

Original Article

The Effect of Leadership Education and Training on Structural Promotion: the Mediating Role of Competence Among Civil Servants in the Indonesian National Police

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Abstract:

This study examines the effect of leadership education and training on structural promotion among civil servants in the Indonesian National Police, with competence as a mediating variable. In the context of public sector reform, leadership training programs are expected to support a merit-based promotion system by enhancing individual competence. However, empirical evidence indicates that leadership training does not always lead directly to career advancement. This study aims to provide empirical clarification by analyzing both direct and indirect relationships among leadership training, competence, and structural promotion. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from 121 civil servants working across 29 units of the East Java Regional Police Headquarters. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with WarpPLS 7.0. Leadership education and training were measured through curriculum relevance, learning methods, evaluation systems, instructor quality, and program management. Competence was assessed based on managerial, leadership, and technical dimensions, while structural promotion was measured using both perceptual indicators and objective career data. The results show that leadership education and training do not have a significant direct effect on structural promotion. However, leadership training has a significant positive effect on competence, and competence has a strong positive effect on structural promotion. Furthermore, competence fully mediates the relationship between leadership education and training and structural promotion. These findings indicate that leadership training contributes to career advancement only when it effectively enhances measurable competence. This study contributes to the literature on human capital and public sector human resource management by emphasizing the central role

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of competence in translating training investments into career outcomes. Practically, the findings suggest that promotion systems within the Indonesian National Police should strengthen the integration between leadership training outcomes, competency assessment, and merit-based promotion mechanisms.

Keywords: leadership training; competence; structural promotion; public sector; Indonesian National Police.

Introduction

Structural promotion plays a crucial role in public sector organizations, as it determines the placement of individuals in positions with greater authority, responsibility, and strategic decision-making power. In the context of the Indonesian National Police (INP), structural positions such as heads of divisions, departments, or regional units are vital for ensuring effective governance, operational performance, and public service delivery. Ideally, structural promotion should be guided by the principles of a merit-based system, where career advancement is determined by competence, performance, and professional qualifications rather than subjective considerations or seniority alone.

In response to public sector reform and bureaucratic modernization, leadership education and training programs have been institutionalized as a key instrument for developing future leaders and supporting meritocratic promotion systems. Leadership training is commonly viewed as an investment in human capital, aimed at enhancing managerial capability, leadership skills, and professional attitudes required for higher-level positions. According to Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), individuals who invest in education and training should receive corresponding career rewards, including promotion opportunities. Consequently, leadership education and training are formally positioned as prerequisites for structural promotion within many public organizations, including the Indonesian National Police.

Despite this normative framework, empirical evidence suggests that leadership training does not always translate directly into structural promotion. Several studies have reported a discrepancy between formal training requirements and actual promotion outcomes in public sector institutions. In the Indonesian National Police, for instance, leadership education and training are mandated as a prerequisite for promotion; however, only a relatively small proportion of training graduates are promoted within a reasonable period after completing the program. This gap between policy expectations and organizational practice raises important questions regarding the effectiveness of leadership training as a mechanism for career advancement.

One possible explanation for this inconsistency lies in the role of competence as an intervening factor. Leadership training is designed to enhance individual competence, encompassing managerial, leadership, and technical capabilities. From a competency-based human resource management perspective ([Spencer & Spencer, 1993](#)), training programs contribute to organizational outcomes only when they produce measurable improvements in job-relevant competencies. In this sense, leadership education and training may not directly influence promotion decisions; rather, promotion outcomes depend on the extent to which training results in demonstrable competence that aligns with job requirements and performance standards.

Moreover, organizational and cultural factors within public institutions may weaken the linkage between training and promotion. Previous research highlights the persistence of seniority-based practices, subjective evaluations, and informal considerations in promotion decisions, which may undermine merit-based systems. When promotion decisions are influenced by factors unrelated to competence, the signaling value of leadership training certificates diminishes, and the motivational impact of training investments may decline. Expectancy Theory ([Vroom, 1964](#)) suggests that when employees perceive a weak connection between effort (training participation), performance (competence development), and outcomes (promotion), their motivation and engagement are likely to decrease.

Within the East Java Regional Police Headquarters, these challenges are particularly relevant given the scale of the organization, the complexity of its operational environment, and the high demand for competent leadership. Civil servants in this institution are required not only to perform administrative duties but also to support policing operations that involve high levels of risk, coordination, and public accountability. Ensuring that leadership positions are filled by individuals with appropriate competence is therefore essential for organizational effectiveness and public trust.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the effect of leadership education and training on structural promotion among civil servants in the Indonesian National Police, with competence as a mediating variable. By employing a quantitative approach and Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), this research seeks to clarify whether leadership training directly influences promotion outcomes or whether its impact operates primarily through competence development. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on public sector human resource management and provide practical insights for strengthening merit-based promotion systems within police institutions.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design with a causal explanatory approach to examine the relationships between leadership education and training, competence, and structural promotion. The design was intended to test both direct and indirect effects among variables and to evaluate the mediating role of competence in the relationship between leadership training and structural promotion. A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect empirical data from civil servants within the Indonesian National Police.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the East Java Regional Police Headquarters (Polda Jawa Timur), which consists of 29 organizational units with diverse administrative and operational functions. The population of this study comprised all civil servants working within the Indonesian National Police at the East Java Regional Police Headquarters who met the eligibility requirements for leadership education and training programs. The total population consisted of 173 civil servants across grades III and IV.

A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that respondents were relevant to the research objectives. Both civil servants who had participated in leadership education and training and those who had not yet participated were included to allow for comparative analysis. Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, a minimum

sample size of 121 respondents was determined. The sample was proportionally distributed across ranks to ensure adequate representation.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents across the 29 organizational units. The questionnaire was administered with the support of relevant stakeholders within the organization to ensure accessibility and compliance. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to minimize response bias.

The survey instrument consisted of closed-ended items measured using a five-point Likert scale. For the independent and mediating variables, the scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree/very low) to 5 (strongly agree/very high). For the dependent variable, structural promotion, the scale was adapted to capture perceptions of suitability, transparency, and impact, supplemented with objective career data.

Measurement of Variables

Leadership Education and Training was treated as an independent variable and measured through six dimensions: curriculum relevance, learning methods, facilities and infrastructure, evaluation system, instructor quality, and program management. These dimensions reflect the quality and effectiveness of leadership training programs in developing leadership capacity.

Competence functioned as the mediating variable and was measured using three core dimensions: managerial competence, leadership competence, and technical competence. These dimensions represent the essential capabilities required for effective performance in structural positions within public sector organizations.

Structural Promotion was the dependent variable and measured using both perceptual and objective indicators. Perceptual indicators included the suitability of promotion decisions, transparency of the promotion process, and the perceived impact of promotion on responsibility and authority. Objective indicators included promotion waiting time, job level alignment, and hierarchical position attained.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with WarpPLS version 7.0. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive research models, relatively small sample sizes, and non-normal data distributions. The analysis followed a two-stage procedure.

First, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to assess construct validity and reliability. Convergent validity was examined using indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to evaluate internal consistency.

Second, the structural model (inner model) was assessed to test the hypothesized relationships among constructs. Path coefficients, p-values, and effect sizes were examined to determine the significance of direct and indirect effects. The mediating role of competence was evaluated using the bootstrapping procedure and the criteria for mediation proposed by Baron and Kenny, complemented by the significance of indirect effects.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research standards by ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of respondents' identities and responses. Data were used solely for academic purposes, and no individual or organizational

identifiers were disclosed in the analysis or reporting of results.

Results

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Respondent Profile

A total of 121 valid responses were collected and analyzed in this study, representing civil servants across 29 organizational units at the East Java Regional Police Headquarters. The respondents consisted of civil servants from grades III and IV, all of whom met the eligibility criteria for leadership education and training programs. The sample included respondents who had participated in leadership training as well as those who had not, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of training effectiveness and promotion outcomes.

Overall, the respondent distribution reflected a diverse range of ages, tenure, educational backgrounds, and work units, ensuring adequate representation of the population and supporting the generalizability of the findings within the organizational context.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs used in this study, including leadership education and training, competence, and structural promotion.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was examined using indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicators with loading values below 0.60 were removed from the model to improve construct validity. After this refinement process, all remaining indicators demonstrated loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.60 and were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, the AVE values for all constructs exceeded the minimum criterion of 0.50, indicating that each construct explained more than half of the variance of its indicators.

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha. The results showed that all constructs achieved CR values above 0.70 and Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability and consistency of the measurement instruments.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Leadership Education and Training	0.88	0.91	0.56
Competence	0.90	0.93	0.61
Structural Promotion	0.86	0.90	0.54

These results confirm that the measurement model met the required standards of reliability and convergent validity and was suitable for further structural analysis.

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among leadership education and training, competence, and structural promotion. Path coefficients (β), p-values, and effect sizes were examined to assess the significance and strength of the relationships.

Hypothesis	Relationship	(β)	p-value	Result
H1	Leadership Training → Structural promotion	0.05	0.27	Not Supported
H2	Leadership Training → Competence	0.35	< 0.01	Supported
H3	Competence → Structural promotion	0.65	< 0.01	Supported

Direct Effects

The results indicate that leadership education and training do not have a significant direct effect on structural promotion ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.27$). This finding suggests that participation in leadership training alone does not automatically increase the likelihood of structural promotion.

In contrast, leadership education and training have a significant positive effect on competence ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$). This result demonstrates that well-designed leadership training programs effectively enhance the managerial, leadership, and technical competencies of civil servants.

Furthermore, competence has a strong and significant positive effect on structural promotion ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of competence substantially increase the likelihood of being promoted to a structural position.

Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of competence in the relationship between leadership education and training and structural promotion was tested using the indirect effect analysis in WarpPLS.

The results show that the indirect effect of leadership education and training on structural promotion through competence is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < 0.001$). At the same time, the direct effect of leadership education and training on structural promotion remains non-significant. This pattern indicates a full mediation effect, where competence fully mediates the relationship between leadership training and structural promotion.

These findings suggest that leadership education and training contribute to career advancement only through their ability to enhance measurable competence. Without competence development, leadership training does not translate into promotion outcomes.

Model Fit and Predictive Power

The overall model demonstrated acceptable fit and predictive relevance based on WarpPLS fit indices. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that leadership education and training explain a substantial proportion of variance in competence, while competence explains a large proportion of variance in structural promotion. These

results support the robustness and explanatory power of the proposed research model.

Conclusion

This study investigates the effect of leadership education and training on structural promotion among civil servants in the Indonesian National Police, with competence examined as a mediating variable. The findings provide important insights into how leadership development programs function within a merit-based promotion framework in the public sector.

The results demonstrate that leadership education and training do not have a significant direct effect on structural promotion. This indicates that participation in leadership training alone is insufficient to guarantee career advancement. However, leadership training has a significant positive effect on competence, and competence, in turn, has a strong positive influence on structural promotion. Furthermore, competence fully mediates the relationship between leadership education and training and structural promotion. These findings confirm that leadership training contributes to promotion outcomes only when it successfully enhances measurable and job-relevant competence.

Theoretically, this study reinforces Human Capital Theory by emphasizing that training investments yield career benefits only when they translate into enhanced competence. It also supports competency-based human resource management perspectives, highlighting competence as the central mechanism linking leadership development to promotion decisions. By integrating mediation analysis, this study extends the literature on public sector leadership training by clarifying why leadership programs often fail to produce direct promotion outcomes.

Practically, the findings suggest that public sector organizations, particularly the Indonesian National Police, should strengthen the alignment between leadership training outcomes, competency assessment systems, and promotion mechanisms. Leadership education and training programs should be designed and evaluated based on their ability to produce measurable competency improvements. In addition, promotion decisions should rely more heavily on objective competency indicators to ensure consistency with merit-based principles.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted within a single regional police organization, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies are encouraged to examine similar models across different regions or public institutions, incorporate longitudinal designs, and include additional variables such as organizational culture, performance appraisal systems, or leadership support.

In conclusion, this study highlights that competence is the key pathway through which leadership education and training influence structural promotion. Strengthening competence-based promotion systems is essential for enhancing leadership quality, organizational effectiveness, and public sector professionalism.

Suggestion

Practical Suggestions

First, the Indonesian National Police should strengthen the alignment between leadership education and training outcomes and the structural promotion system. Leadership training programs should not be treated merely as administrative requirements but as strategic instruments for developing competencies that are directly

relevant to structural positions.

Second, competency-based assessment should be institutionalized as the primary criterion in promotion decisions. Objective and standardized competency indicators—covering managerial, leadership, and technical dimensions—should be integrated into performance appraisal and promotion evaluation systems to reduce subjectivity and seniority bias.

Third, leadership education and training programs should be designed based on systematic competency gap analyses. Training curricula, learning methods, and evaluation mechanisms need to be continuously updated to ensure that training outputs are measurable, applicable, and aligned with organizational needs.

Fourth, post-training evaluation and follow-up mechanisms should be strengthened. Civil servants who complete leadership training should be monitored through competency assessments and performance indicators to ensure that acquired competencies are applied in the workplace and contribute to organizational performance.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies are encouraged to expand the research scope by involving multiple regional police units or other public sector institutions to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal research designs are also recommended to capture the long-term effects of leadership training on competence development and career progression.

In addition, future research may incorporate other explanatory variables, such as organizational culture, leadership support, performance appraisal systems, and political or institutional factors, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of promotion dynamics in public sector organizations.

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