



Work Motivation, Satisfaction, and Environment Effects on Employee Performance through Work Discipline in Higher Education

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Abstract

Purpose: This study analyzes the effect of motivation, job satisfaction, and work environment on employee performance, as well as the role of work discipline as an intervening variable in improving employee performance at Universidade da Paz (UNPAZ), Timor-Leste.

Research Methodology: This study uses a quantitative approach and census methods, which involved 97 permanent employees at the Universidade da Paz Timor-Leste as respondents. Data were collected using a questionnaire that was tested for validity and reliability. The data were analyzed using partial least squares (PLS).

Results: The results show that work motivation and work environment positively affect work discipline, while job satisfaction has no significant effect. Work discipline positively affects employee performance and mediates the effects of job satisfaction and work environment, but not work motivation, on employee performance.

Conclusions: This study concludes that work motivation and work environment positively influence work discipline, while job satisfaction has no significant effect. Work discipline significantly improves employee performance and mediates the effects of job satisfaction and work environment on employee performance, but not work motivation.

Limitations: This study is limited to permanent employees at UNPAZ, Timor-Leste, so the findings may not be fully generalized to other higher education institutions. Future studies should involve broader samples and add other variables such as leadership, organizational culture, or compensation.

Contributions: This study contributes to human resource management literature by confirming the role of work discipline as an important mechanism linking job satisfaction and work environment to employee performance in higher education.

Keywords: *Employee Performance, Environment, Job Satisfaction, Motivation, Work Discipline*

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1. Introduction

Human resources are important assets for every organization in achieving its goals. Studies have shown that the dimensions of human resource performance contribute to competitive advantage (Chantabutr & Wanarat, 2024; Suyanto et al., 2021). In the educational environment, studies on factors that play an important role in influencing employee performance are considered to be important. The studies conducted vary due to the different development contexts and environments of higher education, including

studies on work-life balance on employee performance (Rusmewahni et al., 2023), compensation and work discipline (Akib et al., 2022), and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Iqbal et al., 2023; Sumaryadi & Kusnadi, 2021).

Motivation is an important contributor to performance. Studies on motivation show that external motivation has a significant effect, whereas intrinsic motivation has an insignificant effect (Al-Ansi et al., 2023). The same study was conducted by (Iqbal et al., 2023); therefore, unlike previous studies, this study examines motivation in general on employee performance in higher education. Motivation is a driving force that creates a spirit of work, which enables employees to work together, efficiently, and honestly (Muhammad Al Hafizha, 2022). Employees with high motivation will be enthusiastic and satisfied, and their productivity will increase (Hasibuan, 2017).

In addition to work motivation, job satisfaction, which is a sense of enjoyment of one's work, is an important condition for increasing performance. Job satisfaction is an employee's affective view or feelings about an organization or company (Parmenas, 2022; Rachmaniah, 2019). Employees perform well when they are satisfied. Previous studies have shown that job satisfaction can have a direct effect on performance and can intervene between work motivation and performance (Nurudin, 2020; Susanto et al., 2021). Unlike previous studies, in this study, work motivation and job satisfaction are considered antecedent variables to performance.

The work environment is an important factor in the context of research in universities in developing countries that plays an important role in supporting performance improvement. The work environment includes the entire equipment, materials faced, work methods, and work arrangements. A pleasant work environment creates a sense of security and allows employees to work optimally (Mulyati et al., 2023; Mulyaningtyas et al., 2023). According to Harywibowo and Hariadi (2022) and Wirawan et al. (2023), the work environment is a very important component when employees carry out their activities. Previous studies have shown that the environment has a direct and indirect effect on performance through work motivation (Andi & Y., 2021; Parmenas, 2021). However, in this study, the environment was not mediated by motivation but by work discipline. The argument is that work discipline is the most important capital needed to achieve desired organizational goals. Employees who are aware of compliance with the regulations or orders set (Mulyaningtyas et al., 2023), have high work motivation, and have a supportive and satisfying work environment will perform well. However, this phenomenon needs to be studied further, especially in the context of higher education in developing countries, particularly in East Timor. This study aims to build a conceptual framework on the influence of work motivation, job satisfaction, and work environment on employee performance and the role of discipline as a mediating variable.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work Motivation and Employee Performance

Work motivation is an important factor that encourages employees to carry out their duties effectively and achieve organizational goals (Fadlianto & Sulistyowati, 2022; Kurniawan & Hariadi, 2022). In higher education institutions, motivated employees tend to show enthusiasm, responsibility, and commitment in completing their work. Motivation can come from intrinsic aspects, such as achievement and self-development, as well as extrinsic aspects, such as rewards, recognition, and organizational support. Iqbal et al. (2023) and Wijayanti and Santoso (2022) found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play an important role in improving performance in higher education. Similarly, Al-Ansi et al. (2023) and Satria (2021) stated that motivation can influence employee performance through job satisfaction and organizational conditions. Therefore, work motivation is considered an important antecedent of employee performance and work discipline.

2.2 Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Job satisfaction reflects employees' positive feelings toward their job, workplace, and organizational environment. Employees who are satisfied with their work tend to have stronger commitment and are more likely to perform their duties effectively. Nurudin (2020) and Solihin (2021) showed that job satisfaction can act as an intervening variable in the relationship between work motivation and employee performance. Job satisfaction also contributes to improving employee performance when supported by work discipline and motivation (Rizkita et al., 2023; Susanti & Aesah, 2022). Thus, job satisfaction is an important psychological factor that can influence employee behavior, discipline, and performance.

2.3 Work Environment and Employee Performance

The work environment refers to physical and non-physical conditions that support employees in performing their duties. A comfortable, safe, and supportive work environment can increase employee concentration, discipline, and productivity. Waskito and Wulandari (2022) found that the work environment influences employee performance through work discipline as an intervening variable. In addition, a good work environment and work discipline significantly affect employee performance (Kusmiyatun & Sonny, 2021). In higher education, a supportive work environment is essential because employees require coordination, comfort, and institutional support to achieve optimal performance.

2.4 Work Discipline as a Mediating Variable

Work discipline is reflected in employees' compliance with organizational rules, punctuality, responsibility, and consistency in completing tasks. Discipline plays an important role in connecting individual and organizational factors with employee performance. Akib et al. (2022) found that work discipline significantly affects employee performance in Islamic higher education institutions. Furthermore, work discipline can serve as an intervening variable between work motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (Jufrizen & Sitorus, 2021). Therefore, work discipline is not only a direct determinant of employee performance but also a mechanism that strengthens the effects of motivation, satisfaction, and work environment.

2.5 Relationship among Motivation, Satisfaction, Work Environment, Discipline, and Performance

Previous studies indicate that employee performance is influenced by various factors, including motivation, job satisfaction, work environment, and work discipline. Rahadi and Ocktaliani (2019) explained that work discipline and job satisfaction can support better employee performance. The work environment also contributes to employee performance through job satisfaction (Yerita, 2022). Meanwhile, Rusmewahni et al. (2023) confirmed that work discipline and motivation influence employee performance, with job satisfaction acting as an intervening variable. Based on these findings, this study positions work discipline as a mediating variable that links work motivation, job satisfaction, and work environment to employee performance in higher education.

3. Methodology

3.1 Samples and Sampling Techniques

The study population included all employees of UNPAZ, numbering 173. The retrieval technique sample uses the probability sampling technique method, namely, giving equal opportunity for every element of the population to become a sample. The sample size in this study was 97. Research Data were obtained from direct primary data from object research. Data were collected through questionnaires filled out by the respondents. The distribution of the questionnaire was conducted directly in August – September 2023. The analysis was conducted using the partial least squares (PLS) approach. Data manager using Warp PLS V.8.0 (Ghozali, 2011). The validity Test uses the discriminant validity approach, which is the square of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). A statement in a questionnaire is declared valid when

the AVE value is higher than 0.05 (Akib et al., 2022). Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha) using method Crobach's Alpha. Instruments are reliable if their value is greater than 0.7 on all the constructs that will be tested, but at one point, research in nature investigation mark more than 0.6 can still be tolerated or accepted.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Respondents

Respondents in this part are permanent employees working on the University campus of Paz (UNPAZ) Timor-Leste, numbering 97.

Table 1. The Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Grouping	Amount	%
Age	<21 (18–20)	13	14%
	>21 (21–53)	84	86%
Gender	Man	34	35%
	Woman	63	65%
Employee Status	Not married	20	21%
	Marry	77	79%
Education	Diploma	39	40%
	Bachelor	47	49%
	Post Graduate	11	11%
Years of Employment	<3 years	31	32%
	5–10 years	32	33%
	>10 years	34	35%

Source: processed data

Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents were aged over 21 years, totaling 84 respondents or 86%. In terms of gender, most respondents were women, with 63 respondents or 65%. Based on employee status, 77 respondents or 79% were married. Furthermore, most respondents had a bachelor's degree, totaling 47 respondents or 49%. Regarding years of employment, the largest group had worked for more than 10 years, with 34 respondents or 35%.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Results

Variables	AVE	Information
Work Motivation	0.672	Valid
Job Satisfaction	0.687	Valid
Work Environment	0.699	Valid
Work Discipline	0.742	Valid
Employee Performance	0.681	Valid

Source: processed data

Based on Table 2, all variables have AVE values above 0.50, indicating that each construct meets the discriminant validity criteria. The highest AVE value is shown by Work Discipline at 0.742, while the lowest is Work Motivation at 0.672. Therefore, all variables in this study are declared valid.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Information
Work Motivation	0.824	Reliable
Job Satisfaction	0.856	Reliable
Work Environment	0.817	Reliable
Work Discipline	0.859	Reliable
Employee Performance	0.850	Reliable

Source: processed data

Based on Table 3, all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70, indicating that the research instruments are reliable. The highest reliability value is found in Work Discipline at 0.859, while the lowest value is found in Work Environment at 0.817. Therefore, all variables in this study meet the reliability criteria and can be used for further analysis.

Table 4. Path Coefficient

Connection Variables	Coefficient Value (β)	P-Value	Information	Decision
MK \rightarrow DK	0.159	0.05	Significant	Accepted
KK \rightarrow DK	0.083	0.204	Not Significant	Rejected
LK \rightarrow DK	0.641	< 0.001	Significant	Accepted
DK \rightarrow KK	0.353	< 0.001	Significant	Accepted
MK \rightarrow KK	-0.153	0.060	Not Significant	Rejected
KK \rightarrow KK	-0.021	0.417	Not Significant	Rejected
LK \rightarrow KK	-0.333	< 0.001	Significant	Accepted
MK \rightarrow DK \rightarrow KK	0.056	0.214	Not Significant	Rejected
KK \rightarrow DK \rightarrow KK	0.029	0.032	Not Significant	Rejected
LK \rightarrow DK \rightarrow KK	0.226	< 0.001	Significant	Accepted

Source: processed data

Based on Table 4, work motivation has a significant positive effect on work discipline, while job satisfaction does not significantly affect work discipline. The work environment shows the strongest positive effect on work discipline, with a coefficient value of 0.641 and a p-value of <0.001. Furthermore, work discipline significantly improves employee performance. However, work discipline does not mediate the relationship between work motivation and employee performance, while the mediation effect of the work environment on employee performance through work discipline is significant.

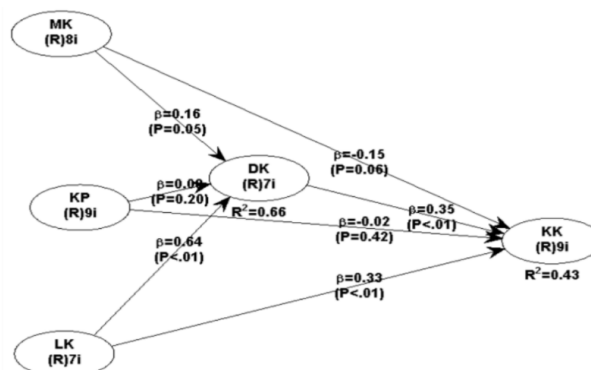


Figure 1. Structural Model

Based on Figure 1, the structural model shows that work motivation (MK) has a positive effect on work discipline (DK) with $\beta = 0.16$ and $p = 0.05$, while job satisfaction (KP) does not significantly affect work discipline with $\beta = 0.08$ and $p = 0.20$. Work environment (LK) has the strongest positive effect on work discipline with $\beta = 0.64$ and $p < 0.01$. Furthermore, work discipline (DK) positively affects employee performance (KK) with $\beta = 0.35$ and $p < 0.01$. Directly, work environment also significantly affects employee performance, while work motivation and job satisfaction do not show significant direct effects. The model explains 66% of work discipline and 43% of employee performance.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Influence work motivation to work discipline

The results obtained from testing the hypothesis showed that work motivation is influential, positive, and significant to work discipline of UNPAZ employees. This explains that the higher the motivation of employees, the higher their level of work discipline. This result is in accordance with the research conducted by (Jufrizen & Sitorus, 2021), who found a strong and positive relationship between work motivation and work discipline.

4.2.2 Influence job satisfaction to work discipline

The results indicate that job satisfaction has an insignificant effect on the work discipline of UNPAZ employees. This means that lower job satisfaction leads to lower job discipline. Job satisfaction can foster a sense of belonging to the workplace. The results of this study are in line with the research conducted by (Yusuf et al., 2023), who stated that job satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on work discipline. Low work satisfaction can negatively impact the performance of UNPAZ employees, which in turn can increase work discipline.

4.2.3 Influence work environment to work discipline

Hypothesis testing revealed that the work environment has a positive and significant influence on work discipline. This means a comfortable environment and good work both physically and psychologically, contributing significantly to work discipline. Employees who feel comfortable tend to be more disciplined in their operating duties and responsibilities. This supports the research conducted by (Waskito & Wulandari, 2022), where the work environment is influential, positive, and significant to work discipline employees at the Universidade da Paz. Factors such as comfort, leadership, system rewards and sanctions, as well as effective communication play an important role in forming work discipline among employees. Therefore, it is important for management to create a work environment that supports discipline. Work can be maintained and improved by using this approach.

4.2.4 Influence work discipline to employee performance

The test results of the hypothesis showed that work discipline has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. This explains that the conditions of work discipline of UNPAZ employees contribute to better high performance. Disciplined employees direct other employees to complete their tasks on time and with good quality. These findings are consistent with the results of a study conducted by (Rusmewahni et al., 2023), which found that work discipline has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. The improvement work discipline program can increase employee performance overall. Good job discipline can increase motivation, which can ultimately increase the performance of employees at the UNPAZ campus.

4.2.5 The influence of work motivation to employee performance

The results of hypothesis testing prove that work motivation has a negative and insignificant effect on employee performance. The results of hypothesis testing prove that work motivation has no significant effect on employee performance. The results of the effect of work motivation on performance are

negative, which shows that (1) motivation for a good job will lower work discipline but can contribute to the improvement of employee discipline, and (2) there are other more important variables dominant in influencing performance, such as work environment and work discipline. If the employee is not motivated or satisfied with their work, then despite the work environment and work discipline, high-performance employees can be negatively affected. This finding is different from the research conducted by (Chantabutr & Wanarat, 2024), who stated that work motivation has a significantly positive effect on employee performance.

4.2.6 The influence of job satisfaction to employee performance

The test results hypothesis proved that job satisfaction has no effect on the performance of employees at the University of Paz campus. The results show that work motivation negatively influences performance. These results are inconsistent with those of previous studies. The environment, especially the physical environment under quality standards due to physical development, is not sufficiently supported for work. Noisy conditions and dust pollution make employees do not enjoy working hours. In addition, there are other factors that are more influential on employee performance, such as the organization's climate. These findings do not support previous research that job satisfaction can increase performance (Susanti & Aesah, 2022). They found that job satisfaction positively influences employee performance.

4.2.7 The influence work environment to employee performance

The test results hypothesis found that the work environment has a significant negative influence on the performance of UNPAZ employees. This explains that a comfortable work environment causes the level of employee concentration at work, and these conditions cause the level of employee productivity to decrease. Research results that work environment influences positively and significantly on employee performance are not in line with research from (Kusmiyatun & Sonny, 2021). A better work environment stated that work environment positively and significantly influences employee performance. An improved work environment allegedly increases employee performance. Employees who do not feel comfortable with their workplace tend to work suboptimally.

4.2.8 The influence work motivation to performance employee through work discipline

The results of the influence of work motivation on employee performance, mediated by discipline, are negative and not significant. This explains that the higher the motivation of employees on campus of the University of Paz, the higher their level of work discipline. This shows that although work motivation is important, work discipline cannot mediate the relationship between work motivation and employee performance. One of the reasons why work motivation is not significant is the lack of awards and incentives from superiors to employees. Providing adequate rewards and incentives can increase employees' motivation to achieve the best performance. Motivated employees do not necessarily require discipline to increase their performance. These results differ from those of previous research conducted by (Waskito & Wulandari, 2022), who stated that work discipline can be a positive mediator between work motivation and employee performance.

4.2.9 The influence job satisfaction on employees performance through work discipline

The hypothesis testing proved that work discipline is capable of mediating the influence of job satisfaction on the work discipline of employees at the UNPAZ campus. The results of the influence of job satisfaction on employee performance are mediated by work discipline positively and significantly. This can be explained by the fact that high work satisfaction can increase work discipline, which tends to increase employee performance. When employees feel satisfied, they are more motivated to fulfill the rules and work discipline, which can ultimately increase employee performance. This hypothesis supports the research conducted by (Jufrizen & Sitorus, 2021), who proved that there is a positive and significant influence of job satisfaction on employee performance.

4.2.10 Influence work environment on employees performance through work discipline

The hypothesis testing proves that work discipline can mediate the influence of the work environment on the work discipline of employees of the University of Paz. The results of the influence of the work environment on employee performance are mediated by work discipline positively and significantly. This is because a good job environment can increase work discipline, which in turn contributes to improving employee performance. This shows that creating a supportive work environment is important to increase employees' work discipline and performance. These results are supported and consistent with previous research conducted by (Waskito & Wulandari, 2022), who proved that work discipline mediates the influence of the work environment on employee performance.

5. Conclusions

These results show that employee performance is significantly influenced by the work environment and discipline. Although motivation and job satisfaction do not directly influence employee performance, work discipline serves as an important link in improving employee performance. The second of the results is that work motivation has no significant effect on employee performance, and job satisfaction also has no significant effect on employee performance. The other findings of the study are that the work environment has a significant positive effect on employee performance, and work discipline is a mediator in the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance.

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Author Contributions

ALSS contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, formal analysis, and writing of the original draft. TS was responsible for supervision, validation, manuscript review, editing, and final approval of the article.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study. This research was conducted independently, and no financial or personal relationships influenced the results or interpretation of the findings.

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