction between two (or sometimes more than two) people who depend on each other. Interpersonal communication is actually a social process in which the people involved to influence each other, and is the most effective communication in changing someone's attitude, opinion or behavior based on the changing response during the process. De Vito (2011: 124) also states that employee interpersonal communication can be measured by these indicators: (1) Openness, (2) Empathy, (3) A supportive attitude, (4) Positive Attitude, and (5) Similarity.

H₄: Interpersonal communication moderates the influence of work stress on employee performance.

3. Previous Research

We compile the previous research to this study. Previous research on the Effect of Work Competence and Work Stress on Employee Performance can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Previous Research on the Effect of Work Competence and Work Stress on Employee Performance

No	Researcher	Year	Variable	Result
1	Xu and Ye	2014	Comp-EP	Has an effect
2	Choi and Moon	2015	Comp-EP	Has an effect
3	Sarboini	2018	Comp-EP	Has an effect
4	Supriadi, et al.	2018	Comp-EP	Has an effect
5	Hadisantoso, et al.	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
6	Flöthmann, et al.	2018	Comp-EP	Has an effect
7	Pujiastuti, et al.	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
8	Purwanto and Soliha	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
9	Shet, et al.	2019	Comp-EP	Has an effect
10	Hadisantoso, et al.	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
11	Hardi, et al.	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
12	Indrasari and Syamsudin	2019	Comp-EP	Has an effect
13	Runi, et al.	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
14	Achmad and Suryana	2016	Comp-EP	Has an effect
15	Tarandung	2016	Comp-EP	Has an effect
16	Zainol and Mamun	2019	Comp-EP	Has an effect
17	Shah and Prakash	2018	Comp-EP	Has an effect
18	Pranata, et al.	2018	Comp-EP	Has an effect
19	Mukhtar	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
20	Pattiasina, et al.	2016	Comp-EP	Has an effect
21	Adam and Kamase	2019	Comp-EP	Has an effect
22	Hairuddin, et al.	2017	Comp-EP	Has an effect
23	Poovathingal and Kumar	2018	Comp-EP	Has no effect
24	Kurniasari, et al.	2018	Comp-EP	Has no effect
25	Resubun, et al.	2013	Comp-EP	Has no effect
26	Noel, et al.	2017	Comp-EP	Has no effect
27	Mathur, et al.	2007	Stress-EP	Has an effect
28	Knight, et al.	2014	Stress-EP	Has an effect
29	Amoako, et al.	2017	Stress-EP	Has an effect
30	Gonzalez & Pérez-Floriano	2015	Stress-EP	Has an effect
31	Gharib, et al.	2016	Stress-EP	Has an effect
32	Foy, et al.	2019	Stress-EP	Has an effect
33	Akgunduz	2015	Stress-EP	Has an effect
34	Kalyar and Kalyar	2018	Stress-EP	Has an effect
35	Murali, et al.	2017	Stress-EP	Has an effect
36	Khuong and Yen	2016	Stress-EP	Has an effect
37	Ahmed and Ramzan	2013	Stress-EP	Has an effect
38	Fatikhin, et al.	2017	Stress-EP	Has an effect
39	Azadeh, et al.	2014	Stress-EP	Has an effect
40	Kusumo et al.	2018	Stress-EP	Has an effect
41	Manzoor, et al.	2012	Stress-EP	Has no effect
42	Turangan, et al.	2017	Stress-EP	Has no effect
43	Apriliani and Gentari	2016	Stress-EP	Has no effect
44	Enshassi, et al.	2015	Stress-EP	Has no effect
45	Mohklas	2015	Comp-IC-EP	IC moderates Comp-EP

Source: Data is accessed and summarized by the researchers from literature studies.

4. Formulating the Research Problems

Based on the introduction and the research gap analyzed in the previous section, the formulation of the research problems in this study was done as follows,

- Does Work Competency have a significant effect on Employee Performance at PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. Rengat branch?
- Does Work Stress have a significant effect on Employee Performance at PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. Rengat branch?
- Does Interpersonal Communication moderate the effect of Work Competence on Employee Performance at PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. Rengat branch?
- Does Interpersonal Communication moderate the effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance at PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. Rengat branch?

4.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is needed to bridge the research variables done in the process. The conceptual framework of this research can be seen in Fig. 1.

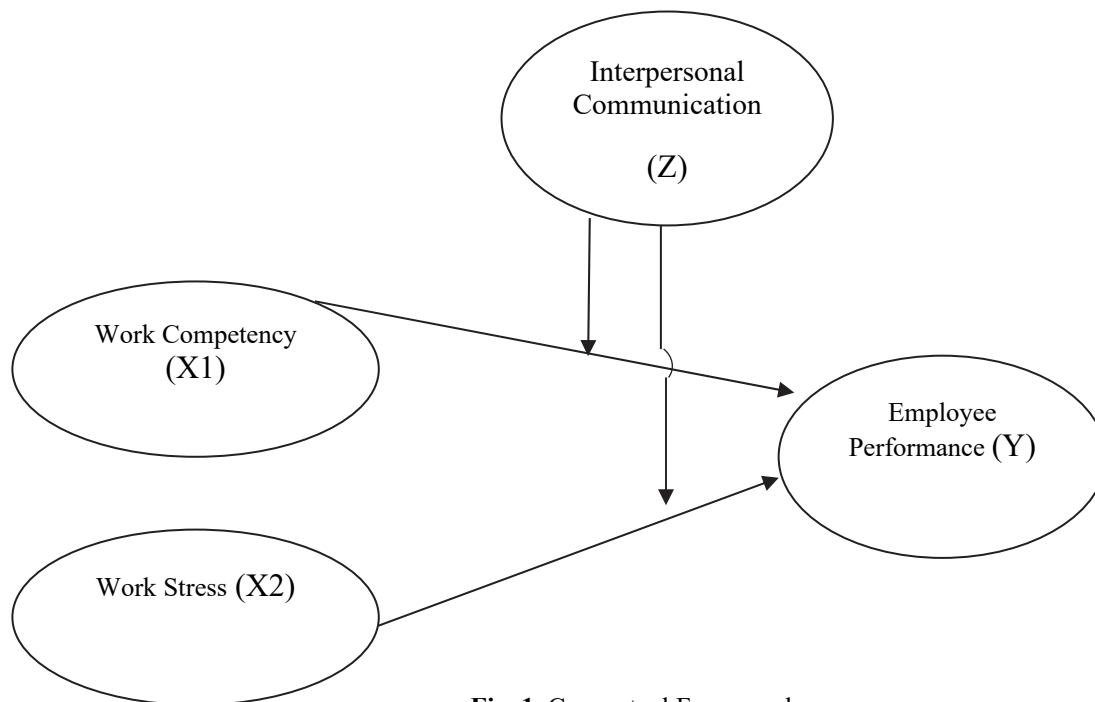


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

4.2 Research Methodology

This research uses a positivistic approach using descriptive quantitative methods. Creswell (2008: 5) states that quantitative research is a method for testing certain theories by examining the relationship between variables. The population of this study were 103 people, namely all employees of PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia Tbk. in Rengat branch. The chosen samples were determined using saturated sampling method. The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability using the IBM SPSS 24 application while the hypothesis was tested using the SMART PLS 3.0 application. **Employee Performance** is measured by indicators developed by Robbins (2008: 206) and BRI Directors Decree No. S. 81 (2001) consisting of: (1) Quality, (2) Quantity, (3) Timeliness, (4) Independence, (5) Work commitment, and (6) Expression of satisfaction. **Work Competence** is measured by indicators developed from Spencer and Spencer (1993) and BRI Directors Decree No. S. 91 (2007) namely: (1) Achievement drive, (3) Customer service orientation, and (3) Work integrity. **Work Stress** is measured by indicators developed by Pareek (1983) namely: (1) Role expectation conflict, (2) Role erosion, (3) Role overloads, (4) Personal inadequacy, and (5) Self-role distance. **Interpersonal Communication** is measured by indicators developed from De Vito (2011: 124) including these several indicators: (1) Openness, (2) Empathy, (3) A supportive attitude, (4) Positive Attitude, and (5) Similarity.

5. Empirical Results and Discussions

5.1 Instrument Testing

If the correlation coefficient (r count) > 0.3 , it can be concluded that the statement item is valid. Meanwhile, if the correlation coefficient (r count) < 0.3 , it can be concluded that the statement item is invalid (Sugiyono 2016: 183). From the test results, all statement items have a correlation coefficient > 0.3 , it can be concluded that all statement items are valid. The variable is declared reliable if the alpha Cronbach coefficient value > 0.60 means that the reliability level of 0.60 is an indication of the reliability of a construct (Sugiyono, 2016: 184). From the test results, all Cronbach alpha values > 0.6 . This means that each item of the questionnaire statement from each variable is able to form the construct of this variable. Thus, the list of statements throughout the questionnaire is reliable for measuring each variable. The result on instrument testing can lead to the next determination.

5.2 Analysis of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Validity Test

The analysis of measurement model or outer model was performed in determining the validity test due to the correlation between variables. It can be seen in Fig. 2.

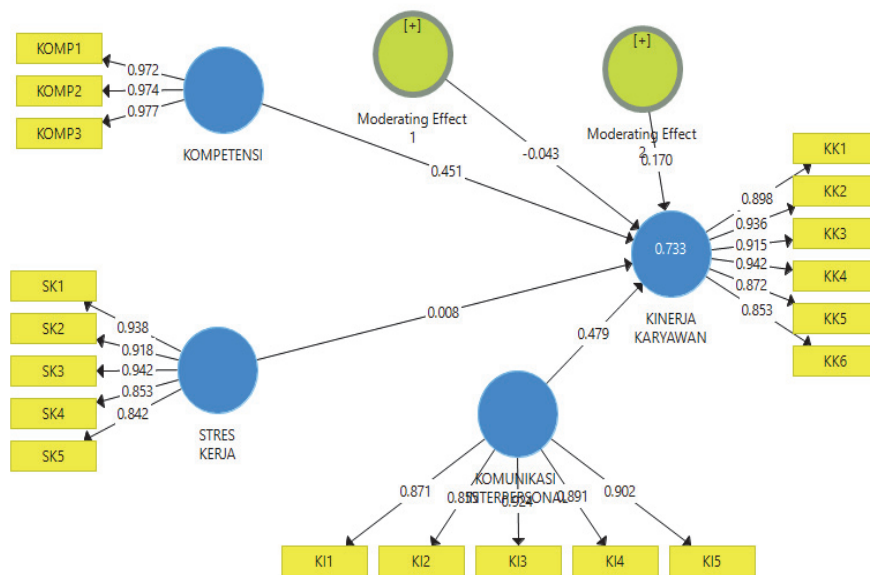


Fig. 2. Validity Testing

A loading factor value of 0.7 or more is considered very satisfying (Henseler et al., 2009; Gotz, 2010) while indicators that have a loading factor value equal to 0.5 are considered acceptable, while indicators with a loading factor value smaller than 0.5 must be excluded (Chin, 1995; Hair et.al., 2010). From Fig. 2 it can be seen that all loading factor values are greater than 0.7, meaning that all indicators in the research variable are valid.

Reliability Test

The analysis of reliability was done in determining the reliability of the questionnaires due to the correlation between variables. It can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Work Competence (X_1)	0.973	0.982
Work Stress (X_2)	0.944	0.955
Interpersonal Communication (X_3)	0.933	0.949
Employee Performance (Y)	0.955	0.964

Source: Data analysis results from SmartPLS application.

The reliability test in PLS can use two methods, namely Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Cronbach's Alpha measures the lower limit of the reliability value, while composite reliability measures the real value of the reliability of a construct (Chin, 1995). Composite reliability is considered to be better in estimating the internal consistency of a construct (Werst et al., 1974). The rule of thumb for Cronbach's Alpha value and composite reliability must be greater than 0.70 although the value of 0.60 is still acceptable (Hair et al., 2010). From Table 2 we can see that Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability is greater than 0.70, which means that the construct of the research model consists of Work Competence, Work Stress, Interpersonal Communication, and Employee Performance.

5.3 Analysis of Structural Model (Inner Model)

Analysis of Determinacy Coefficient (R-Square)

The analysis of structural model or inner model was done in determining the analysis of determinacy coefficient or R-Square of the variables. It can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3
R-Square Scores

Variable	R Square
Work Competence (X ₁)	-
Work Stress (X ₂)	-
Interpersonal Communication (X ₃)	-
Employee Performance (Y)	0.733

Source: data analysis results from SmartPLS application

R² results of 0.67, 0.33 and 0.19 for endogenous variables in the structural model indicate that the model is "good", "moderate", and "weak" (Ghozali, 2012). The goodness of fit in the PLS model can be seen from the R² value, the higher the R², the more fit the model can be. The results of the calculation of R² of the employee performance variable show a value of 0.733 more than 0.67. It means that the model is fit and the magnitude of the diversity to the research data can be explained by the structural model and has a good relevant value because the value is almost close to one.

5.4 Hypotheses Testing Results

The analysis of inner and outer model was done so that the hypotheses testing can be performed. Table 4 shows the results of hypotheses testing in this study.

Table 4
Hypotheses Testing

The Effect Between Variables	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P-Value	Result	Moderation
Work Competence → Employee Performance	0.451	3.497	0.001	Has an effect	-
Work Stress → Employee Performance	0.008	0.080	0.935	Has no effect	-
Moderating effect 1 → Employee Performance	-0.043	0.557	0.578	Has no effect	-
Moderating effect 2 → Employee Performance	0.170	2.338	0.020	Has an effect	Pure Moderation

Source: Data analysis results from SmartPLS application.

Abdillah and Jogiyanto (2015: 197) state that the coefficient path or inner model score indicated by the T statistic value must be above 1.96 for hypothesis testing at 5 percent alpha.

H₁: Work competence has a significant effect on the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat branch.

The effect of the work competence variable on employee performance is 0.451 with a t-statistics value of 3.497, where the t-statistics value is greater than 1.96 and the P value is 0.001 so it can be concluded that the work competence variable has a significant effect on employee performance variables. It means that if the competence is improved it will improve employee performance. Thus, the first hypothesis stating that work competence has a significant effect on the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch is accepted (H1 accepted).

H₂: Work stress has a significant effect on the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat branch.

The effect of the work stress variable on the employee performance variable is 0.008 with a t-statistics value of 0.080, where the t-statistics value is less than 1.96 and the P value is 0.936 so it can be concluded that the work stress variable has no effect

on the employee performance variable. It means that however the level of work stress varies, it will not improve employee performance. Thus, the second hypothesis stating that work stress has a significant effect on the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch is rejected (H2 is rejected).

H₃: Interpersonal Communication Moderates the Effect of Competence on Employee Performance at Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat Branch.

The role of interpersonal communication variable in moderating the effect of work competence on employee performance is -0.043 with a t-statistics value of 0.557, where the t-statistics value is less than 1.96 so it can be concluded that the interpersonal communication variable does not moderate the influence of work competence variable on employee performance. It means that if there is increase in work competence is accompanied by the increase of interpersonal communication, it will not improve employee performance. Thus, the third hypothesis which states that interpersonal communication moderates the effect of competence on the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch is rejected (H3 is rejected).

H₄: Interpersonal Communication Moderates the Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance at Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat Branch.

The role of interpersonal communication variable in moderating the effect of work stress on employee performance is 0.170 with a t-statistics value of 2.338, where the t-statistics value is greater than 1.96 so that it can be concluded that the interpersonal communication variable moderates the influence of the work stress variable on employee performance variables. It means that if there is increase in work stress is accompanied by the increase of interpersonal communication, it will lead to the improvement in employee performance. Thus, the fourth hypothesis stating that interpersonal communication moderates the effect of work stress on the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch is accepted (H4 accepted).

6. Discussion

The results of the hypothesis test conducted show that work competence has a significant effect on employee performance. It means that work competence has a significant effect in improving the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch. In other words, the higher the level of competence, the higher the employee performance. The results of the researcher's investigation have shown that competency improvement training is the duty and responsibility of the human resources division of the Bank Rakyat Indonesia head office through education and training, competency enhancement is carried out at Bank Rakyat Indonesia Corporate University, while for specific competencies usually the human resources division works. the same as consultants who are experts in the field whose competence will be improved, for example for IT training personnel in collaboration with software developers such as Microsoft, Linux and others. This is in line with the research done by Xu and Yes (2014); Choi and Moon (2015); Sarboini, et al., (2018); Supriadi, et al., (2018); Shet, et al., (2019); Hadisantoso, et al., (2017); Flotmann, et al., (2018); Shah and Prakash (2018), and Adam and Kamase (2019) who concluded that competence affects employee performance. The results of the hypothesis test conducted show that work stress does not have a significant effect on the performance of employees of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch. It means that work stress does not have a significant effect in improving the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch. In other words, if there is an increase of work stress, then employee performance will not decrease. On the contrary, work stress will decrease and will not increase employee performance. Researchers are interested in knowing more deeply why work stress does not affect the employee performance of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch. The results of interviews with several employees show that they work well with planning, such as weekly and monthly plans and their achievements must be evaluated every day. In addition, they try to enjoy their work. Saturday and Sunday holidays are really used for family and refreshment so that on Monday they are back to their activities in a good condition. This is in line with research by Manzoor, et al. (2012); Turangan, et al. (2017); Apriliani and Gentari (2016); and Enshassi, et al. (2015) who concluded that work stress has no effect on employee performance. The results of the hypothesis test conducted showed that interpersonal communication did not moderate the effect of work competence on employee performance at Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch, while competence had an effect on employee performance. It means that the interpersonal communication variable is a moderating predictor variable. The results of interviews by researchers with Human Resources (HR) development managers of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch show that the obtained information of the recruitment process for Bank Rakyat Indonesia employees was very strict, where one of the important points in the assessment was the communication factor for both direct and indirect way so that those who passed the selection also had the characteristics of being able to communicate well, besides having a high competence. Thus, it is expected that the employee's work environment will be able to communicate well among colleagues, superiors, and customers. This is not in line with previous research from Moklas (2015) stating that communication moderates the effect of competence on employee performance. The results of the hypothesis test conducted show that interpersonal communication moderates the effect of work stress on employee performance at Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch or it can be said that work stress does not affect employee performance. It means that interpersonal communication is a pure moderating variable. The results of interviews by researchers with HR managers of Bank Rakyat Indonesia in Rengat branch show that the information preparing

strong employees has started from the employee recruitment process, where resistance to challenges is one of the important points, so that those who pass the selection are expected to be able to work under pressure with work targets. It was very strict and tight process. Besides that, with the openness of interpersonal communication, leaders can provide directions and explanations to employees about what to do, how well they do it and what can be done to improve performance if it is below standard. Thus, it is hoped that they will be able to manage work stress along with effective communication in the work environment, both among employees and with superiors.

7. Conclusions and Implications

7.1 Conclusions

Based on the results of the research and discussion in the previous sections, several conclusions can be drawn to answer the research questions as follows:

- a. The results showed that the work competence variable had a significant effect on employee performance at PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat branch. It means that the hypothesis stating “work competence has an effect on employee performance” is accepted.
- b. The results showed that the work stress variable had no effect on employee performance at PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat branch. It means that the hypothesis stating “work stress has an effect on employee performance” is rejected.
- c. The results showed that the interpersonal communication variable was a moderating predictor of the influence of competence on employee performance at PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat branch. It means that the hypothesis stating “interpersonal communication moderates the effect of work competence on employee performance” is rejected.
- d. The results showed that the interpersonal communication variable was a pure moderation of the effect of work stress on the employee performance of PT. Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Rengat branch. It means that the hypothesis stating “interpersonal communication moderates the effect of work stress on employee performance” is accepted.

7.2 Implications

The implications of the results of this study are to identify that interpersonal communication variable can strengthen employee performance, so that the company can build its resources to gain a competitive advantage according to Resources Based View Theory. It can be prospective research in deeper field in the future.

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