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The Effect of Curiosity on Employee Performance: A Case Study in Indonesia*

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of independent behavior, goal achievement, and curiosity on employee performance and examines the impact of independent behavior and goal achievement on employee performance through curiosity. This research is conducted on a survey using explanatory research. Data collection is carried out using a questionnaire as a research instrument. The questionnaire was conducted on employees of finance companies in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The selection of companies used as research is based on the similarity of the products being marketed. In Yogyakarta, there are 54 branch offices of finance companies that carry out business activities. However, of the 54 companies, ten have the same products being marketed, namely mortgage loans, investment loans, and multipurpose loans. In contrast, other finance companies focus more on motor vehicle loans—determining the number of samples obtained by multiplying by six times the number of indicators used. The sampling technique is done by purposive sampling with specific respondent criteria. In this study, analysis techniques, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 22. The results showed that the increase in employee performance was influenced by curiosity regarding independent employee behavior. This study provides recommendations human resource management practices that have an impact on organizational performance.

Keywords: Financial Institutions, Motivation, Curiosity, Job Performance, Personality Traits

JEL Classification Code: L2, M1, N2, M5, M31

1. Introduction

Employees' performance is directly proportional to organizational performance (Kleinknecht et al., 2014; Kumari, 2015; Vosloban, 2012). Employee performance is defined by Bernardin and Russel (1998) as a combination of characteristics, abilities, and efforts. Robbins and Judge (2015) say efforts about the means or efforts made in completing work; ability to explain about the application of

personal characteristics in carrying out work; and perception, which is a form of behavior that arises from the desire to complete a job (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

The role of employees in an organization is expressed in physical, mental, and emotional relationships. This role ultimately raises a strong desire for employees to remain part of the organization and use all their efforts, beliefs, and potential to achieve their goals (Newstrom & Davis, 2007). Work performed by employees as an effort to support the achievement of organizational goals. This form begins with the desire to achieve personal goals through energy, initiative, and role (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Organizations need to realize that employees are an essential part of organizational performance (Mello, 2012). This is because employees are an essential factor in producing organizational performance according to the set goals of the organization. Spencer et al. (1994) said that employees are the greatest asset to the organization, which plays a vital role in the organization's progress and quality improvement. The resulting organizational performance is influenced by employee motivation at work marked by the emergence of high loyalty to the organization (Khan et al., 2014).

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This research puts curiosity as the primary variable. Curiosity is one aspect of the concept of motivation. Robbins and Judge (2007) define motivation as a behavior driver that shapes intensity, direction, and effort to achieve goals. Motivation plays an essential role in bringing out employee orientation (PANCASILA et al., 2020). Simultaneously, curiosity is a form of behavior in seeking and finding answers to questions one wants to know from an oddity found (Silvia, 2008). Thus, curiosity is an understood motivational drive that shapes exploratory behavior to understand the differences experienced (Keller et al., 1994; Loewenstein, 1994).

A financial institution's survival and performance growth is not determined solely by success in financial management based on the strength of capital or money alone (Goh, 2005), and its success in managing employees. Employee management carried out by a financial institution organization must unify employees and the organization's perceptions to achieve the organization's goals. Problems related to finance companies' performance is not optimal employee understanding of the work done, especially experienced by employees in the credit marketing department. As an impact that appears, ultimately, employees do not play a role in achieving sales targets as organizational goals.

Applying curiosity in doing work is indicated by employee behavior to adapt to the work environment and interact with their work (Berlyne, 1978). In other words, curiosity raises employee behavior to learn to know, understand and improve the ability to adapt to organizational goals (Kang et al., 2009; Pulakos et al., 2000; Spielberger & Reheiser, 2003).

Research on curiosity has so far emphasized specific antecedents and consequences. Some of these antecedents include knowledge (Lauriola et al., 2015), personality (Mussel, 2013), adjustment of circumstances (Thomas & Vinuales, 2017), angry behavior (Reio & Callahan, 2004), and feelings of anxiety (Reio & Callahan, 2004).

Meanwhile, some of the consequences of curiosity include creating innovative behavior (Abukhait et al., 2020; Lauriola et al., 2015), satisfaction (Kashdan et al., 2004), and improve performance (Reio Jr & Wiswell, 2000). Some researchers suggest the need to explore further the antecedents of curiosity (Mussel, 2013; Reio & Callahan, 2004).

This article aims to fill research gaps in understanding the effect of curiosity on employee performance by placing independent behavior and goal achievement as antecedents of curiosity in Indonesia's finance companies. The findings of the phenomenon in this study follow the opinion expressed by Roe (2014) that employee performance can affect organizational performance. At this time, the dynamic changes in the business environment demand employee performance according to organizational goals. The goals set by the organization can win the competition (Cascio & Boudreau, 2010).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

2.1. Independent Behavior and Performance

Employees are said to be independent if they tend to be confident, enthusiastic, and persistent in facing every challenge (Nelson & Quick, 2013). Also, independent employees can form relationships with the surrounding environment to communicate problems when facing stressful situations. Independent behavior, concerning job execution and skills, explains how to achieve something and manage something (Parker & Benson, 2005).

Employee performance is defined as the level of an employee's ability to carry out assigned tasks or jobs (Byars & Rue, 2006). This ability is indicated by how far the employee can meet the conditions set out in work being performed. Employees who have high performance, are marked as productive people. However, they are said to have low performance if they are less productive. Sundstrom et al. (1980) explained that employee performance refers to employees' effectiveness in completing assigned tasks or jobs per the organization's criteria, such as quantity, quality, and efficiency.

2.2. Independent Behavior and Curiosity

Ainsworth et al. (1978) define independent behavior originating from within the individual that arises from the learning process and experiences. This process's impact is related to a sense of security, rejection, and anxiety. Security indicates a high level of independent behavior, while rejection and anxiety indicate a lack of independent behavior (Bowlby, 1982; Harms et al., 2016; Johnstone & Feeney, 2015; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2015).

Ferguson and Reio (2010) explain that curiosity is a basic need obtained from the learning, development, and adaptation processes that motivate exploration behavior. Berlyne (1960) explains that curiosity can produce negative feelings when it is not fulfilled, but it will be nice to get the information (Markey & Loewenstein, 2014). Curiosity naturally influences one's behavior, such as in information seeking in workplace learning (Reio Jr & Wiswell, 2000).

2.3. Goal Achievement and Performance

Schunk (2012) explains that achieving goals is based on goal setting, and employee focus on doing work. Goal setting focuses more on how goals are built and changed according to the traits that drive behavior. Goal achievement is a description of beliefs related to the form of the approach used, how to use it, and responses to conditions that lead to performance. Goal achievement also reflects the individual's value in assessing their performance, either success or failure.

Also, goals will, in turn, influence the way employees interpret and respond to situations and challenges (Dweck, 2000). The goal's form includes the orientation to pursue performance improvement, marked by the emergence of competence. Goal achievement is related to the abilities that lead to performance achievement (Duda & Hall, 2001; Payne et al., 2007). Achieving a goal is an approach that raises employees' motivation to achieve goals following the beliefs that underlie abilities (Covington, 2000).

2.4. Goal Achievement and Curiosity

Goal achievement is a form of personality trait. Pervin (2015) states that goal achievement is a conscientiousness that explains behavior to achieve goals. Feist (2013) says that a personality is a form of traits, and characters are relatively permanent in influencing a person's behavior. Littauer (2006) says personality is the behavior of someone who tends to interact with the situation. The ability to interact leads to behavior in achieving the desired goals.

Curiosity refers to the general tendency in a person to be curious. Reio and Callahan (2004) explain that curiosity evokes emotions that induce exploratory behavior in seeking information to answer curiosity. Curiosity affects the emergence of scientific activities, exploration, and innovation (Kashdan & Silvia, 2009). When a person has curiosity, he will pay much attention to processing information more deeply, remember information better, and do his job to the end (Kashdan & Silvia, 2009).

2.5. Curiosity and Performance

Applying curiosity to work, Oschmann (2018) describes curiosity as recognizing and looking for things that are new, unusual, and beyond an employee's experience. Employees' success in generating new ideas and approaches demands openness and comfort with things that have not been tried before. Employees' courage in taking risks arises because of curiosity due to persistence. Schiefele et al. (1992) define curiosity in the world of work as a form of intrinsic motivation that gives rise to exploration efforts to take advantage of opportunities (Kashdan et al., 2004). Sorenson (2013) shows that employee involvement in the organization results in a performance marked by reduced absenteeism, low turnover rates, and high work quality. These practices include personal attributes, organizational context, and practices in employee management.

2.6. Independent Behavior, Curiosity and Performance

Several studies have emphasized the importance of employees' abilities in developing their interpersonal

skills (Auerbach & Blatt, 2001). Independent behavior towards curiosity is due to the emergence of forms in job evaluation implementation (Choi-Kain & Gunderson, 2008). Independent behavioral assessment of curiosity is generally motivated by changes that occur regularly due to the support received from work implementation.

Several studies on curiosity suggest a new perspective, understanding curiosity as a feeling of attraction that arises when employees do not consider themselves less knowledgeable but instead feel that it would be fun to find something new (Litman & Jimerson, 2004). In contrast, curiosity arises as motivation to obtain substantive and meaningful information, for example, about answers to complex questions—facts that occur, or solutions to solve difficult problems (Litman & Silvia, 2006).

2.7. Goal Achievement, Curiosity and Performance

Harrison et al. (2011) define curiosity to shape employees' adaptation process to their work that raises ideas and solutions to understand their work and socializing (Reio Jr & Wiswell, 2000). Weiland et al. (2012) define curiosity as a predictor that affects employee awareness in the workplace, relating to understanding the surrounding environment (both friends and work status) that drives success.

Motowidlo and Kell (2012) defined employee performance as the concept of value expected to emerge from employee behavior in carrying out duties following the organization's standards. Oedekoven and Hay (2010) show that employee performance arises by implementing employee involvement in work, resulting in an increase in organizational performance (Baber, 2019). This employee's performance is marked by the emergence of a feeling of pleasure at work, supported by the organization's welfare.

2.8. Hypotheses

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

H2: Independent behavior has a positive and significant effect on curiosity.

H3: Goal achievement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H4: Goal achievement has a positive and significant effect on curiosity.

H5: Curiosity has a positive and significant effect on performance.

H6: Independent behavior has a positive and significant effect on performance through curiosity.

H7: Goal achievement has a positive and significant effect on performance through curiosity.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

The research approach used in this research is quantitative. The quantitative approach aims to answer research problems (Malhotra, 2010). This research was conducted in the form of a survey using explanatory research. The survey aims to obtain data or information from respondents who are the research sample. Data collection was carried out on the respondents, using a questionnaire or questionnaire as a research instrument. Explanatory research aims to test theories to strengthen or reject existing research results (Sekaran, 2011).

3.2. Data Collection

This research's data source is the primary data source—the data collection out by surveying the respondents. The application of survey activities aims to obtain data or information from the research samples. Data collection, using a questionnaire as a research instrument. Survey activities in this study were conducted to produce explanatory research. Explanatory research aims to find a cause-and-effect relationship or causality between data analysis variables (Sekaran, 2011). Data collection was carried out in 10 finance companies in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

3.3. Sample

To determine the sample, opinion of Hair et al. (2010) is used where the number of samples is obtained by multiplying by six times the number of indicators used. So, the number of samples used in this study were 150 employees. Following criteria has been used to determine the correctness of the samples: employees who work in the marketing department, employees who have permanent status, employees who have worked for at least 12 months, and employees willing to be respondents.

3.4. Measurement

The scale of the respondent's indicator answer uses five measurement scales. Starting from number 1 (totally disagree) to number 5 (totally agree). This measurement scale is used for each indicator of each variable. Independent behavior variable, with six indicators according to the opinion of Van den Broeck et al. (2010); goal achievement variable, with eight indicators following the opinion of Tanaka et al. (2013); curiosity variable, with six indicators following the opinion of Weiland et al. (2012); and employee performance variables, with five indicators following the opinion of Hamzah et al. (2020).

Indicator is valid, with a loading factor size >0.5 and a significant level value <0.05 . Malhotra (2015) said the validity test aims to measure the error of research indicators. Factor confirmatory analysis test aims to test the feasibility of indicators against research variables (Hair et al., 2010). The consistency requirements for the indicator value are reliable; the construct reliability value is >0.7 (Hair et al., 2006; Malhotra, 2010; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2005). For Data analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 22.00 is used. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) aims to examine the relationship between variables in obtaining a comprehensive picture of the model (Bollen, 1989).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Construct Validity and Reliability

Heise (1969) states that for research that focuses on determining variables' causality, it is necessary to fulfill the size model's empirical requirements to determine whether there are adequate construct validity and reliability. Meanwhile, Hair et al. (2006) state that all constructs have size errors, including variable indicators. Therefore, it is necessary to test the theoretical construction of each variable empirically.

Based on the test results in Table 1, all indicators were declared valid and reliable for the curiosity variable. For the goal achievement variable, indicators one to four are omitted because they are invalid and reliable. For the curiosity variable, indicators four to six are invalid and reliable. For employee performance variables, indicator two is invalid and reliable. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis is necessary to obtain a fit model before testing the hypothesis. The tests' results show the model's shape that meets the predetermined goodness of fit requirements.

Hair et al. (2010) stated that the model is feasible and fit if it has 4–5 criteria for the goodness of fit. The model is said to be fit if it has criteria from each component of the goodness of fit. The absolute fit measure is determining the model's degree to the correlation and covariance matrices. The following will be explained in Table 2 below, which results from testing the fit model.

4.2. Hypothesis

The test results described in Table 2 above show that the proposed model has the goodness of fit. After obtaining the goodness of fit model above, then testing the hypothesis. First, a test is carried out with a path analysis of the direct influence of independent behavior and goal achievement on employee performance and curiosity on employee performance. Second, testing the indirect effect of curiosity and goal achievement on employee performance

Table 1: Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable/Indicator	L.F	C.R	AVE
Independent Behavior:			
Being able to assert yourself at work	0.921	0.957	0.789
Often following other people's way of working	0.921		
Work according to the way one wants to	0.897		
Feel free to do work	0.902		
Being compelled to do work from the boss	0.868		
Freedom of expressing ideas	0.815		
Goal Achievement:			
Aiming to obtain better results than others	0.843	0.940	0.798
The desire to obtain better job evaluation results	0.892		
Always trying to achieve better targets	0.950		
The fear of getting worse evaluations from others	0.883		
Curiosity:			
Trying to contribute to the progress of the organization	0.808	0.905	0.760
Always developing new strategies	0.896		
Always trying to find solutions	0.908		
Employee Performance:			
Always trying to complete work well	1.011	0.905	0.709
Always involved in the implementation of work	0.837		
Always trying to meet job requirements	0.731		
Always focusing on completing work	0.760		

L.F = Loading Factor; C.R = Construct Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extract.

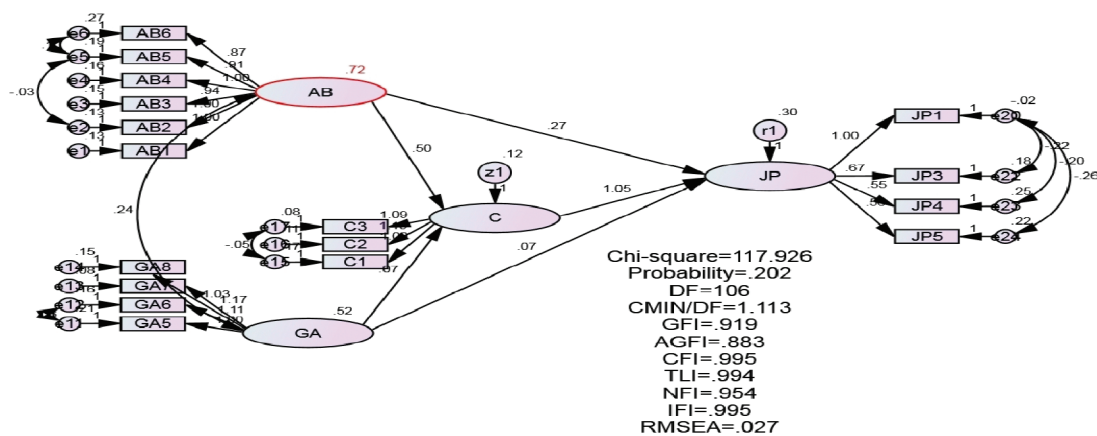
**Figure 1:** Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Tests

Table 2: Fit Model Test Results

Measure	Cut off Point	Fit Model	Details
Chi-Square (df = 140, $p = 0.05$)	168.613	176.446	Not Fit
Significance probability	≥ 0.05	0.20	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.90	Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.04	Fit
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.86	Not Fit
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.94	Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	1.00	Fit
TLI/NNFI	≥ 0.90	0.98	Fit
CMIN/DF	≤ 5	1.26	Fit

Table 3: All Path Test Results

Path	Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Probability
Curiosity \leftarrow Goal Achievement	0.067	0.036	1.845	0.065
Curiosity \leftarrow Independent Behavior	0.452	0.047	9.696	***
Employee Performance \leftarrow Independent Behavior	0.503	0.064	7.870	***
Employee Performance \leftarrow Goal Achievement	-0.017	0.037	-0.464	0.643
Employee Performance \leftarrow Curiosity	0.844	0.117	7.214	***

through curiosity. The following in Table 3 below describes the test results of all paths.

The test results in Table 3 show a positive and significant effect of independent behavior on employee performance. The results obtained show the value of t -value or c.r. amounting to $7.870 \geq 1,967$ with a p -value of $*** \leq 0.05$. So from these results, it can be concluded that employees' independent behavior at work affects employee performance in the marketing division of finance companies in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (H1).

The test results in Table 3 show a positive and significant influence on independent behavior on curiosity. The results obtained show the value of t -value or c.r. amounting to $9.696 \geq 1,967$ with a p -value of $*** \leq 0.05$. So from these results, it can be concluded that employees' independent behavior at work affects the curiosity of employees in the marketing division of a finance company in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (H2).

The test results hypothesis 3 (H3) show the value of t -value or c.r. equal to $-0.464 \leq 1,967$ with p -value $0.643 \geq 0.05$. Based on these results, it is concluded that work goal achievement do not affect employee performance produced by employees of finance companies' marketing division in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

The test results obtained by the value of t -value or c.r. amounting to $1.845 \leq 1,967$ with a p -value of $0.065 \geq 0.05$. Based on these results, it is concluded that the goal achievement at work do not affect employees' curiosity about the marketing division of a finance company in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (H4). Based on the test results obtained, the t -value or c.r. $7.214 \geq 1,967$ with p -value $*** \leq 0.05$. Based on these tests' results, it can be concluded that employees' curiosity at work affects employee performance produced by employees of the marketing division of finance companies in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (H5).

To test the sixth hypothesis, the two pathways. The first path, independent behavior testing towards curiosity, obtained significant and positive results ($\beta = 0.452$, $p \leq 0.05$). The second route is testing the curiosity of employee performance, which results in positive and significant results ($\beta = 0.844$, $p \leq 0.05$). From the test results, all pathways are significant from independent behavior \rightarrow curiosity \rightarrow employee performance. So from these results, it can be concluded that employees' independent behavior at work affects employee performance through the curiosity of employees of the marketing department at a finance company in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

After obtaining the above test results, then the second stage of testing is carried out. The second testing stage is to test mediation (curiosity) by comparing the direct and indirect effects. The standardized direct effect of independent behavior on performance is 0.503 or 0.253. Meanwhile, the standardized indirect effect of independent behavior on performance is $0.452 \times 0.844 = 0.381$. Based on testing, the standardized indirect effect is greater than the standardized direct effect; then the hypothesis is that curiosity mediates independent behavior on employee performance (H6).

To test the seventh hypothesis, the two existing pathways. In the first route, testing the goal achievement on curiosity, the results are not significant ($\beta = 0.067, p \geq 0.05$). The second route is testing the curiosity of employee performance, which has positive and significant results ($\beta = 0.844, p \leq 0.05$). From the test results, one of the paths, namely the goal achievement towards curiosity, is not significant. So it can be concluded that the achievement of employee goals at work does not affect employee performance through the curiosity of employees of the marketing division of finance companies in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (H7).

4.3. Discussion

Based on the pathway results of direct influence and indirect influence, independent behavior affects employee performance (Humphrey et al., 2007; Judge et al., 2007). The curiosity variable significantly affected employee performance (Kashdan et al., 2013; Mussel, 2013). Meanwhile, for the goal achievement variable, the direct effect path test results were found not to affect and rejected the opinion (Schunk, 2012; Van Yperen et al., 2016).

Based on the indirect effect test results, it was found that only independent behavior affects employee performance through curiosity (Hong et al., 2019). Based on the comparison of the direct and indirect effect values, it was found that curiosity mediates independent behavior on employee performance. Based on the comparison, the indirect effect's value is $0.381 > 0.253$ (direct effect). The result of the total effect of the independent behavior to curiosity on employee performance = $0.452 + 0.844 = 1.296$.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study are expected to contribute ideas for further research. As for the findings of this study, curiosity is proven as a mediating variable. Curiosity shows employee motivation in knowing, understanding, and implementing knowledge to implement the work done. With the high curiosity of employees at work, it impacts mastery of the work carried out. In this study, only two exogenous constructs were used, namely independent behavior and goal

achievement. Based on the test results, it turns out that only an independent behavior variable contributes significantly to employee performance. Researchers hope that this research can be continued in the human resource population (HR) in other industrial fields, for example, employees outside the field of financial institutions.

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