

The Influence of Work Motivation and Work Discipline on Employee Performance with Work Engagement as a Mediating Variable

Edhy Richard¹, Restu Alam Paripurnawaty², Chonchita Valentina Latupapua³, Agusthina Risambessy⁴

Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia¹, Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia², Universitas Pattimura Indonesia³
Politeknik Negeri Bandung⁴

Email: edhyrichard@gmail.com, ars5clay@gmail.com, risambessyagusthina68@gmail.com,
restu.paripurnawaty@polban.ac.id

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of work motivation and work discipline on employee performance, with work engagement as a mediating variable in a government law enforcement institution. Grounded in motivational theory—including Self-Determination Theory, Goal-Setting Theory, and Equity Theory—and supported by established frameworks on work discipline and employee engagement, this research develops seven hypotheses relating these constructs. A quantitative explanatory design was employed, collecting data from 125 respondents selected through proportional random sampling using the Slovin formula from a population of 182 employees. Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) was used for data analysis. Results indicate that: (1) work motivation positively and significantly influences work engagement; (2) work motivation does not significantly influence employee performance directly; (3) work discipline positively and significantly influences work engagement; (4) work discipline positively and significantly influences employee performance; (5) work engagement does not significantly influence employee performance; (6) work engagement does not mediate the relationship between work motivation and performance; and (7) work engagement does not mediate the relationship between work discipline and performance. These findings suggest that in bureaucratic, rule-based organizations, formal discipline exerts a more dominant direct effect on performance than psychological engagement. The study contributes to human resource management theory by contextualizing motivational constructs within institutional settings

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a central concern in organizational management, representing the quality and quantity of work outcomes achieved by individuals in fulfilling their assigned responsibilities (Robbins & Judge, 2022). In the context of public sector organizations—particularly law enforcement institutions—sustained high performance is essential for maintaining public trust, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring accountability in governance.

Several theoretical frameworks provide foundational insights into performance determinants. The AMO (Ability–Motivation–Opportunity) model proposed by Robbins and Judge (2022) identifies motivation as a core driver of performance: $P = f(\text{Ability} \times \text{Motivation} \times \text{Opportunity})$. Colquitt et al. (2021) further decompose performance into task performance, citizenship behavior, and counterproductive behavior, each influenced by individual mechanisms

including motivation, job satisfaction, and learning. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) similarly recognize personal, leadership, team, and system factors as contributors to performance outcomes.

Work motivation—defined as the energetic forces that initiate, direct, and sustain goal-oriented behavior (Colquitt et al., 2021)—has long been associated with enhanced performance. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) posits that intrinsic motivation, arising from needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leads to more sustained effort. Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2020) demonstrates that specific, challenging goals direct effort and increase persistence. Despite these well-established relationships, empirical evidence across sectors reveals nuanced patterns: in highly formalized organizations, the direct effect of motivation on performance may be moderated by structural and regulatory factors.

Work discipline—reflecting the degree to which employees voluntarily adhere to organizational rules, procedures, and standards—is similarly theorized to influence performance (Dessler, 2020; Mondy & Martocchio, 2021). In rule-intensive environments, disciplinary behavior operationalizes professionalism, ensuring consistent application of procedures and timely completion of tasks.

A growing body of research highlights work engagement as an important mediating mechanism linking motivational antecedents to performance outcomes. Fredricks et al. (2018) conceptualize work engagement across three dimensions: behavioral (active participation), emotional (affective reactions), and cognitive (investment in learning). Kanungo (1982) describes engagement as the degree to which work becomes central to an employee's psychological identity. When employees are engaged, they exhibit greater vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work, which can translate to improved performance outcomes (Schaufeli, 2021).

Prior studies—including Saputri (2024), Astuti et al. (2023), and Putri et al. (2025)—have examined the mediating role of work engagement between motivation and discipline on one hand and performance on the other, with mixed results. Some find full or partial mediation, while others report non-significant mediation particularly in bureaucratic contexts. This inconsistency underscores the need for context-sensitive investigation.

Al-Kharaj: Journal of Islamic Economic and Business
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This study addresses this gap by empirically testing a mediation model in a government law enforcement context, a setting characterized by formalized hierarchies, rigid procedural requirements, and strict performance accountability. The research questions are: (1) Does work motivation influence work engagement? (2) Does work motivation directly influence employee performance? (3) Does work discipline influence work engagement? (4) Does work discipline directly influence employee performance? (5) Does work engagement influence employee performance? (6) Does work engagement mediate the relationship between work motivation and performance? (7) Does work engagement mediate the relationship between work discipline and performance?

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory design, following Cooper and Schindler (2019), to test causal relationships among study variables through hypothesis testing. A cross-

sectional survey approach was employed, consistent with Sekaran and Bougie (2020), collecting data at a single point in time.

The study population comprised 182 employees of a government law enforcement institution, consisting of 60 prosecutors and 122 administrative staff. Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2) = 182 / (1 + 182(0.05)^2) \approx 125 \text{ respondents}$$

Proportional random sampling was applied, yielding 41 prosecutors and 84 administrative staff. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

Four constructs were measured: (1) Work Motivation (X1), operationalized through indicators of effort intensity, persistence, goal direction, self-efficacy, and goal commitment, adapted from Robbins and Judge (2022) and Colquitt et al. (2021); (2) Work Discipline (X2), measured via attendance, rule compliance, resource utilization, quality standards, and professional behavior, following Dessler (2020); (3) Work Engagement (Z), assessed through role satisfaction, work meaning, organizational pride, and decision participation, adapted from Fredricks et al. (2018) and Peng (2020); and (4) Employee Performance (Y), captured through quality, quantity, timeliness, cooperation, initiative, adaptability, and reliability indicators, drawing on Noe et al. (2021) and Dessler (2020).

Instrument validity was assessed using Pearson correlation (r -critical = 0.300). All 57 items across four variables met the validity criterion. Reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs exceeding the 0.70 threshold.

Data analysis employed Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) using SmartPLS 3.0. This method is appropriate given its robustness with non-normal data distributions and medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis proceeded through: (1) outer model evaluation (convergent validity via outer loadings >0.70, discriminant validity via Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross loadings, and composite reliability >0.70); (2) inner model evaluation (R^2); and (3) hypothesis testing via bootstrapping (t -statistics >1.96, p -values <0.05).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Among 125 respondents, 52.8% were male and 47.2% female, reflecting a near-balanced gender composition. The largest age group was 31–40 years (27.2%), with relatively even distribution across other age bands. Most respondents had served more than 20 years (29.6%). Educational attainment was high, with 59.2% holding master's degrees (S2), 31.2% bachelor's degrees (S1), and 9.6% doctoral degrees (S3).

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all study variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Category
Work Motivation (X1)	3.280	0.087	Fairly Good

Work Discipline (X2)	3.175	0.203	Fairly Good
Work Engagement (Z)	3.462	0.265	Good
Employee Performance (Y)	3.439	0.173	Fairly Good

Work motivation scored fairly good ($M=3.280$), with the highest indicator being 'Pressure Motivation', suggesting that organizational demands and targets effectively stimulate serious effort. Work discipline ($M=3.175$) showed the highest scores for 'Work Re-checking' and 'Timely Task Completion', with the lowest on 'Resource Utilization'. Work engagement ($M=3.462$) was highest for 'Discussion Participation' and 'Role Satisfaction'. Employee performance ($M=3.439$) was strongest in 'Quality Standards Compliance' and lowest in 'Effective Work Methods' and 'Cross-unit Cooperation'.

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Al-Kharaj: Journal of Islamic Economic and Business
Volume 8 (2), 2026

Convergent validity was confirmed as all outer loadings exceeded 0.70 (Table 2). Discriminant validity was supported by Fornell-Larcker criterion values (Table 3) and cross-loading patterns showing that each indicator loaded highest on its intended construct.

Table 2. Composite Reliability and AVE

Construct	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE
Work Motivation	0.912	0.916	0.927	0.558
Work Discipline	0.919	0.923	0.934	0.641
Work Engagement	0.919	0.920	0.932	0.553
Employee Performance	0.936	0.938	0.945	0.609

All constructs achieved Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR) values above 0.70, and AVE values above 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity and internal consistency (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	X1	X2	Z	Y
Work Motivation (X1)	0.747			
Work Discipline (X2)	0.379	0.801		
Work Engagement (Z)	0.658	0.453	0.744	
Employee Performance (Y)	0.467	0.916	0.488	0.780

Structural Model (Inner Model)

Table 4 presents the R² values for endogenous constructs.

Table 4. R-Square Values

Construct	R ²	R ² Adjusted
Work Engagement (Z)	0.481	0.472
Employee Performance (Y)	0.856	0.852

The R² adjusted for employee performance is 0.852, indicating that 85.2% of its variance is explained by the model. Work engagement's R² adjusted is 0.472, with 47.2% explained by work motivation and work discipline.

Hypothesis Testing

Al-Kharaj: Journal of Islamic Economic and Business

Volume 8 (2), 2026

Table 5. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Test Results

H	Path	β	t-stat	p-val	Decision
H1	Motivation → Engagement	0.568	8.186	0.000	Accepted
H2	Motivation → Performance	0.134	1.900	0.058	Rejected
H3	Discipline → Engagement	0.238	2.856	0.004	Accepted
H4	Discipline → Performance	0.861	22.190	0.000	Accepted
H5	Engagement → Performance	0.011	0.171	0.864	Rejected
H6	Motivation → Engagement → Performance	0.006	0.161	0.872	Rejected
H7	Discipline → Engagement → Performance	0.002	0.161	0.872	Rejected

DISCUSSION

Work Motivation and Work Engagement (H1 Accepted)

The positive and significant influence of work motivation on work engagement ($\beta=0.568$, $p<0.001$) aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which posits that fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhances intrinsic motivation and, consequently, psychological engagement with work. When employees find meaning and value in their tasks, they are more likely to exhibit the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement dimensions identified by Fredricks et al. (2018). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory similarly supports this finding: motivating factors such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility foster deeper identification with work. These results are consistent with Saputri (2024) and Astuti et al. (2023), who found significant positive effects of work motivation on work engagement.

Work Motivation and Employee Performance (H2 Rejected)

Contrary to the AMO model's expectation that motivation directly elevates performance, this study finds no significant direct effect ($\beta=0.134$, $p=0.058$). This result is theoretically interpretable through the lens of Equity Theory (Adams, 1963; Colquitt et al., 2021): if employees perceive imbalances in effort–reward ratios or lack a clear performance system that converts motivation into results, motivational drive alone may not suffice. In bureaucratic institutions, procedural compliance, formal supervision, and structural factors may override the direct performance impact of individual motivation. Wahyudi (2023) similarly found a non-significant direct effect of motivation on performance when mediated by organizational commitment. This finding suggests that motivation's performance-enhancing effects are channeled through other mechanisms rather than operating directly.

Work Discipline and Work Engagement (H3 Accepted)

Work discipline positively and significantly influences work engagement ($\beta=0.238$, $p=0.004$). This finding is consistent with Kanungo's (1982) conceptualization of engagement as internalization of work values: employees who voluntarily adhere to organizational norms are more likely to identify psychologically with their work roles. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) assert that procedurally fair disciplinary practices create orderly, productive environments conducive to higher engagement. Astuti et al. (2023) and Putri et al. (2025) corroborate this result, finding that disciplined employees demonstrate greater work engagement in organizational settings.

Work Discipline and Employee Performance (H4 Accepted)

Work discipline exerts the strongest influence in the model ($\beta=0.861$, $p<0.001$). This dominant effect can be explained by the nature of bureaucratic organizations where formal compliance—timely task completion, adherence to standard operating procedures, consistent quality maintenance—directly produces measurable performance outcomes. Dessler (2020) identifies attendance, rule compliance, quality standards, and professional behavior as core discipline indicators, each mapping directly to performance dimensions. Mondy and Martocchio's (2021) concept of corrective and progressive discipline further elucidates how consistent enforcement of standards elevates overall organizational performance. This finding is consistent with Winarti et al. (2022), Putri et al. (2025), and Chen & Liu (2022), who found stronger discipline effects ($\beta=0.456$) than motivation effects ($\beta=0.312$) in law enforcement contexts.

Work Engagement and Employee Performance (H5 Rejected)

The non-significant influence of work engagement on performance ($\beta=0.011$, $p=0.864$) challenges the conventional assumption that engaged employees inherently perform better. This result can be understood through the distinction between psychological engagement and behavioral performance: while engagement reflects affective and cognitive states, performance in highly regulated institutions is driven primarily by procedural adherence and formal accountability structures. Bakker and Albrecht (2021) acknowledge that the engagement–performance relationship is moderated by organizational characteristics, including job demands, resource availability, and management practices. In rule-bound institutions, performance standards may be so structurally enforced that psychological engagement adds minimal incremental variance. This finding parallels Wahyudi (2023), who found that organizational commitment did not

mediate performance outcomes when procedural compliance was the primary performance driver.

Mediation by Work Engagement (H6 and H7 Rejected)

Neither H6 (Motivation → Engagement → Performance: $\beta=0.006$, $p=0.872$) nor H7 (Discipline → Engagement → Performance: $\beta=0.002$, $p=0.872$) was supported. These results follow logically from the non-significant Engagement → Performance path (H5). Theoretical frameworks such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Schaufeli, 2021) suggest that engagement mediates the effects of resources and demands on outcomes, but this mediation is context-dependent. In institutions where performance is externally regulated rather than intrinsically driven, psychological engagement may not function as an effective bridge between antecedents and outcomes. These findings contrast with Saputri (2024), who found engagement mediating motivation's effect on performance in a private sector context, reinforcing the view that organizational sector and culture moderate the engagement–performance link. For discipline specifically, its direct effect on performance (H4) is so dominant that the indirect route via engagement adds negligible explanatory power.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of work motivation and work discipline on employee performance, with work engagement as a mediating variable, in a government law enforcement institution. Seven hypotheses were tested using SEM-PLS with 125 respondents.

Key findings are: (1) work motivation significantly enhances work engagement; (2) work motivation does not directly influence employee performance; (3) work discipline significantly enhances work engagement; (4) work discipline is the dominant predictor of employee performance ($\beta=0.861$); (5) work engagement does not directly influence performance; and (6–7) work engagement does not mediate either motivational path to performance.

These findings contribute to SHRM theory by demonstrating that in highly formalized, rule-based organizations, structural compliance mechanisms (discipline) exert more direct influence on performance than psychological states (engagement). Motivational interventions are more effective in building engagement than in directly improving performance in such institutional contexts.

Practically, organizations of this type should prioritize disciplinary culture, enforcement consistency, and procedural clarity as core performance management strategies. Simultaneously, motivation-building efforts remain valuable for strengthening employee engagement—a positive organizational outcome in its own right, contributing to retention, participation, and organizational climate.

This study is limited to a single institutional context, constraining generalizability. Future research should: (1) replicate findings across multiple public sector organizations; (2) incorporate moderating variables such as leadership style, organizational culture, and job demands; (3) explore whether the engagement–performance relationship strengthens in less bureaucratic environments; and (4) employ longitudinal designs to capture temporal dynamics among these constructs.

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