Jurnal Manajemen Pelayanan Publik Vol. 09 No. 01, February 2025
http://dx.doi.org/10.24198/jmpp.v9i1.58965

Analysis of the Effect of Customer Service Competencies in Improving International Freight Forwarding Performance

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ABSTRAK

Kinerja Logistik Indonesia berada di peringkat terendah berdasarkan Indeks Kinerja Logistik Bank Dunia tahun 2023. Hasil ini disebabkan oleh kinerja perusahaan freight forwarding yang menangani logistik ekspor dan impor. Tujuan penelitian ini menganalisis dampak kompetensi layanan pelanggan terhadap peningkatan kinerja perusahaan freight forwarding. Penelitian kuantitatif dengan lima construct dan 23 indikator ini telah divalidasi dan terbukti dapat diandalkan. Kuesioner ditujukan kepada 210 orang manajer atau supervisor layanan pelanggan di Jakarta untuk mendapatkan wawasan strategis peran layanan pelanggan dalam mencapai kinerja perusahaan. Hasil penelitian ini dapat membangun dan menjalankan empat kompetensi layanan pelanggan secara jelas untuk mencapai target kinerja perusahaan freight forwarding. Penelitian kompetensi layanan pelanggan freight forwarding belum pernah dilakukan sebelumnya, sehingga menjadikan penelitian ini baru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kompetensi keterampilan memahami kebutuhan pelanggan, manajemen freight forwarding, manajemen layanan pelanggan, dan mengelola pemangku kepentingan mempengaruhi kinerja perusahaan freight forwarding secara positif dan signifikan. Memperkuat keempat kompetensi ini dapat meningkatkan kinerja operasional, kualitas layanan, efektivitas pengiriman, dan hubungan kerja yang baik dengan departemen lain. Menerapkan kompetensi layanan pelanggan akan meningkatkan kinerja perusahaan freight forwarding dan peringkat logistik Indonesia. Perusahaan freight forwarding didorong untuk lebih memperhatikan pengembangan layanan pelanggan melalui pelatihan dan sertifikasi khusus dalam industri freight forwarding.

ABSTRACT

The performance of Indonesia Logistics is at the lowest rank as per 2023 the Logistics Performance Index of the World Bank. This is due to the freight forwarder's performance that does the export-import logistics. This research aims to analyze the impact of customer service competencies on improving the freight forwarder's performance. This quantitative research with five constructs and 23 indicators is validated and proven reliable. The questionnaire was targeted at 210 customer service managers or supervisors in Jakarta to obtain strategic insights into customer service roles in achieving company performance. This research's result is to build and implement four clear customer service competencies to achieve the freight forwarder's performance. The customer service competencies have not been previously researched, making this research novel. The results indicate that the competencies of understanding customers, freight forwarding management, customer service management, and stakeholder management positively and significantly affect the freight forwarder's performance. Strengthening these competencies can enhance operational performance, service quality, delivery effectiveness, and good working relationships with other departments. Implementing customer service competencies will improve freight forwarders' performance and Indonesia's logistic rank. Freight forwarders have to pay more attention to developing customer service through specialized training and certification in the freight forwarding industry.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Submited: 08 11 2024
Revised: 18 11 2024
Accepted: 01 12 2024
Published: 02 02 2025

KATA KUNCI
Layanan Pelanggan; Freight Forwarding*; Logistik; Kompetensi; Kinerja*

KEYWORDS
Customer Service; Freight Forwarding; Logistics; Competence; Performance

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INTRODUCTION

The World Bank periodically conducts surveys around the world every two years to rank the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) (Beysenbaev & Dus, 2020; Civelek et al., 2015; Hamed, 2019; World Bank, 2023). The survey results related to the LPI in 2023 showed that Indonesia's position was ranked 61st, down considerably compared to 2018 at 51st (World-Bank, 2023). The LPI measurement parameters are aspects of customs, infrastructure, international transportation, logistics competence, track & trace system, and timeliness. (Beysenbaev & Dus, 2020; Civelek et al., 2015; World-Bank, 2023).

Logistics plays an important role in supporting export and import activities. Freight forwarding is part of logistics that is directly related to export and import activities, especially its transportation activities, and is related to its customer companies (Purwoko et al., 2023; Rodrigue, 2020; Schramm, 2012; Sumantri & Nugrahanto, 2018; Vidovic et al., 2015). According to Karingithi (2013), export and import activities can be used as indicators of the national economy, which is strongly influenced by the performance of freight forwarders.

LPI parameters are closely related to freight forwarding performance, so Indonesia's LPI results also show the important role of freight forwarders in supporting the logistics system in Indonesia (Anggorowati, 2018; Wati, 2018). Freight forwarding companies in Indonesia are generally faced with the obstacle of fulfilling the demand for shipping goods that have not been effective and efficient, due to the limited capacity of all modes of transportation. Government regulations related to export and import activities as well as infrastructure conditions due to Indonesia's geography are also obstacles to the progress of international freight forwarding in Indonesia. This condition causes many Indonesian freight forwarding companies to be unable to compete with logistics companies in other countries (Sumantri & Nugrahanto, 2018; Wati, 2018). Freight forwarding has several scopes or ranges of work, some are inter-country, global, or international, and some are only domestic or national. This research is specifically aimed at freight forwarding companies whose scope of work is intercountry or international. This research is specifically aimed at freight forwarding companies whose scope of work is between countries or internationally and it is hoped that improving their performance will improve LPI's score in the future.

The nature of freight forwarding activities is Business-to-Business (B2B), so relationships between personnel are highly prioritized (Gil-Saura et al., 2018; Kadłubek et al., 2022; Lucas, 2014; Shang & Lu, 2012). This relationship between personnel is facilitated by customer service. The role of customer service in logistics companies, especially freight forwarding, is very important to provide effective, efficient, and high-quality services (Gizaw et al., 2021; Nurwahyudi & Rimawan, 2021; Shang & Lu, 2012; Yang & Xue, 2020). Customer service is one of the driving forces of freight forwarding activities that affect the performance of the freight forwarding company itself (Kadlubek, 2020; Shang & Lu, 2012). Several factors emphasize the role of customer service as a competitive weapon such as increasing customer expectations and changing commodity markets, so the role of customer service is needed to accommodate it (Bowersox et al., 2020; Christopher, 2011; Lucas, 2014).

Another phenomenon observed and found is the low capacity of customer service human resources (HR) working in the freight forwarding sector. One of the reasons, according to Lin & Chang (2018), is that customer service does not come from a specialized school of logistics management, so the understanding and performance of customer service is based on experience (learning by doing). Customer service professionalism in managing and managing export and import documents, including coordination with related parties, are some of the

factors that greatly affect the performance of freight forwarding companies. Customer service for freight forwarding services must have the competencies needed to provide excellent service to customers (Kadlubek, 2020; Meldiana & Rahadi, 2020).

The study of Grzeskowiak et al. (2022) about students in logistics schools showed a mismatch between their competencies and those required in the workplace. Loyalty, commitment, and responsibility are not competitive factors in the logistics industry, but rather communication and teamwork skills. Sadri et al. (2021) identified the competencies that must be possessed by the workforce of logistics service companies. The competencies most needed by logistics services in a row according to Sadri et al. (2021) are foreign language skills, supervision implementation, and planning. According to Pratama & Permatasari (2021), freight forwarder employees who do not have a maritime management background or maritime understanding competencies will experience obstacles when preparing export declarations of goods by sea. Ngamvichaikit (2017) provides three types of competencies that are very important for freight forwarding employees, especially those related to multimodal transportation management, namely knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Research by Čižiuniene et al. (2016) shows the need for the Human Resources (HR) department of transportation and logistics companies to pay attention to the competencies of their employees so that employees feel more cared for and empowered. This will have an impact on reducing the level of potential employee movement (labor turnover), especially customer service on the front lines (Wang & Wang, 2020). Andrade (2021) added that frontliners such as customer service feel the most pressure, both from internal and external stakeholders. According to Ciechomski & Strojny (2022), the problem is not the competency aspect, but how to standardize customer service positions in logistics. The standardization includes standards for dealing with customers of logistics services as well as interpersonal service elements such as communication, negotiation, and logistics services.

This research has novelty, which is that the same research has not been found regarding the importance of having holistic competencies for customer service in the logistics service sector, especially in the freight forwarding industry. Russ-Eft (2014) conducted research on customer service competencies in all industries and resulted in five customer service competencies abbreviated as SERVE. Even though each industry is unique and has different customer characteristics. The freight forwarding performance research by Beysenbaev & Dus (2020) only looks at the logistics elements listed in the parameters of the LPI survey, but not specifically at the competence of freight forwarding service providers, let alone the customer service department. Research by Yang & Sue (2020) only emphasizes freight forwarding performance as a result of customer service's closeness to customers.

Customer service positions are currently filled by different educational backgrounds and generally not from logistics management, let alone freight forwarding. This difference in background directly impacts the performance of the customer service itself and indirectly impacts the achievement of company performance. Competency standards are needed to bridge the differences in customer service experience and academic backgrounds. The recruitment process for customer service positions is based more on two factors, namely customer service experience in previous freight forwarding companies and/or experience in freight forwarding operations (Čižiuniene et al., 2016; Gołembska & Gołembski, 2020; Jurčević et al., 2009). Candidates with customer service experience, but from other industries, need to be given intensive training on freight forwarding operations. Candidates with a background in freight forwarding operations need to be trained in customer service skills. Researchers consider it necessary to develop competency standards for logistics customer service specifically in the

field of freight forwarding services. These competency standards can be used as HR guidelines in streamlining the customer service recruitment process and customer service training. Overall, no researchers have examined the competencies needed by customer service in the freight forwarding industry, and their effect on company performance. The four customer service competencies that were studied for their influence on freight forwarder performance were customer understanding skills, freight forwarding management, customer service management, and managing stakeholders. These four customer service competencies are exogenous variables that will be studied for their influence on freight forwarder performance as endogenous variables.

The current principle (update) is carried out according to the times and is still relevant for a long time and uses a new model that has not existed before (Sugiyono, 2019). Technological developments are not analyzed in this study because they are more of a tool to accelerate the customer service work process. To answer the above needs, this dissertation is titled **"Analysis of the Effect of Customer Service Competencies in Improving International Freight Forwarding Performance"**.

Literature Review

Theory of The Resource Based View (RBV) and The Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV)

RBV, which evolved into Resource Based Theory (RBT), has been widely used to study how companies can gain a competitive advantage (Karingithi, 2020; Miles, 2012). This advantage is largely determined by the capacity to deploy resources and capabilities that are appropriate, rare, valuable, unsubstitutable, and difficult to imitate (Barney et al., 2021; McGahan, 2021). DCV has become one of the most important research areas in management recently, showing that competitive advantage in modern markets can only be achieved through dynamic capabilities (Helfat, 2022; Mikalef et al., 2019; Wójcik, 2020). Dynamic capabilities are the ability of companies to seize new opportunities, reconfigure, and protect knowledge assets and competencies (Helfat, 2022; Mutsvanga, 2021; Wójcik, 2020).

Logistics and Transportation Management

Logistics management can be realized if there is a system that can coordinate logistics activities in an integrated manner within the company, or it can be referred to as an integrated logistics system. The concept of integrated supply chain and logistics will provide a complete logic for determining logistics activity plans in an industrial structure within the framework of channels that work together in an integrated manner (Bowersox et al, 2020). Integrated supply chain according to Suwandi et al. (2020) is a collaborative activity to meet efficient product, service, and information that will provide the best value to customers. One example of integrated logistics activities is freight forwarding activities in the form of multimodal transportation (Nguyen, 2021). Management of logistics activities is usually directed and supervised by various activities in the existing parts of the company. If there is confusion about rights, authority, and responsibility, it will result in waste that can hinder the achievement of the objectives of logistics management itself. Transportation is the activity of moving cargo, in the form of goods and passengers, using transport facilities and infrastructure in a safe, secure, integrated, fast, smooth, timely, and according to plan (Anggraini et al., 2016; Bowersox et al., 2020; Purwoko et al., 2019; Senna et al., 2020). Transportation management, in the opinion of Nguyen (2021), is part of logistics management.

Freight Forwarding Company Performance

According to Yadegari et al. (2019), company performance can be seen from various dimensions, such as productivity, service quality, responsiveness, responsibility, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. Company performance is the basis for assessing the extent to which management's ability to achieve organizational goals. Company performance measurement is often classified into two aspects, namely financial and non-financial (Marr, 2014; Uhrenholt et al., 2022). The inability to control operational costs in addition to having an impact on financial performance also has an impact on non-financial performance. The subject of this study is a freight forwarding service sector company, whose performance will be greatly influenced by operating costs and logistics. The performance of a freight forwarding company is the overall work achieved by a company in achieving its goals. The performance of freight forwarders is directly determined by management's ability to manage financial, operational, and market-based performance (Djaja & Arief, 2015).

Financial and operational performance is more dominant in influencing the company's performance holistically compared to market-based performance in terms of value-added market. Improvements in work productivity through improved service quality, on-time delivery, and rapid response are preferred by customers to use the products and services offered (Jahanshahi et al., 2012). Company performance shows management skills in achieving its goals such as financial management, quality products and services, stakeholder satisfaction, and long-term organizational survival by using appropriate strategies and action plans (Iskandar et al., 2012; Sawalha et al., 2013).

RESEARCH METHODS

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from the field using a questionnaire instrument. Researchers used a survey instrument that contained statements regarding the research variables asked of respondents. The data scale used is a Likert scale consisting of values strongly agree (5), agree (4), moderately agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1) (Yusuf, 2014). A five-interval scale is sufficient to see the consistency of the distribution of answers if the number of respondents exceeds 100 respondents. This study was aimed at 210 respondents, so the five-interval Likert scale was very adequate. 210 respondents were taken from members of the Indonesian Logistics and Forwarder Association (ALFI) Jakarta. The selection of ALFI Jakarta members takes into account more than 70 percent of Indonesia's export and import activities through the city of Jakarta. The questionnaire using Google Forms was disseminated with the help of the ALFI Jakarta Regional Leadership Council, thus it is hoped that the originality and integrity of the survey results will be obtained.

Secondary data were obtained from reports published by the Ministry of Transportation, company data, industry association data, books, scientific articles, and research journals. The scientific articles selected were those relevant to the topic of this research. The journals used are journals published nationally and internationally, and the most recent.

The data analysis method in the study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis with the help of statistical software AMOS version 24 for Windows. SEM is a statistical technique used to build and test statistical models in the form of causal or causality models (Ali Memon et al., 2020; Parashakti et al., 2016) and is cross-sectional, linear, and general. The SEM model of this research can be seen in Figure 1. The stages of SEM analysis in this study are as follows:

1. Drawing research variables into the research design

Make the direction of the relationship and influence between exogenous variables and endogenous variables in the form of a research model design.

2. Validity test with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test

Test whether the construct or indicator can reflect the latent variable. If the probability (P) ≤ 0.05 and the Critical Ratio (CR) value ≥ 1.96, it is said to meet the classical hypothesis testing criteria (Goretzko et al., 2023).

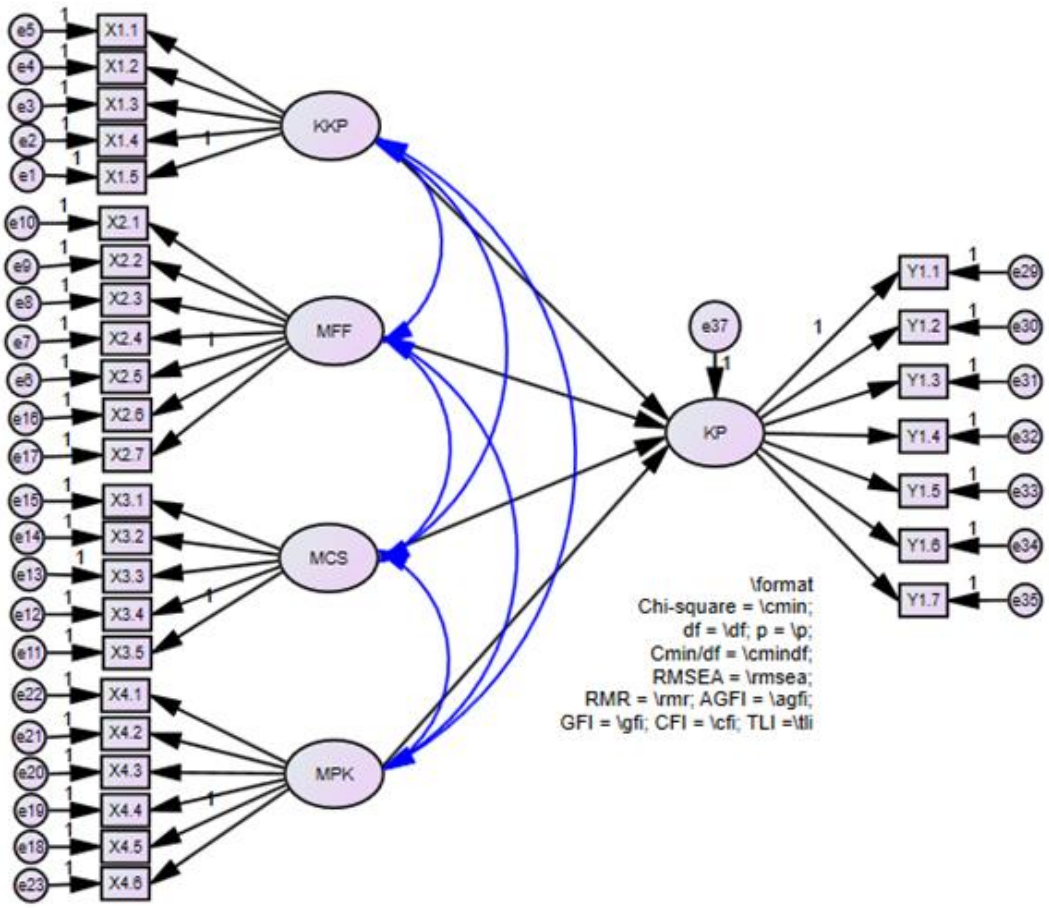
3. Validity test with the Convergent Validity test

Tests whether the construct or indicator has a high proportion of variance. According to Riwoe & Mulyana (2020) if the loading factor or standardized loading estimate ≥ 0.5 is said to meet the criteria for convergent validity testing.

4. Validity test with the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test

Test confirmation (confirmatory) by looking at the average variance extracted between latent variable indicators. It is said to fulfill this test if the AVE ≥ 0.5 5 (Nasution et al., 2020; Shrestha, 2021).

Figure 1.
SEM-AMOS Operational Model (SEM-AMOS Application v.24, 2023)



Source: Processed by author

1. **Validity test with the Discriminant Validity test**

This test measures how different a construct or indicator is from other indicators. This criterion test is met if the AVE square root value is greater than the correlation value between latent variables. This test is used for fellow exogenous variables (Gu et al., 2023).

2. **Reliability test with Construct Reliability test**

Tests the reliability and consistency of the data. The construct reliability test is fulfilled if the construct reliability value is ≥ 0.6, then the validity of the construct or indicator in the model is good (Yudi & Ruswanti, 2021).

3. **Residual normality test with univariate / multivariate normality test**

This test analyzes the level of normality of the data used in this study. Univariate looking at the CR value on the tendency (skewness) is expected to be around ± 2.58. Values outside this number can be tolerated if the multivariate value is still around ± 2.58 (Hair et al., 2014).

4. **Residual normality test with Mahalanobis Distance Outlier test**

According to Hair et al. (2014), this test detects extreme data. The trick is to see the calculated Mahalanobis distance ≤ chi-square distribution table.

5. **Residual normality test with Determinant of Sample Covariance Matrix test**

Determinant of sample covariance matrix test to see multicollinearity and singularity in a combination of variables (Stock & Watson, 2015). Multicollinearity is a situation that indicates a strong correlation between two or more independent variables in a multiple regression model. A truly small determinant indicates multicollinearity or singularity. It is expected that the determinant of the sample covariance matrix is away from zero and preferably ≥ 1.

6. **Goodness of Fit Index with Full Model test**

If the calculated chi-square value is good, the data is said to have a good fit index. If other index values are met, it means that the data is more fit (G. Cho et al., 2020).

7. **Research hypothesis testing**

It is said that there is a direct relationship and influence if the significance value of CR ≥ 1.96 or the ρ-value ≤ 0.05. The t-test is used to test the significance of the effect of exogenous sub-variables of customer service competence on the performance of freight forwarding companies as endogenous variables. This test is conducted to determine and analyze whether the exogenous sub-variable partially has a significant effect on the endogenous variable. The basis for decision-making for hypothesis testing proposed in this study is as follows:

a) If the probability value of significance ≥ sig. α 0.05 or critical ratio ≤ 1.96, the regression coefficient of the research variable can be interpreted as insignificant.
b) If the probability value of significance ≤ sig. 0.05 or critical ratio ≥ 1.96, the regression coefficient of the research variable can be interpreted as significant.
c) The variable is considered to have a significant effect if the critical ratio (CR) value> 1.96 because it means that the variable has a significance level of 95%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

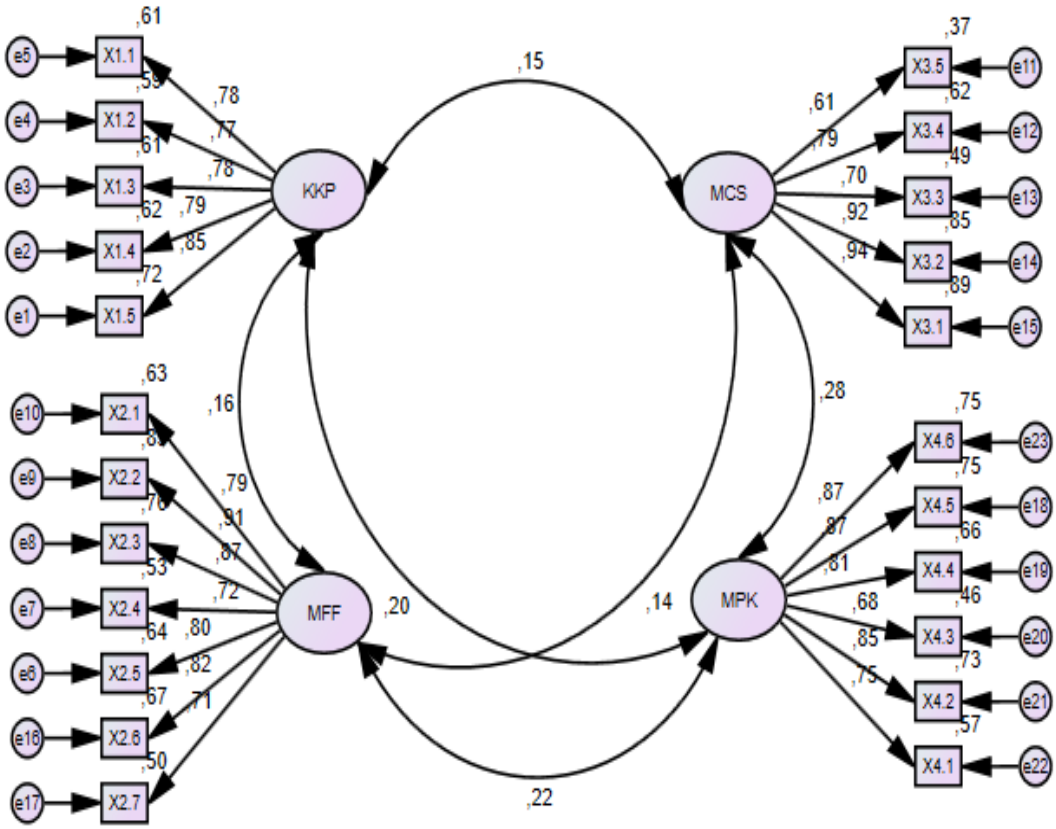
A. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis aims to test the unidimensionality of indicators of latent constructs. At this stage, CFA is conducted separately through a construct validity test and a construct reliability test.

1) Construct Validity Test

CFA in construct validity testing is used to examine the unidimensionality of indicators that explain the latent factors of both exogenous and endogenous constructs. The correlation of each exogenous and endogenous variable can be observed from the loading factor value of each indicator. The data is considered valid if the loading factor value is above 0.5. The results of the construct validity test for exogenous and endogenous constructs can be seen in Figure 2. The four exogenous variables are labeled as KKP, MFF, MCS, and MPK to facilitate data processing. KKP stands for Competency in Customer Understanding Skills. MFF stands for Competency in Freight Forwarding Management Skills. MCS stands for Competency in Customer Service Management Skills. MPK stands for Competency in Stakeholder Management Skills.

Figure 2.
Exogenous Confirmatory Factor Analysis Test



Source: Primary Data Processing Results, 2024

The exogenous confirmatory factor analysis can be explained in Table 1.

Table 1.
Exogenous Confirmatory Factor Analysis Test

			Estimate
X1.5	←	KKP	0,847
X1.4	←	KKP	0,790
X1.3	←	KKP	0,781
X1.2	←	KKP	0,769
X1.1	←	KKP	0,783
X2.5	←	MFF	0,798
X2.4	←	MFF	0,725
X2.3	←	MFF	0,874
X2.2	←	MFF	0,909
X2.1	←	MFF	0,792
X3.5	←	MCS	0,610
X3.4	←	MCS	0,788
X3.3	←	MCS	0,698
X3.2	←	MCS	0,923
X3.1	**←**	**MCS**	**0,942**
X2.6	←	MFF	0,821
X2.7	←	MFF	0,706
X4.5	←	MPK	0,868
X4.4	←	MPK	0,812
X4.3	←	MPK	0,681
X4.2	←	MPK	0,854
X4.1	←	MPK	0,755
X4.6	←	MPK	0,865

Source: Primary Data Processing Results, 2024

An indicator is considered to have good validity if the loading factor (estimate) from the test results is greater than 0.5. The results of the CFA test showed that all loading factor coefficients for the four customer service competencies studied were greater than 0.5. Thus, all indicators demonstrate good validity in measuring these four customer service competencies. The data in Table 1 shows the highest loading factor, 0.942, in the customer service management skills (MCS) competency in terms of business communication (X31). Customer service interacts intensively with customers, so it is appropriate that customer service business communication receives a high score (Hinson et al., 2020b). Meanwhile, the lowest loading factor, 0.610, is found in the customer service skills (MCS) competency in establishing customer relationships (X35).

2) Reliability Construct Test

CFA in the reliability construct test is used to show the extent to which a measuring instrument can provide relatively the same results if measurements are taken twice or more on the same subject. The results of the reliability construct test for exogenous variables using the Construct Reliability formula can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2.
Reliability Construct Analysis Test – Exogenous Variables

			Estimate	*Loading Factor²*	*ei=1- LF²*	CR	AVE
X1.5	←	KKP	0.847	0.717	0.283		
X1.4	←	KKP	0.79	0.624	0.376		
X1.3	←	KKP	0.781	0.610	0.390	**0.895**	**0.631**
X1.2	←	KKP	0.769	0.591	0.409		
X1.1	←	KKP	0.783	0.613	0.387		
	Sum		**3.970**	**3.156**	**1.844**		
X2.7	←	MFF	0.706	0.498	0.502		
X2.6	←	MFF	0.821	0.674	0.326		
X2.5	←	MFF	0.798	0.637	0.363		
X2.4	←	MFF	0.725	0.526	0.474	**0.928**	**0.650**
X2.3	←	MFF	0.874	0.764	0.236		
X2.2	←	MFF	0.909	0.826	0.174		
X2.1	←	MFF	0.792	0.627	0.373		
	Sum		**5.625**	**4.552**	**2.448**		
X3.5	←	MCS	0.610	0.372	0.628		
X3.4	←	MCS	0.788	0.621	0.379		
X3.3	←	MCS	0.698	0.487	0.513	**0.898**	**0.644**
X3.2	←	MCS	0.923	0.852	0.148		
X3.1	←	MCS	0.942	0.887	0.113		
	Sum		**3.961**	**3.220**	**1.780**		
X4.6	←	MPK	0.865	0.748	0.252		
X4.5	←	MPK	0.868	0.753	0.247		
X4.4	←	MPK	0.812	0.659	0.341		
X4.3	←	MPK	0.681	0.464	0.536	**0.918**	**0.654**
X4.2	←	MPK	0.854	0.729	0.271		
X4.1	←	MPK	0.755	0.570	0.430		
	Sum		**4.835**	**3.924**	**2.076**		

Source: Primary Data Processing Results, 2024

A construct is considered to have good reliability if the construct reliability (CR) value is greater than 0.7. Based on the results of the construct reliability test calculations in Table 2, the construct reliability values for all four exogenous variables are above 0.7, indicating that the exogenous constructs have good reliability. The CR for the competency in customer understanding skills variable is 0.895. The CR for the competency in freight forwarding management skills variable is 0.928. The CR for the competency in customer service management skills variable is 0.898. The CR for the competency in stakeholder management skills variable is 0.918.

B. SEM Structural Test

This SEM analysis study uses AMOS 24.0 software to find out more clearly about improving freight forwarder performance by building customer service competencies. The results of the analysis above can be written as the following structural equation model.

KP = 0.407*KKP + 0.369*MFF + 0.272*MCS + 0.568*MPK + ζ1 Errorvar. = 0.081; R^2 = 0.919

where ζ (Zeta) = structural model error; R2 = total influence.

The four customer service competencies have a positive effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies with a total influence of R^2 = 0.919. This shows that the performance of freight forwarding companies can be explained by the four customer service competencies by 91.9%. While 8.1% is explained by other variables not examined in this study.

1) Model Suitability Test Results (Goodness of Fit)

The calculation results with AMOS 24.0 software obtained the Goodness of fit criteria value of the structural equation model of this study. According to Ghozali (2018), there are three types of goodness of fit measures, namely absolute fit measures, incremental fit measures, and parsimonious fit measures. Absolute fit measures are used to measure the model as a whole. Incremental fit measures are used to compare models with other models. Parsimonious fit measures are used to measure fit by comparing models with different numbers of coefficients. This study uses absolute fit measures and incremental fit measures as model benchmarks because both measurements have definite criteria for measuring model suitability. While parsimonious fit measures are still used as a consideration to determine model suitability but are not used as the main reference because they do not have ideal value criteria limits (Hair et al., 2014). Overall, the suitability of the model in this study can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3.
Structural Model Fit

No	Degree of Match Size	Value	Acceptable Match Level	Inform-ation
1	*Chi-Square*	1.992 p = 0.001	CMIN/DF < 2.00 p-*value* < 0.05	Good Fit
2	*Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)*	0.868	0.8≤GFI<0.9	Marginal Fit
3	*Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)*	0.823	0.8≤AGFI<0.9	Marginal Fit
4	*Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)*	0.069	≤0.08	Good Fit
5	*Incremental Fit Index (IFI)*	0.918	≥0.9	Good Fit
6	*Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)*	0.904	≥0.9	Good Fit
7	*Comparative Fit Index (CFI)*	0.917	≥0.9	Good Fit

Source: Primary Data Processing Results, 2024

The structural model fit test shows that the p-value is 0.001 or ρ-value <0.05, it can be concluded that the research model is a bad fit. However, if the CMIN/df value has a value of less than 2.00, it can be said to be a good fit. Although the p-value parameter states a bad fit, other measurement results are good. For example, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI) are greater than 0.8, stated as marginal fit, and still acceptable. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is less than 0.08 which indicates a good fit. The

Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are greater than 0.90 which also indicates a good fit. So it can be concluded that the research model follows empirical conditions.

2) Hypothesis Test Results

The research results were obtained from data processing using AMOS 24.0. The result of the next statistical hypothesis is that if H_0: ρ1 ≤ 0, then the exogenous variable has no significant effect on the endogenous variable, and if H_1: ρ1 > 0, then the exogenous variable has a significant effect on the endogenous variable.

The t-count value of the customer understanding skill competency variable was 7.680, greater than the t-critical of 1.96, with ρ 0.407 and an error rate of five percent decided to reject H_0 and accept H_1. The competency of customer understanding skills has a positive and significant effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies. Efforts to strengthen the competency of customer understanding skills can improve the performance of freight forwarding companies.

The t-count value of the competency of freight forwarding management skills was 6.828, greater than the critical t-1.96, with ρ 0.369 and an error rate of five percent decided to reject H_0 and accept H_1. The competence of freight forwarding management skills has a positive and significant effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies. Efforts to strengthen the competence of freight forwarding management skills can improve the performance of freight forwarding companies.

The t-count value of the customer service management skill competency variable was 5.211, greater than the critical t-1.96, with ρ 0.272 and an error rate of five percent decided to reject H_0 and accept H_1. The competence of customer service management skills has a positive and significant effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies. Efforts to strengthen the competence of customer service management skills can improve the performance of freight forwarding companies.

The t-count value for the competency variable of stakeholder management skills was 8.451, greater than the t-critical of 1.96, with ρ 0.568 and an error rate of five percent decided to reject H_0 and accept H_1. Competency in stakeholder management skills has a positive and significant effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies. Efforts to strengthen the competency of stakeholder management skills can improve the performance of freight forwarding companies.

DISCUSSION

The competency of understanding customers received a fairly good rating from respondents, with an average of 4.08. Respondents rated the ability of customer service to understand the type of customer industry as the best indicator, with an average value of 4.14. Meanwhile, the ability of customer service to collect customer data to develop company strategies was the lowest indicator, with an average of 4.00. This is due to the view that the sales team must collect customer data to develop company strategies. Improving this competency helps better customer management and maximizes long-term company profits.

Customer service freight forwarding is required to have customer insight to understand and understand the needs and behaviors of their customers (Katuse, 2020; Lee & Song, 2018). The results of the H_1 test show that the competency of customer understanding skills has a positive and significant effect on company performance, according to research by Christopher (2023), Vidovic et al. (2015), Katuse (2020), dan Lee & Song (2018). Improving these competencies helps

better customer management and maximizes the company's long-term profits. This competency is also expected to be able to identify the real market segmentation, based on data and information related to the volume and behavior of customers it has (Christopher, 2011; Lee & Song, 2018; Wright et al., 2021).

The competency of freight forwarding management skills received a very good rating, with an average of 4.23. Respondents rated the ability of customer service to carry out the process of sending, receiving, and transporting goods as the best indicator, with an average of 4.36. This is because most customer service comes from operations, or even still holds operational positions. The ability to implement the Incoterms 2020 concept is the lowest indicator, with an average of 4.00. In the early stages of business negotiations, customer service is usually not involved in determining the mode of transportation. The decision to determine the mode of transportation is in the hands of the customer.

Freight forwarding management skills competencies are very helpful for customer service in understanding and understanding freight forwarding products. This knowledge includes understanding modes of transportation, customs handling, licensing management, and so on (Anggorowati, 2018; Bowersox et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2019; Schramm, 2012; Zhang et al., 2021). The main function of freight forwarders in multimodal transportation management is to offer, manage, and develop multimodal transportation services (Ngamvichaikit, 2017). This ability is very important for a customer service person to have in providing services to customers. This service includes the delivery of goods and the management of the customer's shipping permit documents in the customs process (Lee & Song, 2018; Purwoko & Maulina, 2019). The results of the H_2 test show that the competence of freight forwarding management skills has a positive and significant effect on the company's performance, and following the results of research conducted by Ngamvichaikit (2017), Zhang et al. (2021), and Nguyen (2021).

The freight forwarding management ability possessed by customer service directly affects the company's operational performance. This ability plays a role in selecting and ordering the right mode of transportation, negotiating prices, and regulating the loading and unloading process at the port (Petrová et al., 2021; Schramm, 2012; Shang & Lu, 2012). Operational performance will improve, especially those related to customer service. Performance achievement is characterized by improved service quality, on-time delivery, short order waiting time, and quick response to changes in market demand (Bae, 2017; Fiorello et al., 2023; Gu et al., 2023; Nanyam & Jha, 2022; Uddin, 2022).

Customer service management skills competency also received a good rating, with an average of 4.14. Respondents rated customer service business communication skills as the best indicator, with an average of 4.13. Customer service administration skills were the lowest indicator, with an average of 4.10. This skill is the basis of customer service activities as the main part of customer service management. The busyness and routine of transactional work results in a lack of time for customer service to improve administration.

Customer service management skills competencies are directed at the ability to communicate with customers, negotiate, present products and services, and manage administrative activities (Huang et al., 2019; Knapp, 2015; Sarder, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). The results of the H_3 test show that the competence of customer service management skills has a positive and significant effect on company performance, following research conducted by Huang et al. (2019) and Melovic et al.(2015).

Stakeholder management skills competency received a good rating, with an average of 4.09. Respondents rated customer service's ability to understand stakeholders and manage

customers, related agencies, and other parts or departments in the organization as the best indicator, with an average value of 4.12 each. The ability to manage other departments was the lowest indicator, with an average of 4.03. This competency needs to be improved considering that in its daily activities, customer service involves many other parties, both internal and external.

Competency in stakeholder management skills is considered dominant in the performance of freight forwarding companies because of the high coefficient value obtained from data analysis. This competency hypothesis test gave a t-count of 8,451, the highest compared to other competencies. A high coefficient indicates a strong relationship between the observed variables. The ability to manage relationships with various parties involved in the company's operations, such as customers, related agencies, and internal departments, has a significant impact on the company's performance. Stakeholder management skills, such as understanding the needs and interests of various related parties and effectively communicating and collaborating with other parties are key factors in achieving the operational and business success of freight forwarding companies. These findings highlight the importance of developing and improving stakeholder management skills in the freight forwarding industry to improve the overall performance of companies.

Good customer service must be related to the core business of the organization and its stakeholders. Customer service must be able to establish good relationships and manage all stakeholders directly related to the company, both internal and external parties (Hinson et al., 2020b; Ricardianto et al., 2022). The results of the H_4 test show that the competency of stakeholder management skills has a positive and significant effect on the company's performance, following the results of the research conducted (Hinson et al., 2020a; McGahan, 2021; Miles, 2012). Even though other parties outside customer service are groups, parts, or organizations, customer service is managed more by individuals or personnel within the group who are directly related to customer service (Gizaw et al., 2021; Hinson et al., 2020a; Kivits, 2015; McGahan, 2021). This performance directly impacts the company's performance, where the company's performance is built on the individual performance of employees and the company's management performance holistically (Beigi et al., 2023; Intarapanich & Limpsurapong, 2019; Iqbal et al., 2019).

The performance of freight forwarding companies received a good rating, with an average of 4.04. The company's efforts in developing the market are considered the best indicator, with an average of 4.17. This is indicated by the increase in targets and target achievements each year. The company's service revenue growth this year is the lowest indicator, with an average of 3.91. This is due to the rarity of company management providing revenue achievement information to its employees in several companies.

CONCLUSIONS

Customer service activities can run better to achieve freight forwarding performance if customer service has the right competencies. The results of this study have found determinants to achieve freight forwarding performance as the main goal of the organization, namely customer service activities enabled by the four customer service competencies. The skill competency of understanding customers has a positive and significant effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies. Customers appreciate customer service that understands the customer industry.

The competence of freight forwarding management skills has a positive and significant effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies. Improving the company's operational

performance is related to improving service quality, the effectiveness of on-time delivery, and quick response to changes in market demand. Customer service is required to have an understanding of the complex freight forwarding process, especially related to international trade. This competency is customer service in carrying out freight forwarding operational activities effectively.

The competence of customer service management skills has a positive and significant effect on the performance of freight forwarding companies. Customer service must continue to hone their communication, presentation, negotiation, and administration skills. Stakeholder management skills competency has a positive and significant effect on freight forwarding company performance. This performance directly impacts holistic company performance built on the performance of individual employees, who interact with their surroundings. Customer service in carrying out its activities cannot be separated from working relationships with other parts, both internally and externally.

The diverse customer service backgrounds working in freight forwarding encourage the implementation of these four customer service competencies to be carried out immediately. Clear job descriptions and customer service KPIs related to company performance can be compiled using the foundation and framework of these four competencies. Existing customer service actors, new employees, and employees transferred from other departments can immediately be given training related to these four competencies. The Human Resources Department with management that directly handles customer service has a shared responsibility for developing customer service positions to achieve the standards needed in the international freight forwarding industry.

Customer service together with the operational department will improve the performance of freight forwarding companies. Competent customer service expects to adapt to any unfavorable conditions such as technology, economy, and social disruption, such as what happened during the COVID-19 outbreaks (Saribanon et al., 2024). Freight forwarding and basic cargo competencies have existed beforehand, but they are only carried out as a requirement for the establishment and operation of freight forwarding companies, not directed to a very large number of freight forwarders. Further research is directed to operational competencies that will strengthen operational efficiency and productivity which will reduce logistics costs in Indonesia. The new research will also be directed to domestic freight forwarders who play a role in flowing goods from all provinces to major international ports, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Semarang, Makassar, and Medan. Research for customer service positions and international freight forwarding operations can be developed only for cities that have these international ports.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to God Almighty for His grace that this research can be conducted. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia for supporting the funding of postgraduate research grants for doctoral dissertations. We certainly hope that the results of this research can be utilized by international freight forwarding customer service actors in Indonesia so that they can improve the performance of companies and the performance of Indonesian logistics. We would also like to thank the leadership of the Indonesian Institute of Transportation and Logistics, starting from the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, and Program Director for their support so that this research can be completed. Finally, if there are any shortcomings and errors in the research or writing of the results of this research, we apologize profusely.

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