

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE GOAL LEVEL SELECTION AMONG INDONESIAN CUSTOMS OFFICERS

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### ABSTRACT

*Goal-setting is an essential tool to improve individual and organizational performance. The study about goal-setting has been done immensely in the past century. However, research on goal-setting is rarely conducted in Indonesia's Public sector, especially in Customs and Excise work environment. A survey of Indonesian Customs is carried out to examine the correlation between individual variables that are self-esteem, work locus of control, self-efficacy, supervisor's support, anticipated reward, and other organizational support with employee goal level selection. 45 merchandise goods-related document analysts and goods inspectors are included in the survey, where a small experiment is administered by asking the respondent to set their target independently. Using the Spearman correlation analysis, the result indicated that only work locus of control has a significant negative association with goal-level selection, particularly promotion and job acquisition subscales. Self-esteem and self-efficacy are found not significantly correlated with goal-level selection, and so are support from supervisors, office environment, and monetary reward.*

**Keywords:** *goal-setting, goal level, self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy, public sector*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Goal-setting is an essential part of an organization's performance management system (PMS). It kickstarts employee attention and effort to work on behalf of the organization (Locke & Latham, 2002, p.706). As a result, the employee becomes more productive than the "do your best" or "no goal" condition. The goal-setting benefit is evident in many different jobs: loggers (Latham & Locke 1979, p.70), motor mechanic, and cleaner (Kim & Hamner 1976, p.50), only to name a few.

As theorized by Latham and Locke (1991, p.213), a goal must be specific and challenging to increase employee performance or alter their behavior. Challenging means that goal is hard to achieve. For instance, "getting a score 90" out of 100 a maximum, instead of 50. Meanwhile, specific means that goal is clear. For instance, "reading five pages" instead of "reading." In practice, specificity reduces the variability of the performance.

While the concept of goal specificity is firmly established, that is not the case in the goal difficulty construct because of its subjectivity. A goal may be perceived as difficult for one employee but easy for the others. Imagine a goal of "to read 200 pages of a book in a day". For some employees, that goal is attainable; thus, they put effort into finishing it. On the other hand, the goal may be perceived as very difficult for some others; hence, they are less motivated. Roose and Williams (2018, p.40) concluded that if the goal set is unrealistic, employee performance was stagnant or even declined.

In practice, goal-setting becomes more intrincating. For example, to ensure the goal is challenging, the organization might assign it. However, the result could be undesirable if employees perceive the goal as unrealistic. On the other hand, if the organization let employees set their own goal, it is plausible to get easy goals. In the end, goal-setting cannot optimize employee productivity.

The latter situation is expected in the public sector. A study on the goal-setting among German civil servants showed that the goal difficulty level is low (Reemts, Hirsch, & Nitzl 2016, p. 9). As a result, productivity in the public sector did not reach the optimum level. For this reason, having an understanding of what factors influence an employee's goal choice is essential for the organization. For instance, if incentive availability is believed to influence goal-setting, then the incentive scheme should enable high or difficult goal-setting behavior.

This study explores factors that influence goal-setting among Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) employees. There is only limited study regarding this issue in the public sector, particularly within Indonesia Customs context. This study is expected to further shed light on goal-setting issues in Indonesia Customs, which can subsequently be used to make best-fit-related policies. It also gives benefits to managers in the goal-setting application within the PMS framework.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS**

As cited by Gibson et al. (2006, p.95), Lewin postulated that individual behavior is a function of internal and external factors. Internal factors encompass skills and abilities, demographics such as age and gender, and psychological attributes (e.g., personality, attitude, and perception) from the employee's inner self. Meanwhile, the external factor is how the surrounding shape employee behavior. It includes leadership or manager, group behavior or colleagues, and resource availability.

### **2.1. Personal Factors**

Every employee is a unique individual. On the one hand, they have different personalities, attitudes, and other psychological and social-psychological attributes. For example, about personality and referring to the big five personality traits, employee A is an introvert while B is an extrovert. At the same time, they share other personality attributes. For example, both employees are conscientious. As Latham and Locke (2007, p.293) cited, Judge, Locke, and Durham developed core self-evaluation (CSE) theory describing three other personal attributes: self-esteem, locus of control, and self-efficacy as collective predictors of job motivation and performance.

Study about the relationship between personality traits and goal-setting has been conducted mainly in the present century, yet the results do not clearly explain the goal choice mechanism. For example, conscientiousness and neuroticism significantly influence the goal-setting process (Bipp & Kleingeld 2011, p.318). However, the former works by building up one's commitment to goal attainment while the latter negatively affects the employee's perception of the goal-setting process. Unfortunately, personality assessment is restricted to the author's qualification, and therefore, not analyzed.

Self-esteem is how an individual sees worthiness of themselves (Abdel-Khalek 2016, p.1). Self-esteem is considered an essential factor in individual performance. An employee with high self-esteem would be more optimistic and motivated, thus, perform

higher than counterpart (Akgunduz 2015, p.1091). In contrast, low self-esteem is linked with depression and the inability to overcome difficulties during task completion. About the goal-setting process, Hollenbeck and Brief (1987, p.408) found that under self-set condition, yet minimum, self-esteem is related to the choice of challenging goals. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between self-esteem and goal difficulty

Locus of Control (LOC) is an individual belief in control origin over the workplace (Spector 1982, p.482). An employee with an internal locus of control believes that the control over the situation that happens in the workplace is themselves. On the contrary, external locus of control means that the workplace outcome depends on others' control or is just a matter of luck. Tillman, Smith, and Tillman (2010, p.120) suggested that internal LOC is positively related to overall job satisfaction, such as pay, interpersonal relationship, and career growth opportunity. Erez and Judge (2001, p.1275) found that locus of control is strongly related to goal-setting, including goal difficulty. Based on this finding, the following hypothesis is posited:

H2: There will be a positive relationship between locus of control and goal difficulty

Self-efficacy is about an individual's perception of their ability to perform the assigned tasks (Bandura 1993, p.118). The correlation between self-efficacy and goal-setting probably is more straightforward than previous factors. Bandura (1993, p.118) argued that an employee who has high self-efficacy would prefer more challenging goals. Further, this behavior leads to better performance than colleagues. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is presented:

H3: There will be a positive relationship between self-efficacy and goal difficulty

## **2.2. Workplace factors**

Individual decision making is also influenced by their surroundings, in this case, workplace situation. It includes interaction with other individuals such as superiors and peers, also, work facilities, policies, systems, and procedures. That daily engagement may contribute to employees' decision in the goal-setting. Lee et al. (1991) explained that some goal-setting contributing factors are supervisors, tangible rewards, and resource availability, such as budget and equipment.

A superior plays a vital role in the workplace because they work closely with employees daily. Therefore, they would first know if employee performance decrease. They are often accounted for to provide feedback and coaching to improve employee performance. Moen and Skaalvik (2009, p.40) found that an executive manager who receives a coaching program has significantly higher goal-setting attributes in the goal-setting process. Employees knowing that the supervisor's back-up is in place would, therefore, would not resist hard goals. This study posited hypothesis as below:

H4: There will be a positive relationship between the supervisor's support and goal difficulty.

One of the individual motivators is their need. Maslow (1943) posited a grand need-based work motivation theory that explains five needs that influence individual behavior: Physiological, Safety, Love, Esteem, and Self-actualization. These needs would be satisfied with a monetary reward, promotion, and social recognition in the workplace. Consequently, employee's behavior on the goal-setting is influenced by their attempt to maximize rewards. In this case, reward availability would lower self-set goal difficulty. Thus, this study proposes a hypothesis as follow:

H5: There will be a negative relationship between reward availability and goal difficulty.

To be successful in performing their duties, employees need resources such as money, equipment, and a reliable team. Also, their performance depends on policies and procedures clarity. Without those resources, the employee would think that the goal is unreachable and thus should be lowered. Therefore, the hypothesis is posited as follow:

H6: There will be a positive relationship between resource availability and goal difficulty.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study is based on survey data collected from Goods Inspectors and Document Analysts in four Indonesian Customs Offices. An online survey is used due to its effectiveness in collecting extensive data from various distant locations in a short amount of time (Sugiyono 2011, p.192). Better still, it is suitable in the Covid-19 pandemic situation, reaching respondents without violating health protocol.

Both jobs have a responsibility related to merchandise goods import clearance. Their Key Performance Indicator (KPI) was "average number of days needed for

inspection" and "average number of days needed for document examination," respectively. The formula is to divide the total number of documents by the number of days taken to complete the task. Although the measurement is identical between jobs, the expected target varies, depending on the location (see table 1). Likely, situational differences such as workload and personnel numbers were taken into consideration in the goal-setting.

Table 1. The target for Goods Inspector and Document Analyst

No.	Customs Office	The average number of days for completing the task	
		Goods Inspector	Document Analyst
1.	A	2.12	0.49
2.	B	0.79	0.53
3.	C	0.66	0.45
4.	D	0.33	1.53

First of all, this study determined the goal difficulty index through current year-performance data computation. Item difficulty, which is commonly used in the academic field, is adopted in this study. A division of the number of employees who attain goals indicates goal difficulty level. As suggested by the Center for Development of Human Studies (1999, p. 19), if the number of employees who attain the goal is less than 30% of total employees, the goal is regarded as difficult. On the other hand, if the number of successful employees is more significant than 80% or 0.8, the goal is considered easy. A reasonable goal is between 0.3 and 0.8 points. This study computed goal-level classification based on this guidance and current job-performances (see table 2).

Table 2. Goal Level Classification

No.	Customs Office	Difficulty Level	Goods inspector (average days in job completion)	Document Analyst (average days in job completion)
1.	A	Hard	< 1.37	< 0.90
		Moderate	1.37 – 2.46	0.90 – 1.28
		Easy	> 2.46	> 1.28
2.	B	Hard	< 0.25	< 0.20
		Moderate	0.25 – 1.02	0.20 – 0.61
		Easy	> 1.02	> 0.61
3.	C	Hard	< 0.10	< 0.16
		Moderate	0.10 – 1.40	0.16 – 1.31
		Easy	> 1.40	> 1.31
4.	D	Hard	< 0.13	< 1.53
		Moderate	0.13 – 0.88	1.53 – 2.92
		Easy	> 0.88	> 2.92

In the second phase, targeted respondents in four offices were asked to complete an online survey voluntarily. The questionnaire consists of 33 questions and statements which construct discussed variables and general information. Respondents are first asked to set their target for the same KPI. To increase the validity, we inform them that their response will be considered for the next-year KPI. Their response was then categorized following table 2 criteria. It implies that respondents have control over the goal selection. Questions and statements related to research variables are adopted from previous researches, as explained below.

The single-item self-esteem scale (SISE), as developed by Robins, Hendin, and Trzesniewski (2001), is employed to measure the self-esteem variable. Like its name, the scale only asks the respondent to rate one statement: "I have high self-esteem," using a five-point Likert-type scale. Even though only one item is used, this scale is valid and reliable (Donnelland, Trzesniewski, and Robins 2011).

Concerning LoC, this study adopts a simplified Work Locus of Control (WLCS)-8 by Spector (2020). This scale uses eight instruments, a half shorter from the previous version of the scale, consisting of 16 instruments. A statement like "Promotions are usually a matter of luck" and "Promotions are given to employees who perform well in the job" were presented. A Likert-type scale using six points ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) is used in these instruments.

Besides, this study operationalizes "self-efficacy," "supervisor support," and "anticipated reward with the items of Lee et al. (1991, p. 480-481). This scale uses a seven-point Likert-type from strongly disagree (1) to agree (7) strongly. Self-efficacy is measured using four items with a statement like, "I usually feel that I have a suitable or effective strategy or plans for reaching my goals." Meanwhile, supervisor support is indicated by three items, including a statement like "My supervisor lets me participate in the goal-setting." A statement like "If I reach my goals, my chance for promotion is higher" is used as one of the four items of contingent reward.

Spearman rank correlation analysis is conducted using a statistical computer program. This method is appropriate when data is collected using an ordinal scale (Raharjo 2017). It provided information on whether the relationship is significantly or insignificantly positive or negative. Also, it indicated the degree of relationship strength. Since this analysis is non-parametric, linearity and normality tests are not required before.

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1. Descriptive Information**

A total of 45 responses were received, or about 21% of the total incumbents. A descriptive summary of the demographic sample is presented in table 3. 57.8 percent of respondents are document analysts, while the rest (42.2 %) are goods inspectors. Most of them are male (97.8%), and only one respondent (2.2%) is females. Diploma and undergraduates are the majority of respondents' educational background, constituting more than 95 percent of samples. 46.7% of respondents were working in Customs Office A. It was followed by those from Customs Office D (28.9%), Office C (13.3%), and Office D (11.1%).

Concerning age and tenure (see table 4), The average age of the respondent is 35.11. The youngest respondent is 20 years old, while the oldest is 57 years of age. On average, respondents have been working with DGCE for more than 13 years, ranging from 0 to 37 years of working experience.

Table 3. Demographic Information

	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	44	97.8
Female	1	2.2
<b>Education</b>		
High School	1	2.2
Diploma	30	66.7
Bachelor	13	28.9
Master	1	2.2
Doctor	-	0
<b>Customs Offices</b>		
A	21	46.7
B	5	11.1
C	6	13.3
D	13	28.9
<b>Job Position</b>		
Goods Inspector	19	42.2
Document Analyst	26	57.8

Table 4. Age and Tenure Information

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Age	20	57	35.11	7.708
Tenure	0	37	13.82	7.078

Regarding difficulty level, on average, goods inspectors tended to set easy goals. Only those from Customs Office A that, on the contrary, selected a challenging goal for next-year KPI. In the document analyst group, three Customs Offices (A, B, and C) chose reasonable goals, and only those from office D who chose the hard goal.

Table 5. Goal Level Descriptive Information

No.	Customs Office	Goods inspector				Document Analyst			
		Min.	Max.	Mean	Level	Min.	Max.	Mean	Level
1.	A	0.01	2.58	1.32	Hard	0.01	3	1.15	Moderate
2.	B	2	2	2	Easy	0.53	0.6	0.55	Moderate
3.	C	1.5	2	1.75	Easy	0.1	3.5	1.09	Moderate
4.	D	0.08	2	0.99	Easy	1.5	1.53	1.52	Hard

Using the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test, we found no significant differences between any demographic groups regarding goal level selection. Therefore, a further demographic discussion is not necessary.

Descriptive information about variables is in table 6. First of all, the average total score of self-esteem is 4.29 of 5 point maximum. Besides, locus of control has a mean value of 27.62 of a maximum of 42 points. Self-efficacy has an average score of 16.71 of a maximum of 28. Meanwhile, for the supervisor's support, the average total score is 12.53 of 21 maximum. Regarding reward availability, the mean score is 15.18 from a maximum of 28. Lastly, organizational support has an average score of 21.22 of 35.

Table 6. Variables Descriptive Information

No.	Variables	N	Min	Max.	Mean	Possible Max. Score	Percentage	Std. Dev.
1.	Self-esteem	45	2	5	4.29	5	85.8%	0.815
2.	Locus of Control	45	12	38	27.62	42	65.8%	5.361
3.	Self-efficacy	45	11	20	16.71	28	59.7%	2.063
4.	Supervisor's support	45	4	15	12.53	21	59.7%	2.361
5.	Reward availability	45	8	20	15.18	28	54.2%	2.979
6.	Organizational support	45	10	25	21.22	35	60.6%	3.096

#### 4.2. Validity and Reliability Test

Items related to variables are accounted for validity and reliability preceding to analysis except for the single-item for self-esteem construct. This study used Pearson correlation product moment for the former test and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the latter. As suggested by Raharjo (2014), if the level of significance for a two-tailed (sig. 2-tailed) is greater than 0.05, then the item is not valid. On the contrary, when the item

correlation score is less than 0.05, then it is valid. An item that is not valid is then omitted in the subsequent analysis. Reliability is measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Raharjo (2014) asserted that if Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is more significant than 0.6, items are reliable. The result of these tests is shown in table 7.

Table 7. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variables	Item Number	Sig. (2-tailed)	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Self-Esteem	Item 1	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested
Locus of Control	Item 1	0.017	valid	0.697	reliable
	Item 2	0.586	Not valid		
	Item 3	0.000	valid		
	Item 4	0.001	valid		
	Item 5	0.001	valid		
	Item 6	0.000	valid		
	Item 7	0.000	valid		
	Item 8	0.000	valid		
Self-efficacy	Item 1	0.000	valid	0.765	reliable
	Item 2	0.000	valid		
	Item 3	0.000	valid		
	Item 4	0.000	valid		
Supervisor's Support	Item 1	0.000	valid	0.810	reliable
	Item 2	0.000	valid		
	Item 3	0.000	valid		
Tangible Reward	Item 1	0.000	valid	0.748	reliable
	Item 2	0.000	valid		
	Item 3	0.000	valid		
	Item 4	0.000	valid		
Organizational Support	Item 1	0.000	valid	0.831	reliable
	Item 2	0.000	valid		
	Item 3	0.000	valid		
	Item 4	0.000	valid		
	Item 5	0.000	valid		

### 4.3. Hypotheses Test

Spearman rank correlation analysis result is presented in table 8. This study found a negative correlation between self-esteem and goal difficulty. However, the relationship is weak and insignificant. Thus, H1 is rejected. This finding does not support previous findings by Hollenbeck and Brief (1987, p.408). Possibly, the difference lies in the measurement tools. Hollenbeck and Brief used 20 items from the Janis-Field scale, which provide more detailed data such as confidence in task-related ability. Meanwhile, this

study merely asked about general self-esteem, which does not necessarily relate to the job.

Table 8. Self-esteem and Goal Level Correlation Analysis

		Goal Level	Self-esteem
Spearman's rho (n=45)	Goal Level	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	Self-esteem	Correlation Coefficient	-.036
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.814

The result relevant to hypothesis 2, which stated that locus of control is positively correlated with goal level, is shown in table 9. It can be seen that there is a significant correlation between those variables in this study. However, the direction was negative; thus, H2 is rejected. In this study, a higher locus of control is correlated with more attainable goal selection. Further analysis showed that two subcategories that are job acquisition and promotion, are negatively correlated with 99% and 95% significance level, respectively. Other subsets indicated that there is a weak negative correlation.

Table 9. Locus of Control and Goal Level Correlation Analysis

Variable	Goal Level
Locus of Control	-0.338*
Job acquisition	-0.392**
Goal attainment	-0.201
Promotion	-0.323*
Monetary reward	-0.197

Notes: \* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)  
 \*\* correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis 3 states that there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and goal level. However, the result showed no significant correlation between self-efficacy and goal level (see table 10). This result did not support what Bandura (1993, p.118) suggested that self-efficacy would make employees engage in more challenging goals. In the same study, Bandura argued that factors like previous performance enhance self-efficacy. Unfortunately, this study could not confirm the previous respondent performance to check the actual self-efficacy number. Self-efficacy and goal level relationship might also be moderated by work overload (Brown, Jones & Leigh 2005, p.978), a condition in which an employee has simultaneous tasks hence experiencing limited time and psychological pressures.

Table 10. Self-Efficacy and Goal Level Correlation

		Goal level	Self-efficacy
Spearman's rho (n=45)	Goal level	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	Self-efficacy	Correlation Coefficient	-0.128
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.403

Our hypothesis 4 stated a positive correlation between the supervisor's support and the goal level. However, the result, as reported in table 11, is the opposite. We found that there is no significant correlation between the supervisor's support and goal level.

Possibly, the nature of both jobs is, in a way, autonomous. It means that employees do not need a top-down direction. Moreover, most of them are experienced, having been working for more than a decade. Likely, they already possess the required knowledge and skills. Based on this argument, the employee might not have considered their supervisor's support when choosing the KPI.

Table 11. Supervisor's support and Goal Level means that correlation

		Goal level	Supervisor Support
Spearman's rho (n=45)	Goal level	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	Self-efficacy	Correlation Coefficient	-0.128
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.992

Hypothesis 5 stated that there is a negative correlation between reward availability and goal level. The finding shows the opposite result. As reported in table 12, there is only a weak positive correlation between those variables. Although insignificant, there is a negative correlation between variable subsets: job security, monetary reward, and promotion opportunity with goal level. This finding is similar to the previous result about the work locus of control. Both results show a negative correlation between goal level with a monetary reward, job promotion, and job acquisition.

Table 12. Reward and Goal Level Correlation

Variable	Goal Level
Reward availability	0.070
Sense of achieving	0.259
Job security	-0.038
Monetary Reward	-0.119
Promotion	-0.037

This study's last hypothesis is to see whether there is a correlation between other organizational support and goal level. Overall, this study sees no significant correlation between those two variables, as presented in table 13. A more detailed analysis show consistency in that only an insignificant negative correlation appears. All direction in the correlation is negative.

Table 13. Other organizational support and Goal Level Correlation

Variable	Goal Level
Organizational Support	-0.212
Realistic KPI	-0.164
Policies	-0.275
Teamwork	-0.253
General resources	-0.246
Supportive Supervisor	-0.074

## 5. CONCLUSION

All in all, all hypotheses are not supported in this study. Firstly, this study found no significant correlation between individual variables, namely self-esteem, and self-efficacy, with goal level selection. Only work locus of control has a significant correlation with goal selection, yet, the relationship was negative. Two work locus of control subscales that are promotion and job acquisition is significantly negatively correlated with goal level selection. In contrast, monetary reward and goal attainment did not show any significance. It means that employees with higher work locus of control, particularly those who believe that promotion opportunity and job security depend on one's effort, would select easy goals. Their choice is understandable since the easy goal would be easily attained. Thus, the employee's performance result would look great. Further, this performance result increases promotion opportunities and job security.

Likewise, regarding workplace factors, none of these factors: support from supervisor, reward availability, and other organizational supports has a significant correlation with the goal level selection. A closer look at the subscales provides an initial hint that financial incentives and career advancement are negatively correlated with goal level selection though insignificant. Therefore, both factors should be considered carefully in the application. Meanwhile, the sense of achievement is positively related to the selected goal despite its insignificance. Contributing factors that play significant roles in employees' goal level selection still needs to be researched.

Additionally, the average score regarding self-efficacy and locus of control shows that Indonesia Customs officers are moderately confident about their ability and control over the workplace environment. In contrast, most employees have high self-esteem, with an average index of more than 80%. Regarding workplace factors, employees moderately believe that the organization and the supervisors are conducive.

### LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

This study's findings are based on correlation but not a causal analysis. As a consequence, the results are not appropriate to determine causal inference. Secondly, despite adopting questionnaires from multiple previous quality research, all variables in this study are measured based on self-report information. Therefore, although small, it leads to potential bias, especially when respondents are reluctant to provide information truly. Finally, this research has struggled to get many respondents representing various job positions and office locations.

Because of those reasons, future research should use other than correlation analysis techniques to supplement this research finding. Also, qualitative or mixed-method research can be considered to elicit more thorough information about employee's motivation in goal level selection. Finally, the research scope should be widened to cover other job positions and other possible influencing factors, such as personality traits.

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