

# Employee Digital Competency Development Strategy at The BKPSDM of Gunungsitoli City

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes strategies for developing employees' digital competence at the Human Resources Development Agency (BKPSDM) of Gunungsitoli City. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research explores employees' digital competence levels, training needs, supporting and inhibiting factors, and the impact of development strategies on personnel service performance. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving key informants and supporting staff. The findings reveal that the overall digital competence of employees is at an adequate level, supported by an online recruitment system that filters candidates with basic digital skills. However, variations in digital ability across employees highlight the need for continuous development through structured, medium- to long-term training such as formal education and integrated digital learning. Key strategies identified include integrating digital applications to enhance efficiency, fostering a culture of innovation through knowledge sharing and open communication, and strengthening collaboration with the Communication and Information Agency and educational institutions. These efforts contribute to improving service quality, transparency, and efficiency in public administration. The study emphasizes that sustainable digital competence development is essential for enhancing organizational performance and achieving better public service outcomes in the digital era.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital transformation has significantly altered the landscape of public service delivery, demanding government institutions to adapt by enhancing employees' digital competencies. Human resources, as the core of every organization, play a critical role in determining the success of adaptation strategies toward technological change. In this regard, the Human Resources Development Agency (BKPSDM) of Gunungsitoli City is required to strengthen its employees' digital skills in order to provide efficient, transparent, and accountable services. Human resources not only represent organizational assets but also function as agents of change capable of driving innovation and sustaining competitiveness in the era of globalization and digitalization (Sciences, 2022).

In today's organizational context, digital competence is no longer a complementary skill but a fundamental necessity. Employees must master digital tools, information systems, and online platforms to effectively perform administrative tasks, manage databases, and provide responsive services to the public (Waruwu, 2024). The demand for digital competence is not only technical but

also behavioral, as employees are expected to demonstrate adaptive, innovative, and collaborative attitudes in utilizing digital technologies. This makes digital competence a multidimensional capability encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes aligned with the needs of modern governance.

The implementation of digital transformation in public institutions, however, faces both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, digitalization promises improved efficiency, transparency, and service accessibility. On the other hand, it requires continuous adaptation from employees who may have varying levels of digital readiness. For many civil servants, the use of new digital applications can be intimidating and may create resistance or reluctance to adopt change. Therefore, organizations must provide adequate training, mentoring, and communication to ensure that digital initiatives are embraced and implemented effectively (Hermawanto et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, the importance of digital competence development among civil servants has been emphasized in Law No. 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus. The regulation underlines that human resource development must be integrated, continuous, and relevant to the responsibilities of government institutions. It includes not only technical skills but also managerial and soft skills, such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and the utilization of digital learning platforms. These legal mandates further highlight the urgency of designing systematic strategies for digital competence development in government agencies (Stark et al., 2022).

Gunungsitoli City, as a developing region in North Sumatra, faces unique challenges in strengthening the capacity of its civil servants. The demand for fast, efficient, and transparent services from the public has pushed BKPSDM to rethink its approach to human resource management. While online recruitment and administrative processes have improved the baseline level of digital literacy among employees, gaps remain in terms of advanced skills, structured training, and sustainable competence development. Without addressing these gaps, public service delivery risks being slow, inefficient, and vulnerable to errors (Astuti et al., 2023).

The urgency of developing digital competence is also reflected in the implementation of e-Government applications such as the e-Kinerja system. This system, which aims to increase transparency and accountability in civil servants' performance evaluation, requires employees to input, process, and report data through digital platforms. However, many employees struggle with technical features, such as saving drafts, editing inputs, or submitting reports online. These difficulties not only affect individual productivity but also disrupt organizational performance and service quality (Sobari & Tussoleha Rony, 2025).

Academic studies further reinforce the importance of digital competence development in public administration. Research shows that digital literacy directly correlates with the efficiency of government operations, employee performance, and citizens' satisfaction. For instance, online learning strategies and blended training models have been found effective in enhancing employees' digital skills, while simultaneously reducing training costs and increasing accessibility. Such findings provide strong justification for BKPSDM Gunungsitoli to adopt innovative, evidence-based approaches to employee development (Duan et al., 2022).

In addition, the analysis of training needs plays a central role in ensuring the success of digital competence development. Training programs must be designed based on systematic assessments of skill gaps, job requirements, and organizational goals. Without proper needs analysis, training efforts risk becoming ineffective, irrelevant, or unsustainable. Therefore, BKPSDM must integrate training needs assessment into its strategic planning to guarantee that training investments yield maximum benefits for both employees and the organization (van der Berg et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the development of digital competence is not without constraints. Factors such as limited budgets, unstable internet connectivity, and the absence of structured evaluation mechanisms often hinder the sustainability of training initiatives. Moreover, variations in employees' motivation and adaptability further complicate the implementation of digital strategies. Resistance to change, whether due to fear of technology or lack of awareness about its benefits, poses a serious challenge to achieving digital transformation in government institutions (Rohman et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, several supporting factors strengthen the potential for successful digital competence development at BKPSDM Gunungsitoli. These include strong leadership commitment, collaborative partnerships with universities and the Communication and Information

Agency, as well as employees' intrinsic motivation to improve their skills. When properly managed, these factors can provide a solid foundation for implementing effective digital development strategies.

To address the complexity of digital transformation, BKPSDM must adopt a holistic approach that goes beyond technical training. This includes cultivating a culture of innovation, encouraging peer-to-peer learning, and integrating digital applications across different organizational units. By doing so, employees are not only equipped with technical skills but also empowered to embrace innovation and continuous improvement as part of their work culture. The integration of digital competence development with organizational strategy is essential for aligning employee capabilities with institutional objectives (Ndruru et al., 2025). Digitalization should not be seen as an isolated initiative but as a long-term strategy embedded in the vision, mission, and performance goals of BKPSDM. This strategic alignment ensures that competence development contributes directly to organizational performance and public service quality.

Furthermore, the sustainability of digital competence development relies heavily on continuous evaluation and improvement. BKPSDM must establish monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of training programs, identify areas for improvement, and adapt strategies according to technological advancements. Such an adaptive approach is critical in ensuring that digital competence development remains relevant and impactful in the long run. In the broader context, developing digital competence among civil servants is not only an organizational necessity but also a societal demand (Halawa, Anggraini, et al., 2023). Citizens increasingly expect government services to be as fast, transparent, and user-friendly as digital services provided in the private sector. Meeting these expectations requires government employees to master digital tools and demonstrate digital professionalism. Failure to do so risks eroding public trust and undermining the legitimacy of government institutions.

Given these realities, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the strategies for developing digital competence among employees at BKPSDM Gunungsitoli. Specifically, it examines the current level of digital competence, identifies supporting and inhibiting factors, analyzes training needs, and proposes effective strategies for sustainable development. The study also evaluates the implications of competence development for organizational performance and public service outcomes. Ultimately, the study contributes to the theoretical and practical understanding of digital competence in public administration. By presenting evidence-based insights and recommendations, it seeks to guide policymakers, practitioners, and academic researchers in designing adaptive and effective strategies for digital competence development. In doing so, the study not only addresses the immediate needs of BKPSDM Gunungsitoli but also provides broader lessons for other government institutions striving to navigate the challenges of digital transformation.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies for developing employees' digital competence at BKPSDM Gunungsitoli. A qualitative method was chosen because it allows the researcher to capture the perceptions, experiences, and practices of employees in their real context (Halawa, Sridadi, et al., 2023). The descriptive nature of the study provides a systematic and factual account of digital competence levels, training needs, supporting and inhibiting factors, and strategic initiatives within the organization.

The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including the Head of BKPSDM, division heads, and staff members with varying backgrounds. Additional data collection methods included direct observation of employees' digital practices in daily tasks and the use of documentation such as organizational reports and official records (Booyens et al., 2022). Secondary data were gathered from literature reviews, previous studies, and government regulations related to digital competence development. To ensure validity, triangulation was applied by cross-checking findings from multiple data sources and confirming interpretations with the informants.

The analysis of data followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which involves four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Collected data were first coded and categorized into themes such as digital competence

levels, training needs, and strategic approaches. These themes were then analyzed to identify patterns and relationships among variables. Conclusions were drawn through iterative interpretation, continuously verified with empirical evidence (Setyaningrum & Muafi, 2023). This approach enabled the researcher to present a comprehensive and reliable account of how digital competence is developed, supported, and challenged within BKPSDM Gunungsitoli.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that the overall digital competence of employees at BKPSDM Gunungsitoli is at a reasonably adequate level, though variations exist across different units and individuals. Online recruitment processes have played a significant role in ensuring that new employees possess at least basic digital literacy skills, thereby establishing a solid foundation for further development. Informants highlighted that most employees can operate basic digital applications such as Microsoft Office, e-Kinerja, and government information systems, but disparities remain in terms of mastery, efficiency, and confidence in using more advanced tools (Hermawanto et al., 2022).

Despite the general adequacy, the evaluation of digital competence at BKPSDM has so far been conducted informally. Competence mapping is often based on supervisors' observations and daily interactions rather than systematic assessments or formal instruments. This has limited the organization's ability to identify specific skill gaps and design targeted training programs. Informants emphasized the need for structured evaluations and standardized measurements to better align training with actual employee needs (Lase et al., 2025).

The results also indicate that the primary factor supporting digital competence development is the employees' intrinsic motivation and willingness to learn. Several employees have shown initiative in engaging in self-learning, attending webinars, and sharing knowledge with colleagues. This culture of peer-to-peer learning has complemented formal training and contributed to gradual improvements in digital literacy across the institution (van der Berg et al., 2022). The leadership's commitment to fostering open communication and innovation has further reinforced this positive trend.

However, significant challenges persist, particularly in the form of limited financial resources. Informants reported that budget constraints often restrict the number of employees who can participate in external training or formal education programs. As a result, training opportunities are sometimes limited to a small group, leaving many employees with minimal exposure to structured competence development (Prabhu & Srivastava, 2023). This constraint has hindered the overall pace of digital transformation at BKPSDM.

Another major challenge identified is the inconsistency of technological infrastructure. Issues such as unstable internet connectivity and limited access to updated digital devices were frequently mentioned by informants as barriers to effective training and daily operations. These technical limitations not only reduce the effectiveness of digital initiatives but also create frustration among employees who are willing to adapt but face obstacles beyond their control. The study also found that training programs implemented so far, such as technical guidance (bimtek), tend to be short-term and limited in scope (Sulaiman et al., 2023). While useful, these programs often fail to provide comprehensive knowledge or practical mastery of digital systems. Informants stressed the importance of medium- to long-term training, such as structured workshops or multi-month education programs, which would allow employees to internalize and apply new skills more effectively.

Collaboration with external partners has emerged as a potential solution to some of these challenges. Partnerships with universities and the Communication and Information Agency have provided valuable opportunities for training and resource sharing. However, these collaborations are still relatively ad-hoc and need to be institutionalized to ensure long-term sustainability. Informants suggested that stronger and more formalized partnerships could enhance the availability and quality of training programs for employees.

In terms of strategy, BKPSDM has prioritized the integration of digital applications across different units to reduce duplication of tasks and improve efficiency. This approach was noted as essential for ensuring that employees' digital efforts are aligned and mutually reinforcing. Informants indicated that when applications are integrated, employees can perform their tasks more efficiently,

with fewer errors and faster turnaround times. This has also contributed to improvements in transparency and accountability in administrative processes. The implementation of digital competence strategies has also shown tangible impacts on the quality of public services. Informants reported that digitalization has led to faster processing times, reduced paperwork, and more transparent reporting mechanisms (Pant et al., 2024). Citizens now benefit from more efficient and reliable services, which in turn enhances public trust in the government. Employees themselves expressed greater satisfaction with their work, as digital tools have helped them complete tasks more effectively and with less manual effort.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that while BKPSDM Gunungsitoli has made significant progress in developing employees' digital competence, much remains to be done. The current level of competence provides a strong foundation, but structured training, improved infrastructure, and sustainable strategic planning are essential for achieving long-term success. The findings underscore the need for a comprehensive and systematic approach to digital competence development that balances technical skills, organizational support, and continuous evaluation.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that digital competence among employees at BKPSDM Gunungsitoli has reached a reasonably adequate level, yet requires significant reinforcement through structured strategies. The adequacy of competence is largely attributed to the online recruitment system, which ensures that new employees have at least a basic level of digital literacy (Rahmadani & Schaufeli, 2022). This aligns with prior research that highlights the importance of recruitment processes in shaping organizational competence, as digital skills are increasingly seen as prerequisites for public sector employment.

Nevertheless, the reliance on informal assessments to evaluate competence represents a limitation that undermines the effectiveness of training programs. Without systematic mapping, training initiatives may fail to address actual gaps in skills. This finding echoes the argument of scholars who emphasize the necessity of needs-based training design to ensure efficiency and relevance (Booyens et al., 2022). Thus, BKPSDM must adopt formal evaluation frameworks to standardize competence assessments and guide the formulation of development strategies.

Motivation emerged as a critical internal factor in driving digital competence development. Employees' willingness to engage in self-learning and peer knowledge sharing reflects an organizational culture that values innovation and adaptability. This is consistent with human capital theory, which stresses that intrinsic motivation contributes significantly to learning outcomes. Encouraging and rewarding such behaviors could serve as a low-cost yet highly effective strategy for sustaining digital transformation (Alrabadi et al., 2023).

At the same time, the findings reveal that financial constraints present a substantial barrier to competence development. Budgetary limitations reduce opportunities for employees to participate in long-term and structured training programs. This aligns with earlier studies which argue that underinvestment in employee training is a common obstacle in government institutions, often leading to skill stagnation. Addressing this issue requires both increased financial allocation and innovative approaches such as blended learning, which reduces costs while maintaining training quality (Halawa, Angraini, et al., 2023).

Infrastructural issues, particularly unstable internet connections and inadequate digital devices, also surfaced as recurring challenges. These findings correspond with broader studies on digital readiness, which underline that technological infrastructure is a prerequisite for effective digital transformation. Without reliable access to digital tools, employees' motivation and willingness to adapt are likely to diminish. Thus, infrastructure investment must be considered an integral part of competence development strategies (Ndruru et al., 2025).

The limited impact of short-term training programs further highlights the importance of designing sustainable and comprehensive learning models. While bimtek provides useful knowledge, its short duration prevents employees from fully mastering complex applications. Literature suggests that medium- to long-term training programs, complemented by follow-up evaluations, yield better outcomes in terms of skill retention and practical application (Sobaih et al., 2022). Therefore, BKPSDM should prioritize longer training interventions that are tailored to specific job functions.

Collaboration with external institutions was identified as a valuable but underutilized strategy. Partnerships with universities and the Communication and Information Agency offer opportunities for resource sharing, curriculum development, and joint training programs. This finding resonates with prior research which argues that inter-organizational collaboration enhances the capacity of public institutions to adapt to technological changes. Institutionalizing these collaborations would ensure that competence development becomes more sustainable and less dependent on sporadic initiatives (Hermawanto et al., 2022).

The integration of digital applications within BKPSDM represents a notable step toward efficiency and consistency in public service delivery. When applications are interconnected, employees benefit from streamlined workflows and reduced duplication of tasks. This supports earlier studies on e-Government implementation, which emphasize that system integration enhances transparency and reduces bureaucratic inefficiencies. For BKPSDM, strengthening digital integration should remain a strategic priority to maximize the benefits of employees' competence development (Rohman et al., 2023).

The positive impacts of digital competence on service quality, as highlighted by informants, confirm the link between digital literacy and organizational performance. Faster service delivery, transparent reporting, and reduced paperwork not only improve efficiency but also enhance citizens' trust in government. These outcomes align with service quality theory, which posits that reliability and responsiveness are critical dimensions of effective public services (Aprelyani, 2025). By strengthening digital competence, BKPSDM directly contributes to improved governance and public satisfaction.

Another key implication of the findings is the role of leadership in shaping digital competence development. The commitment of BKPSDM leadership to foster open communication and innovation creates a supportive environment for learning. This finding is consistent with transformational leadership theory, which underscores the importance of vision, inspiration, and individualized support in driving organizational change (Chumnumporn et al., 2022). Leaders at BKPSDM must continue to champion digital competence as a strategic priority to ensure continuity and institutionalization.

The study also highlights the importance of embedding digital competence development within broader organizational strategies. Digitalization should not be treated as a temporary project but as a long-term commitment aligned with institutional vision and mission. This approach ensures that employee development efforts contribute directly to achieving organizational goals. Prior literature supports this notion by arguing that strategic alignment between human resource development and organizational objectives is essential for sustainable growth (Aprelyani, 2025).

Continuous evaluation emerged as another critical dimension of sustainable competence development. Without regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms, training programs risk becoming outdated or irrelevant. Informants acknowledged that current evaluations are mostly informal, which limits the ability to measure training effectiveness. This underscores the need for a formalized monitoring system that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Such systems would enable BKPSDM to adapt strategies in line with technological advancements and organizational needs.

The societal demand for digital governance further strengthens the urgency of competence development. Citizens increasingly expect government services to match the efficiency of private-sector digital platforms. This expectation reflects the principles of new public management, which advocate for customer-oriented governance. For BKPSDM, failing to meet these expectations could erode public trust and weaken the legitimacy of government institutions (Aini Adzan Nisa et al., 2023). Thus, enhancing digital competence is not merely an internal necessity but also a social obligation.

The findings also highlight the dual role of digital competence: as a technical requirement and as a behavioral change process. Employees must not only master digital tools but also develop adaptive mindsets and collaborative behaviors. This aligns with socio-technical systems theory, which emphasizes the interdependence between technology and human behavior. Consequently, competence development programs must integrate technical training with soft skills enhancement to achieve holistic transformation (Aini Adzan Nisa et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the discussion indicates that while BKPSDM Gunungsitoli has achieved notable progress in developing employees' digital competence, substantial gaps remain in terms of

systematic training, infrastructure readiness, and sustainable strategy implementation. The study reinforces the notion that digital competence development requires a comprehensive, multi-layered approach that combines individual motivation, organizational support, and strategic alignment. By addressing these dimensions, BKPSDM can strengthen its capacity to deliver efficient, transparent, and citizen-centered public services in the digital era.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of employees' digital competence at BKPSDM Gunungsitoli is a strategic necessity to enhance public service quality, transparency, and organizational performance. While the current level of competence is adequate due to online recruitment and employees' intrinsic motivation, significant challenges persist, including limited budgets, infrastructural constraints, and the absence of systematic competence mapping. Effective strategies identified include integrating digital applications, fostering a culture of innovation and peer learning, and strengthening collaboration with external institutions such as universities and the Communication and Information Agency (Sobaih et al., 2022). To ensure sustainability, BKPSDM should institutionalize structured, medium- to long-term training programs, supported by continuous evaluation and adaptive planning. It is suggested that future efforts prioritize infrastructure investment, formalized competence assessments, and strategic partnerships to create a comprehensive and sustainable framework for digital competence development that directly contributes to citizen satisfaction and good governance. The author sincerely expresses gratitude to all parties who contributed to the completion of this study on digital competence development strategies at BKPSDM Gunungsitoli. Special appreciation is extended to the academic supervisor for invaluable guidance and constructive feedback throughout the research process. Deep thanks are also conveyed to the Head of BKPSDM Gunungsitoli, division heads, and staff who willingly provided data, insights, and support during interviews and observations. The author is indebted to family and colleagues for their encouragement, prayers, and moral support, which greatly motivated the accomplishment of this research. Without the cooperation and contributions of these individuals and institutions, this study would not have been successfully completed.

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