

TALENT MANAGEMENT THROUGH COMPETENCY TESTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF STATE CIVIL APPARATUS

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Abstract

This study analyzes the implementation of talent management through competency testing as a strategy to improve the quality of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) within the Makassar City Government. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores the competency gaps identified among supervisory-level employees who participated in the 2024 competency assessment conducted by BKPSDM Makassar City. Data were collected through observations (12 February–15 March 2024), documentation review, and interviews with key stakeholders. The findings show that although 93% of employees fall within the “optimal” competency mapping category, only 20% meet the requirements for higher job placements, while 40% are still developing, and another 40% fall below required standards. Significant competency gaps were found in self-development, managing change, and orientation to results. These gaps indicate that competency test results have not been fully integrated into a comprehensive talent management system, particularly in linking assessment outcomes with strategic development, placement, and career acceleration policies. The study concludes that while competency testing provides a strong diagnostic foundation, its effectiveness in strengthening talent management relies on consistent follow-up mechanisms, data-driven decision-making, and sustainable development programs. Recommendations include enhancing HR analytics, reinforcing merit-based policies, and establishing continuous monitoring to develop a professional, accountable, and high-performing ASN workforce.

Keywords

Talent Management, Competency Assessment, and Competency Gaps.



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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of talent management in public institutions has become an essential aspect of strengthening human resource governance in the bureaucratic environment (Thunnissen & Buttiens, 2017); (Boyatzis, 2008). The quality of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is a determinant factor in achieving effective, efficient, and accountable public service. In the context of the Makassar City Government (Khaerunnisa, 2023), the Regional Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency (BKPSDM) plays a strategic role in ensuring that every ASN has competencies aligned with job demands and institutional goals (Suryanto & Sudrajat, n.d.). However, the results of the 2022 competency test for supervisory employees indicated a considerable gap between the expected and actual competencies possessed by employees (Astutiek et al., 2024). This gap reflects an academic and managerial problem, namely the limited optimization of the talent management system in identifying, mapping, and developing high-potential employees. Thus, research on "*Talent Management through Competency Tests to Improve the Quality of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in Makassar City Government*" becomes crucial to understand how competency-based approaches can be systematically utilized to strengthen the merit system and overall organizational performance (NEGARA, 2020).

The application of the talent management system through competency testing serves as a strategic instrument for identifying, developing, and retaining high-potential ASN (Azizah et al., 2024); (Nasution, 2022). Competency tests are not merely evaluative tools but diagnostic mechanisms that help map employee strengths and weaknesses across managerial, technical, and socio-cultural dimensions (Gipps, 1999); (Bimrose et al., 2007). In the case of the Makassar City Government, competency test results provide a foundation for designing targeted development programs, such as training, job rotation, and career acceleration for potential talents (Matindas et al., 2024). This process aligns with the broader objectives of bureaucratic reform, emphasizing professionalism, performance-based management, and evidence-based decision-making (Heinrich, 2007);(Brinkerhoff & Wetterberg, 2013). By integrating competency testing into the talent management cycle, local governments can enhance their ability to place the right people in the right positions, ultimately improving the quality of governance and public service delivery.

Nevertheless, the integration of competency test results into the talent management framework presents various challenges for the Makassar City Government. One of the main issues lies in the limited follow-up mechanism to ensure that competency test results translate into concrete

development and placement strategies. Additionally, the absence of a comprehensive data management system and the inconsistency in policy implementation often hinder the sustainability of talent management practices. To address these challenges, the government needs to develop adaptive strategies, such as strengthening data-driven human resource analytics, enhancing managerial commitment to merit-based decisions, and establishing continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These strategic efforts are essential to create a sustainable, competency-based talent management ecosystem that supports the realization of a professional, accountable, and high-performing ASN in Makassar City.

The success of talent management in government institutions depends largely on the quality of competency assessment and the continuous development of human resources. In the context of public administration, competency-based talent management is not only a tool for employee appraisal but also a strategic mechanism to strengthen bureaucratic professionalism. Several recent studies have examined the implementation of talent management and competency testing in the public sector. Research by (Fauzian et al., 2024) found that competency-based talent management significantly improves employee performance and organizational effectiveness in regional government institutions. (Abd El Motaleb, 2021) emphasized that competency testing provides an objective foundation for the placement and promotion of civil servants, reducing the risks of bias and subjectivity. Meanwhile, (Sidabutar, 2024) demonstrated that the integration of competency assessments in talent development enhances employee readiness for leadership succession in government organizations. Further, (Murti et al., 2023) revealed that the alignment between talent management policy and organizational culture is crucial to maintaining sustainable performance among civil servants. (Saleh & Atan, 2021) found that the use of digital competency mapping systems improves transparency and accelerates the identification of high-potential employees in local governments.

Furthermore, various other studies have reinforced the importance of competency-based talent management in the public sector. Research on the success of talent management in government agencies has been shown to be influenced by the consistency of employee competency testing implementation (Musria, 2023). Competency assessment plays a significant role in increasing the accuracy of ASN talent mapping (Marselina & Rahman, 2024). Capacity building integrated with the talent pool system is able to accelerate employee readiness to occupy structural positions (Marselina & Rahman, 2024). Meanwhile, organizations that systematically apply core competencies

have more adaptive bureaucratic performance (Syafitri et al., 2024). Digitalization of talent management increases the efficiency of the process of identifying and developing high-potential employees (Pettalungi et al., 2025). Then the quality of the competency assessor becomes a key factor in maintaining the objectivity of the assessment (Ciawi, 2021). Organizations with a strong performance culture tend to have more consistent and long-term-oriented talent management implementation (Liviana, 2025). The integration aspect of the personnel information system with talent development makes it easier to monitor employee competency development (RIYADI, 2025). Then, continuous competency-based training increases the professionalism and commitment of employees to the quality of public services (Churniawan, 2024).

Despite these findings, a research gap still exists in how competency testing results are integrated into the broader framework of talent management at the local government level, particularly in Indonesia's decentralized governance structure. Previous studies have tended to focus on general competency development or leadership succession but have not examined the systematic linkage between competency testing outcomes, talent mapping, and the formulation of long-term human resource development strategies. Moreover, empirical data regarding the implementation of these processes at the municipal level, such as in the Makassar City Government, remain limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap by analyzing how the results of competency tests are utilized to identify, develop, and retain high-potential State Civil Apparatus (ASN) as part of the city's talent management system. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the integration process between competency testing outcomes and practical talent management mechanisms that support the merit system, contributing to both theoretical enrichment and policy improvement.

Theoretically, the study is grounded in the Talent Management Theory developed by Lewis and Heckman, which emphasizes talent identification, development, and retention as core elements of human resource sustainability (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). This framework is further supported by the Competency-Based Human Resource Management Model, highlighting that individual competence directly affects organizational effectiveness. In Indonesia, the implementation of these principles is reinforced by Government Regulation No. 17 of 2020 on ASN Management and Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation (Permenpan-RB) No. 3 of 2020 concerning Talent Management in Government Institutions, which mandates the use of competency testing as a fundamental basis for talent mapping and career development. These policies underline the importance of structured, merit-based talent management in realizing professional and

accountable governance (Savitri et al., 2023).

This competency gap is a critical issue that must be addressed, as incompetent employees can significantly affect the overall performance and credibility of government institutions. Identifying the root causes of competency gaps and implementing effective, data-driven solutions is essential to improving ASN competence in the Makassar City Government. Therefore, the objectives of this study are (1) to analyze the implementation of talent management through competency testing in identifying and developing high-potential civil servants, (2) to evaluate the contribution of competency testing to improving ASN performance, professionalism, and public service quality, and (3) to formulate strategies for integrating competency test results into sustainable human resource governance. Theoretically, this study contributes to strengthening the conceptual understanding of competency-based talent management within the public sector, especially in the context of Indonesia's merit system. Practically, the results are expected to provide recommendations for local governments, particularly the Makassar City Government, in optimizing competency test results as instruments for building a professional, accountable, and high-performing ASN workforce capable of supporting effective and sustainable governance.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method, utilizing a case study approach to explore the competency gaps found among supervisory employees within the Makassar City government who have previously undergone competency tests. The primary focus is to understand the causes and implications of these competency gaps and identify effective strategies for addressing them. The data collection methods used in this study include observation, documentation, and interviews. Observation, conducted from 12 February 2024 to 15 March 2024, allows for a direct assessment of employee behavior and performance in their work environment, providing valuable insights into the real-world application of competencies. Documentation refers to the review of relevant records, reports, and competency test results to understand the existing state of employee qualifications. Interviews with key stakeholders, including HR personnel and the employees themselves, further enrich the data by providing personal perspectives on competency gaps and the challenges faced.

The data analysis technique applied is descriptive-analytic. This approach involves describing the existing conditions, recording the findings, analyzing patterns, and interpreting the information in the context of the research objectives. Through descriptive analysis, the study aims

to provide a comprehensive understanding of the competency gaps and their potential impact on employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, several tests of data validity are conducted, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability tests, as outlined by (Sugiyono, 2013); (Sugiyono, 2011); (Sugiyono, 2018). Credibility refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of the data, ensuring that the findings genuinely represent the perspectives of the participants. Dependability assesses the consistency and stability of the research process over time, while confirmability ensures that the conclusions drawn from the data are objective and not influenced by the researcher's biases. Additionally, transferability is considered, ensuring that the findings can be applied or generalized to other similar contexts, although the focus is on the specific case of the Makassar City government.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Table 1 presents the results of the competency test analysis conducted by BKPSDM Makassar City on supervisory position employees. The data includes mapping categories, job-filling categories, and competency gaps derived from the 2024 assessment results.

Table 1. Talent Management through Competency Testing to Improve the Quality of Civil Servants in Makassar City Government

Mapping Categories	Position Filling Categories	Competency Gap
Optimal: 93%	Meets requirements: 20%	Highest gap in Self-Development and Others: 32
Quite Optimal: 2%	Still meets requirements: 40%	Managing Change gap: 27.5
Less than Optimal: 5%	Less than requirements: 40%	Orientation to Results gap: 26
—	—	National Glue gap: 24.5

Source: Processed research data, 2024.

The mapping results show that 93% of participants fall into the optimal category, indicating that most employees meet the competency standards for their current positions. However, job-filling data reveal that only 20% of employees fully meet the requirements for higher positions, while 40% are still in the developing stage, and 40% are below the required standard. The competency gap analysis further indicates that the most significant gaps exist in self-development, managing change, and orientation to results.

BKPSDM Makassar City in the Competency Development and Apparatus Performance Assessment (PKPKA) section. During the internship, the researcher carried out work and observed

the work process in the PKPKA field. The activities carried out by the author include inputting data on the results of the Makassar City government's managerial competency test, inputting the disposition of letters in the PKPKA field, being directly involved in the level one and two civil service exam project and the diploma adjustment promotion exam, being involved in the video production project for the "Bangkom Jateng Award" Competency Development Evaluation, helping to manage the inventory of certificates for the Massive Open Online Course for Government Employees with Work Agreements, and so on.

The PKPKA Division is fully responsible for conducting competency tests on ASN of the Makassar City government. This aims to create a professional, integrity, and prosperous ASN. However, in its implementation, competency tests have not been implemented comprehensively for all levels of ASN positions.

The Makassar City government competency test is under the auspices of the State Civil Service Agency, which is carried out repeatedly every three years with the aim of measuring employee competency, both employees with supervisory positions, administrators, high-ranking Pratama, and functional positions. The importance of filling structural positions in the government bureaucracy, as stated in the ASN Law, provides an opportunity for ASN to be able to fill these positions as long as the competency requirements and qualifications are met by considering the competency standards and job requirements needed in ASN management (Kuswara & Mayasari, 2023).

This competency test is ideally followed by all ASN of the Makassar City government. The assessment of the competency test of ASN of the Makassar City government is carried out by the assessor of the apparatus's human resources. The competencies tested include managerial competencies and structural competencies. Managerial competencies are attitudes, behaviors, skills, and knowledge that can be measured and developed to lead or manage an organization. At the same time, socio-cultural competencies are knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that can be developed that are related to the experience of interacting with the community, including ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality, insight values, morals, and ethics (Kuswara & Mayasari, 2023).

The assessment of the competency standard level is based on Permenpan 38 of 2017 concerning ASN job competency standards. Each job level has different category standards, while in competency mapping, there are three assessment standards, namely optimal, quite optimal, and less than optimal. The competency mapping value is said to be optimal if the Job Person Match (JPM)

score is in the value interval $\geq 90\%$, quite optimal is in the value interval $\geq 78 - <90\%$, and less than optimal is in the value interval $<80\%$, and less than meeting the requirements is in the interval $<68\%$. As stated in BKN Regulation 26 of 2019 concerning the Development of Competency Assessment Implementation, it states that the Job Person Match (JPM) score is the sum of the comparison between the competency value achieved by participants with the total number of competency standards stated in percentages.

In the competency test for employees with supervisory positions, which was attended by 60 employees from various Regional Apparatus Organizations of Makassar City. From the results of the competency test assessment, the following data were obtained on the results of the mapping and filling of position categories:

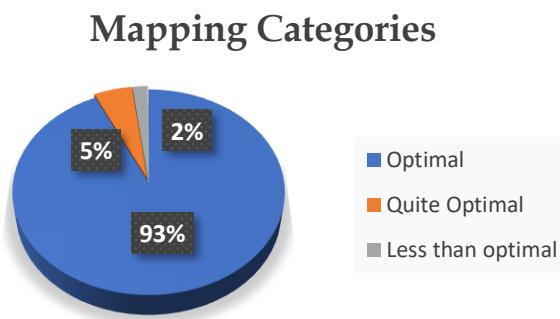


Figure 1. Mapping Category Diagram

Source: Processed research data, 2024

The image above shows a mapping category diagram, and in the table it is stated the percentage of three mapping categories obtained from the competency test participants' scores is stated. There are 93% of participants who get scores with the optimal category, 5% of participants who get scores with the less than optimal category, and 2% of participants who get scores with the fairly optimal category. From the diagram, it can be concluded that the competency test participants have competencies that are in accordance with the qualifications and requirements of the position.

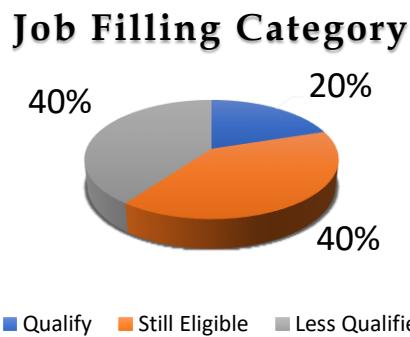


Figure 2. Position Filling Category Diagram

Source: Processed research data, 2024

The image shows a diagram of job-filling categories, and in the table it is stated the percentage of the results of the scores that participants get from taking the competency test is stated. In this case, 20% of participants get a score that meets the requirements, 40% of participants get a score that still meets the requirements, and 40% of participants get a score that is less than the requirements. From these data, it can be concluded that employees with supervisory positions need competency development to be able to fill the next position, because participants who get a score that is less than the requirements still dominate, even though it is less than 50%.

Looking at the data from the diagram above, it can be said that competency tests are important to be carried out to determine and measure managerial and socio-cultural competencies. The results of the assessment will then be used as a consideration in carrying out rotation, mutation, and job promotion. In addition, the results of the assessment will be the basis for developing ASN competencies by referring to the competency gap between competency test participants. Furthermore, after analyzing the values, a competency gap will be found in one of the competencies being tested. From the competencies that have a larger gap value, they will later be used as a consideration in providing recommendations for competency development. The results of the competency gap will be explained in Figure 3.

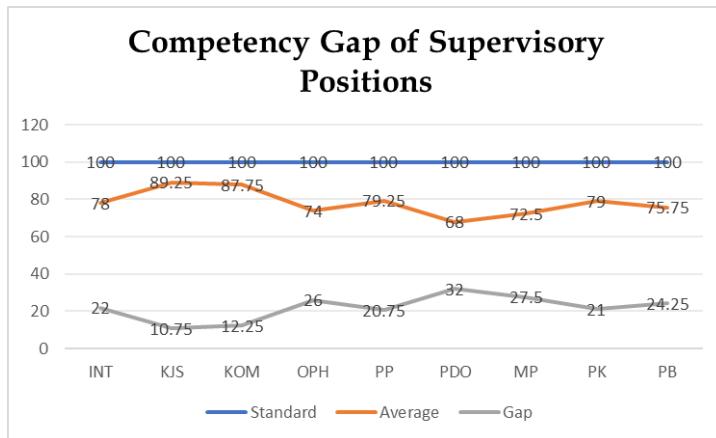


Figure 3. Competency Gap of Supervisory Positions
Source: Processed research data, 2024

The image explains the gap or gap in competency obtained from the competencies tested. The competency gap is calculated based on the difference between the standard value and the average value, so that the highest gap value is obtained, namely 32, in the Self-Development and Others competency. And there are three highest competencies after Self-Development and Others, namely managing change, with a gap value of 27.5. Orientation to results, which has a gap value of 26. And National Glue with a value of 24.5.

The description of the gap or competency gap above is a consideration for PKPKA to carry out the development of competency gaps for employees who do not yet meet the required job competency standards.

The ASN competency test aims to filter potential ASN competencies that meet the appropriate requirements and qualifications to be able to occupy a particular position. The results of the competency test assessment are used as consideration for promotion, transfer, and rotation of ASN. Informants three and four received different category scores for filling positions; informant three had previously received a score in the less-than-satisfactory category, so he had to retake the competency test. In contrast, the fourth informant received a score in the qualified category. Basically, no one failed the competency test, but if the participant received a score in the less-than-satisfactory category, they must retake the competency test because the results of the position category determine the future career of the ASN.

Determination of promotion, rotation, and ASN mutation is not only based on the results of the competency test. But there are several factors in determining a career, and the competency test is only part of the assessment. Participants who are said to have passed and can be promoted to a

certain position must go through several stages of checking work history and competency test results. The assessments used as material for ASN placement include Employee Work Targets (SKP), history of disciplinary punishments, and competency test results. The assessment is carried out comprehensively. If one of the three assessments has a value below the standard, then the participant can be said to have failed the competency test and will take a re-competency test.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of talent management through competency testing at the Makassar City Government has achieved significant progress in identifying and mapping employee competencies. The data from the competency mapping results show that 93% of employees fall into the “optimal” category, indicating that most employees possess competencies that align well with their current job descriptions. However, only 5% are categorized as “less than optimal,” and 2% as “quite optimal,” revealing that while baseline competency formation has been effective, the readiness for higher or strategic roles remains limited. This gap is further reinforced by the job readiness chart, which shows that only 20% of supervisory employees are categorized as “ready now,” while 40% are “ready later,” and another 40% are “not yet ready.” These findings underscore that although the Makassar City Government has achieved a broad competency match at the operational level, its talent pipeline for future leadership positions is not yet fully developed.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings align with the *Talent Management Framework* proposed by Lewis & Heckman (2006), which emphasizes three central perspectives in talent management: ensuring the right people are in the right roles, developing talent systematically, and maintaining a long-term succession strategy. The current condition in Makassar City Government suggests that the organization has succeeded in the first aspect, ensuring position-competency alignment, but still faces challenges in the second and third aspects, namely systematic talent development and succession readiness (Nurnadhifa & Syahrina, 2021). This condition reflects the tendency identified by Collings & Mellahi (2009), who argue that public sector organizations often focus on administrative placement rather than developmental succession planning, resulting in limited leadership continuity and innovation readiness.

Previous studies also provide relevant insights supporting these findings. For instance, Raharjo (2019) found that many regional governments in Indonesia face difficulties in translating competency mapping results into concrete development programs, often due to limited institutional

capacity and inconsistent policy follow-up. Similarly, research by (Sumiar, 2024) on ASN development in South Sulawesi indicated that while competency assessments have been routinely conducted, the linkage between assessment results and career development remains weak. In contrast, a study by (Kimathi, 2015) on talent management at the Ministry of Finance showed that when competency assessments are directly integrated into promotion and rotation systems, employee motivation and leadership readiness increase significantly. These comparisons highlight that the main challenge for the Makassar City Government lies not in assessment execution but in the post-assessment utilization phase.

Analyzing the managerial dimension, the identified competency gaps, particularly in self-development, managing change, and result orientation, illustrate that leadership competencies have not been systematically cultivated. According to (Boyatzis, 2008), leadership competencies require continuous reinforcement through experience-based learning, feedback loops, and mentoring, not just one-time assessments. The dominance of employees in the “still meets requirements” and “less than requirements” categories confirms that BKPSDM’s current competency development model remains reactive rather than proactive. As a result, the talent pool’s readiness to occupy higher-level managerial roles is still fragmented. This finding resonates with the argument of (Thakurta, 2025) that successful public-sector talent management depends on integrating assessment, development, and performance management into a cohesive cycle that fosters organizational agility.

Strategically, the Makassar City Government needs to strengthen follow-up mechanisms after competency assessments to ensure developmental continuity. Development plans should include tailored interventions such as structured leadership training, mentoring by senior officials, and inter-departmental job rotations. These actions are consistent with the recommendations of those who emphasize that effective talent development requires alignment between assessment results and competency-based training design (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Furthermore, integrating competency test data into the broader Human Capital Management System will enable evidence-based decision-making in promotions, transfers, and succession planning. By doing so, talent management will shift from a compliance-based process to a performance-oriented system.

From a broader governance perspective, strengthening talent management at the local government level also contributes to the acceleration of bureaucratic reform. As noted by the Indonesian Ministry for Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenPAN-RB, 2020) (Widodo, 2025) Competency-based talent management is a key driver of ASN professionalization and

improved public service quality. Therefore, the competency test implemented by BKPSDM Makassar serves not only as a diagnostic tool but also as a strategic instrument for achieving sustainable governance. It helps ensure that each leadership layer within the bureaucracy has a measurable competency base and a clear pathway for career progression, supporting both organizational effectiveness and public accountability.

In reflection, while the current study indicates a positive trend in competency alignment, the challenge ahead lies in translating these quantitative outcomes into qualitative improvements in leadership behavior and innovation culture. The author argues that the Makassar City Government should move toward a dynamic model of talent management, emphasizing continuous learning and adaptive leadership as organizational norms. The integration of digital learning systems, performance-based mentoring, and interdepartmental collaboration could significantly enhance leadership readiness and organizational resilience. This proactive stance would transform BKPSDM from a regulatory body into a learning-oriented organization, capable of nurturing high-performing and visionary civil servants who can lead Makassar City toward sustainable and responsive governance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of talent management through competency testing in the Makassar City Government has effectively identified and mapped the competencies of supervisory-level ASN, demonstrating that most employees possess competencies aligned with their current positions. However, the results also indicate a significant readiness gap for higher-level responsibilities, particularly in aspects of self-development, change management, and results orientation. This condition reflects the partial integration of competency test outcomes into the broader talent management system, which is constrained by limited infrastructure, policy support, and budget allocation. Therefore, strengthening the linkage between competency assessments, career development, and succession planning is essential to enhance ASN professionalism, optimize performance, and realize a sustainable and merit-based governance system in the Makassar City Government.

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