

Work Passion, Motivation, and Performance: Job Satisfaction as Mediator

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the mediating role of job satisfaction between work passion, work motivation, and employee performance in public administration. Despite extensive human resource research, empirical inconsistencies persist regarding how intrinsic and extrinsic drivers shape civil service outcomes. To address this theoretical gap, the research integrates self-determination theory with bureaucratic management frameworks to analyze a census sample of 66 employees at the Regional Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency of Tabanan Regency. Employing quantitative path analysis and Sobel testing, structured questionnaire data were collected during the second quarter of 2025. Findings reveal that work passion directly enhances performance, whereas work motivation significantly improves job satisfaction and indirectly boosts performance through this psychological mechanism. Job satisfaction also exerts a direct positive effect on performance. These outcomes provide actionable implications for public administrators designing targeted interventions that harmonize individual drive with organizational satisfaction, ultimately strengthening institutional effectiveness within decentralized governance structures.

INTRODUCTION

The sustained performance of civil servants constitutes a foundational pillar for effective public administration and responsive governance in developing economies. In Indonesia, the Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN) framework has undergone substantial structural reforms aimed at professionalizing bureaucratic operations, enhancing service delivery, and aligning public sector outputs with national development targets. Despite these institutional advancements, local government agencies frequently encounter persistent challenges in optimizing workforce productivity. Field observations within regional human resource development bureaus indicate a recurring phenomenon wherein civil servants experience motivational fatigue, procedural rigidity, and misalignment between personal career aspirations and standardized bureaucratic duties. This dissonance often manifests as declining work discipline, reduced initiative, and suboptimal public service quality. The underlying issue is not merely a deficit in technical competence but a psychological and organizational mismatch wherein intrinsic drivers fail to synchronize with institutional expectations. Understanding how to bridge this gap remains a critical priority for public sector human resource management, particularly in decentralized regions where administrative autonomy demands high levels of employee self-regulation and sustained engagement.

Work passion has emerged in contemporary organizational literature as a potent psychological construct that transcends conventional job attitudes. Characterized by a strong, enduring inclination toward meaningful work activities, passion is theorized to foster resilience, proactive behavior, and sustained performance (Vallerand & Houlfort, 2014). In public sector contexts, however, the translation of passion into tangible performance outcomes is frequently complicated by hierarchical constraints, limited autonomy, and standardized evaluation metrics. Recent empirical investigations present divergent conclusions regarding this relationship. Some studies affirm that passionate civil servants demonstrate higher task persistence and innovation, even within rigid administrative environments (Ananda et al., 2022; Kemie, 2020). Conversely, other research suggests that bureaucratic formalism can suppress passionate engagement, rendering its direct impact on performance statistically insignificant when structural barriers dominate daily operations (Perttula & Cardon, 2012; Ramadhan, 2023). These contradictory findings underscore the necessity of examining contextual moderators and intervening mechanisms that may condition how passion manifests in civil service performance.

Parallel to passion, work motivation remains a central determinant of employee productivity, traditionally conceptualized through the interplay of intrinsic desires and extrinsic reinforcements. Public administration literature emphasizes that civil servants often operate under hybrid motivational structures, where public service motivation coexists with career advancement incentives and compensation schemes (Rachmaniah, 2022; Yanuar, 2017). While theoretical frameworks predict a positive linkage between motivation and

performance, empirical evidence from regional government agencies frequently reveals weak or inconsistent direct effects. Scholars attribute this discrepancy to the multifaceted nature of bureaucratic work, where motivational drivers may require psychological translation before influencing observable outputs (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Specifically, motivation may first need to enhance employees' cognitive and affective appraisals of their work environment before translating into measurable performance improvements. This theoretical proposition positions job satisfaction as a critical mediating pathway that has been underexplored in integrated public sector models.

Job satisfaction, defined as an employee's evaluative stance toward their work conditions, role clarity, and organizational support, has long been recognized as a catalyst for sustained productivity. Recent public administration studies demonstrate that satisfied civil servants exhibit lower turnover intentions, higher compliance with service standards, and greater adaptive capacity during institutional transitions (Mawati et al., 2023; Permatasari & Yanuar, 2024). Nevertheless, the mediating function of job satisfaction in the relationship between psychological drivers and performance remains theoretically contested. Certain empirical investigations report full mediation, suggesting that passion and motivation influence performance exclusively through satisfaction-enhancing pathways (Afriliani et al., 2024; Akbar et al., 2023). Alternative studies indicate partial or non-significant mediation, arguing that direct psychological commitments can bypass affective evaluations in highly routinized bureaucratic settings (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Syahputra et al., 2020). This methodological and contextual fragmentation creates a substantial research gap, particularly within Indonesian regional agencies where decentralization policies demand both emotional commitment and administrative precision.

Addressing this theoretical inconsistency, the present study introduces a novel integrated framework that simultaneously examines work passion and work motivation as dual predictors of civil servant performance, with job satisfaction positioned as a critical intervening mechanism. The novelty of this research lies in three primary contributions. First, it bridges self-determination theory with public sector bureaucratic management by testing how autonomous psychological drivers interact with structured institutional environments. Second, it focuses on a niche, census-based sample from the Regional Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency of Tabanan Regency, an organizational context that inherently models human resource optimization for local governance. Third, it resolves empirical ambiguities by applying path analysis with Sobel testing to disentangle direct and indirect effects, thereby clarifying whether job satisfaction operates as a necessary conduit or an independent performance enhancer in decentralized civil service operations. By contextualizing psychological constructs within a specific Indonesian public administration framework, this research enriches both theoretical discourse and practical human resource strategy.

The primary objective of this study is to empirically examine the direct and indirect relationships among work passion, work motivation, job satisfaction,

and employee performance within a decentralized Indonesian public sector agency, utilizing quantitative path analysis to determine the precise mediating role of job satisfaction in translating psychological and motivational drivers into observable civil service outcomes, while simultaneously generating actionable managerial insights for optimizing human resource development strategies in regional governance contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored in two prominent psychological and organizational frameworks: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Dualistic Model of Passion. SDT, primarily developed by Deci and Ryan (2020), posits that human motivation and psychological well-being are optimized when three innate psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are satisfied within the work environment. In the context of public sector administration, SDT explains how work motivation transitions from extrinsic compliance to intrinsic dedication when civil servants perceive their organizational environment as supportive. When these needs are met, employees experience higher job satisfaction and exhibit enhanced performance outcomes (Rahmadani et al., 2019).

Complementing SDT, the Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al., 2014) conceptualizes work passion as a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that is loved, valued, and invested with significant energy. The model distinguishes between harmonious passion, which arises from autonomous internalization and allows for flexible engagement, and obsessive passion, which stems from controlled internalization and leads to rigid persistence. In bureaucratic settings, harmonious passion is particularly critical, as it enables civil servants to derive meaningful emotional attachment and subjective vitality from their public service duties without experiencing burnout (Vallerand & Houliort, 2014). Together, these theories provide a robust nomological network for understanding how intrinsic psychological drivers (passion and motivation) interact with affective evaluations (job satisfaction) to produce behavioral outcomes (employee performance).

Hypothesis Development

Work Passion and Job Satisfaction

Work passion reflects an employee's deep emotional and cognitive identification with their role. Theoretically, passionate individuals experience positive affect and higher engagement, which should logically translate into greater job satisfaction. Recent studies in dynamic organizational contexts support this, indicating that passion fosters a fulfilling work experience (Wijayanti, 2024). However, in highly regulated public sector environments, the translation of passion into satisfaction can be obstructed by bureaucratic formalism and limited autonomy. Ramadhan (2023) found that in rigid governmental structures, high passion does not always guarantee satisfaction if

structural constraints hinder the actualization of that passion. Thus, the relationship remains empirically contested in public administration.

H1: Work passion has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction.

Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Grounded in SDT, work motivation represents the psychological forces that determine the direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's effort. When public organizations provide equitable rewards, career development opportunities, and supportive supervision, employees' motivational needs are fulfilled, leading to elevated job satisfaction (Rulianti et al., 2023). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that motivated civil servants who feel their efforts are recognized and aligned with organizational goals report significantly higher levels of affective satisfaction toward their jobs (Akbar et al., 2023; Permatasari & Yanuar, 2024).

H2: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction.

Work Passion and Employee Performance

Passionate employees willingly invest substantial time and cognitive resources into their tasks, viewing their work as a core component of their identity. This deep engagement typically results in superior task performance, proactive problem-solving, and resilience in the face of administrative challenges. Recent empirical investigations confirm that work passion directly enhances employee performance by fostering a state of flow and dedicated effort (Ananda et al., 2022; Junianingrum & Hannum, 2023). In the public sector, passionate civil servants are more likely to exhibit public service motivation, directly elevating their service delivery and operational performance.

H3: Work passion has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

Work Motivation and Employee Performance

While motivation is traditionally viewed as a primary catalyst for performance, its direct impact in public sector contexts is frequently complicated by structural rigidities. In environments where performance is heavily dictated by standardized operating procedures rather than individual initiative, high motivation may not yield a proportional increase in measurable performance outcomes. Several recent studies in governmental agencies have found that motivation alone, particularly when extrinsic, fails to directly predict performance unless mediated by other psychological or structural factors (Astri et al., 2023; Yani et al., 2022).

H4: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Job satisfaction represents a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences. Satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors, demonstrate higher loyalty, and maintain consistent productivity. The affective events theory suggests that positive workplace evaluations lead to sustained effort and optimal performance. Extensive recent literature confirms that civil servants who are satisfied with their work conditions, compensation, and interpersonal relationships consistently achieve higher performance metrics (Amara & Nawatmi, 2024; Fitriya & Kustini, 2023).

H5: Job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction: Passion to Performance

The mechanism through which passion influences performance is often theorized to be affective. Passionate employees are expected to experience higher job satisfaction, which subsequently drives performance. However, as noted earlier, if bureaucratic constraints prevent passion from translating into satisfaction, the mediating pathway may be severed. While some studies in the private sector confirm full or partial mediation (Wijayanti, 2024), research in public administration suggests that passion might drive performance directly through sheer dedication, bypassing the need for affective satisfaction (Saputra et al., 2024).

H6: Job satisfaction significantly mediates the influence of work passion on employee performance.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction: Motivation to Performance

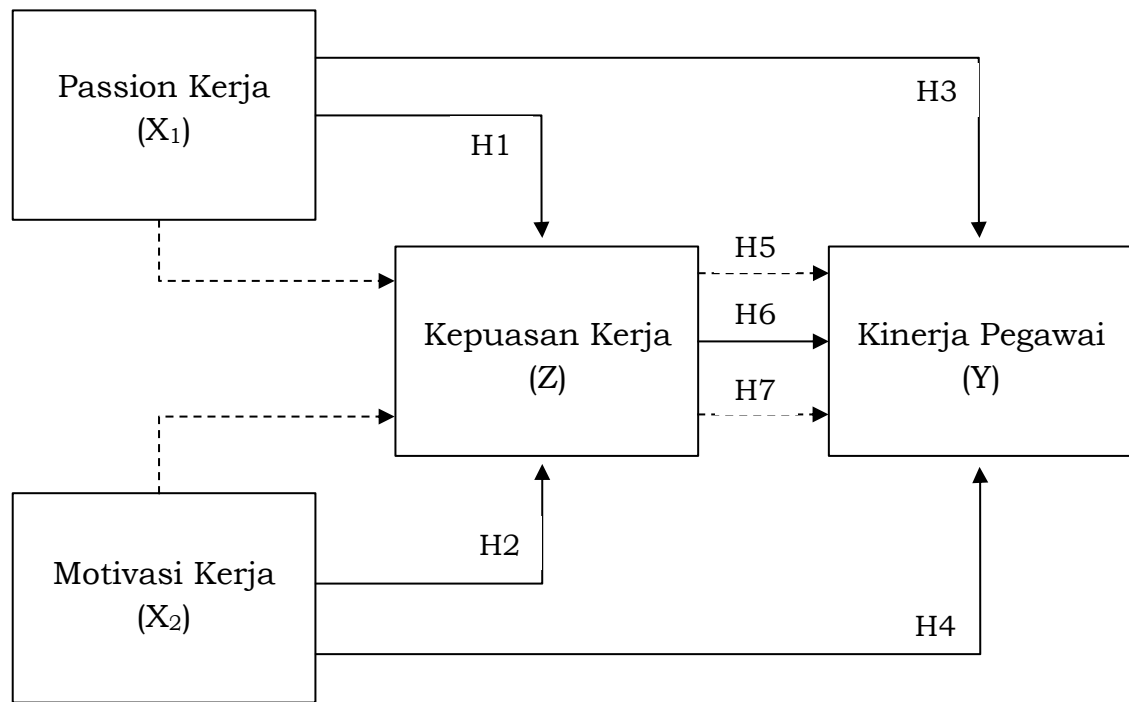
Motivation often requires an affective conduit to manifest into sustained behavioral outcomes. According to SDT, motivated employees first experience a sense of psychological fulfillment and satisfaction with their work environment, which then catalyzes enhanced performance. Empirical studies strongly support this sequential pathway, demonstrating that motivation significantly boosts job satisfaction, which in acts as a critical mediator to elevate employee performance (Afriliani et al., 2024; Rachmaniah, 2022).

H7: Job satisfaction significantly mediates the influence of work motivation on employee performance.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical synthesis and empirical evidence, the conceptual framework of this study posits work passion (X1) and work motivation (X2) as exogenous variables, job satisfaction (Z) as the intervening (mediating) variable, and employee performance (Y) as the endogenous variable. The framework illustrates both the direct causal paths from the exogenous variables to the endogenous variable, as well as the indirect paths traversing through the intervening variable.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships and mediating mechanisms among the proposed variables. The positivist paradigm guides this research, utilizing structured empirical measurements to test the theoretical hypotheses derived from Self-Determination Theory and the Dualistic Model of Passion. The cross-sectional design was utilized to capture the psychological and behavioral dynamics of the respondents at a specific point in time, allowing for the robust statistical evaluation of direct and indirect effects within the structural model.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprises all civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara) working at the Regional Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency (BKPSDM) of Tabanan Regency, Indonesia. The total population consists of 66 employees. Given the relatively small and manageable size of the population, this study utilized a saturated sampling technique (census method), wherein the entire population of 66 employees was included as the sample. This approach eliminates sampling error and ensures maximum representativeness. Furthermore, based on the Central Limit Theorem, a sample size of 66 sufficiently exceeds the minimum threshold required for the asymptotic normality of estimators in path analysis (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012), ensuring the statistical validity of the parametric tests employed.

Data Collection and Instruments

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. To ensure efficiency, anonymity, and high response rates, the questionnaire was distributed digitally via Google Forms. The instrument utilized a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to measure the respondents' perceptions across all constructs.

The variables were operationalized using established indicators from recent, validated literature. Work Passion (X1) was measured using five dimensions adapted from Vallerand et al. (2014), encompassing emotional attachment, self-identification, engagement, meaning, and work-life balance. Work Motivation (X2) was assessed using five indicators reflecting physical needs, security, social needs, esteem, and self-actualization, adapted from Hasibuan (2019) and Robbins and Judge (2022). Job Satisfaction (Z) was measured through five facets: the work itself, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, and co-worker relationships, based on Robbins and Judge (2019). Finally, Employee Performance (Y) was evaluated using six indicators, including productivity, work quality, timeliness, process efficiency, work initiative, and information management (Anakpo et al., 2023; Zeer et al., 2023). Prior to the main data collection, instrument validity and reliability were confirmed through pilot testing, yielding valid item correlations and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the 0.60 threshold for all constructs.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the model was unbiased and consistent. Normality was verified using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, multicollinearity was assessed via Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, and heteroscedasticity was examined using the Glejser test. All assumptions were satisfactorily met.

To evaluate the complex relationships and the mediating role of job satisfaction, Path Analysis was employed. Path analysis allows for the decomposition of correlations into direct and indirect effects, providing a comprehensive understanding of the structural model. The goodness of fit was assessed using the multiple coefficient of determination (R^2) to determine the proportion of variance in the endogenous variables explained by the exogenous variables.

Hypothesis testing for direct effects was conducted by evaluating the t-statistics and p-values associated with the path coefficients, using a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. To specifically ascertain the significance of the indirect (mediating) effects of job satisfaction, the Sobel test was utilized. The Sobel test calculates the standard error of the indirect effect and generates a z-statistic (or t-statistic in small samples) to determine whether the mediation pathway is statistically significant, thereby providing rigorous empirical validation for H6 and H7.

RESULT

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study utilized a saturated sample of 66 civil servants, providing a comprehensive representation of the workforce at the Regional Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency (BKPSDM) of Tabanan Regency. The demographic profile indicates a relatively balanced gender distribution, comprising 34 female employees (51.5%) and 32 male employees (48.5%). The age distribution reveals that the majority of the workforce falls within the highly productive and experienced age brackets; specifically, 24 employees (36.4%) are aged 30–40 years, and another 24 employees (36.4%) are aged 41–50 years. Employees under 30 years old account for 15.2%, while those above 50 years old constitute 12.1%. Regarding educational background, the agency is predominantly staffed by highly educated professionals, with 42 respondents (63.6%) holding a Bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 11 employees (16.7%) have a high school diploma, 7 (10.6%) hold a Diploma degree, and 6 (9.1%) possess a Master's degree. This demographic composition underscores a mature, well-educated, and gender-balanced public sector workforce, which provides a robust and representative foundation for evaluating the proposed psychological and behavioral models.

Measurement Model Assessment

Prior to estimating the structural model, the measurement model was rigorously evaluated to ensure the validity and reliability of the constructs. Convergent validity was assessed by examining the Pearson correlation coefficients of each indicator against the total variable score. All indicators across the four constructs—work passion, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance—demonstrated significant correlations ($p < 0.05$) with values exceeding the critical r -table threshold of 0.204, confirming that all items were valid for further analysis. Subsequently, internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. As summarized in Table 1, all constructs yielded Alpha coefficients well above the 0.60 threshold, indicating high reliability and confirming that the instruments consistently measured the intended theoretical concepts.

Table 1. Measurement Model Assessment: Validity and Reliability

Construct	Number of Items	Validity Status ($r > 0.204$)	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Status ($\alpha > 0.60$)
Work Passion (X1)	7	All Valid	0.784	Reliable
Work Motivation (X2)	7	All Valid	0.782	Reliable
Job Satisfaction (Z)	8	All Valid	0.772	Reliable
Employee Performance (Y)	8	All Valid	0.783	Reliable

Classical Assumption Tests

To guarantee that the path analysis estimates were unbiased, consistent, and optimal, classical assumption tests were conducted. Normality was evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which yielded an asymptotic significance value of 0.118 (greater than the 0.05 alpha level), indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. Multicollinearity was assessed by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. As shown in Table 2, all independent variables exhibited Tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values below 10, confirming the absence of severe multicollinearity. Finally, the Glejser test was employed to detect heteroskedasticity. The significance values for all independent variables predicting the absolute residuals were greater than 0.05 (Work Passion = 0.389; Work Motivation = 0.317; Job Satisfaction = 0.295), confirming that the model was homoscedastic and free from heteroskedasticity issues.

Table 2. Classical Assumption Tests Results

Test	Variable / Parameter	Statistic / Value	Threshold	Conclusion
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	0.118 (Asymp. Sig.)	> 0.05	Normally Distributed
Multicollinearity	Work Passion (X1)	Tolerance : 0.791 VIF: 1.264	Tol > 0.10 VIF < 10	No Multicollinearity
	Work Motivation (X2)	Tolerance : 0.483 VIF: 2.072	Tol > 0.10 VIF < 10	No Multicollinearity
Heteroskedasticity	Glejser Test (All_vars)	Sig. values > 0.05	> 0.05	Homoscedasticity

Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

With the measurement model and classical assumptions satisfied, the structural model was estimated using path analysis to evaluate the direct, indirect, and total effects among the variables. The structural equations derived from the path analysis, incorporating the calculated error terms ($\epsilon_1 = 0.706$; $\epsilon_2 = 0.709$), are formulated as follows:

$$\text{Job Satisfaction (Z)} = 0.123 X_1 + 0.646 X_2 + 0.706 \epsilon_1 \dots (1)$$

$$\text{Employee Performance (Y)} = 0.586 X_1 + 0.137 X_2 + 0.332 Z + 0.709 \epsilon_2 \dots (2)$$

Equation (1) illustrates that work motivation exerts a substantially stronger influence on job satisfaction compared to work passion. Equation (2) demonstrates the direct contributions of work passion, work motivation, and job satisfaction toward employee performance. The overall model demonstrated a strong goodness of fit, with a multiple coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.750, indicating that the proposed variables explain 75% of the variance in employee performance and job satisfaction within this public sector context.

Table 3. Summary of Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	X1 → Z	0.123	-	0.123	1.249	0.216	Not Supported
H2	X2 → Z	0.646	-	0.646	6.544	0.000	Supported
H3	X1 → Y	0.586	0.041	0.627	5.792	0.000	Supported
H4	X2 → Y	0.137	0.214	0.351	1.060	0.293	Not Supported
H5	Z → Y	0.332	-	0.332	2.604	0.012	Supported
H6	X1 → Z → Y	-	0.041	0.041	1.006	> 0.05	Not Supported
H7	X2 → Z → Y	-	0.214	0.214	2.185	< 0.05	Supported

The hypothesis testing results, detailed in Table 3, reveal distinct patterns of influence. Work passion was found to have a significant direct effect on employee performance (t-statistic = 5.792, $p < 0.05$), supporting H3. Conversely, work motivation did not exert a significant direct effect on employee performance (t-statistic = 1.060, $p > 0.05$), leading to the rejection of H4. Job satisfaction significantly influenced employee performance (t-statistic = 2.604, $p < 0.05$), supporting H5. Regarding the antecedents of job satisfaction, work motivation significantly predicted job satisfaction (t-statistic = 6.544, $p < 0.05$), supporting H2, whereas work passion did not show a significant effect (t-statistic = 1.249, $p > 0.05$), resulting in the rejection of H1.

To ascertain the mediating role of job satisfaction, the Sobel test was utilized to evaluate the indirect effects. The indirect effect of work passion on employee performance through job satisfaction was calculated at 0.041, with a Sobel t-statistic of 1.006. Since this value is lower than the critical t-table value of 1.998, the mediation is not significant, rejecting H6. In contrast, the indirect effect of work motivation on employee performance through job satisfaction was 0.214, yielding a Sobel t-statistic of 2.185. Because this value exceeds the critical threshold of 1.998, job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between work motivation and employee performance, supporting H7. The total effect of work motivation on performance (0.351) is thus predominantly driven by this indirect pathway, whereas the total effect of work passion (0.627) is almost entirely direct. These statistical outcomes provide a clear empirical mapping of how intrinsic and extrinsic psychological drivers differentially operate within this bureaucratic environment.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to unravel the complex psychological and organizational mechanisms that drive civil servant performance within the decentralized public sector of Indonesia, specifically focusing on the Regional Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency of Tabanan Regency. By integrating the Dualistic Model of Passion and Self-Determination Theory, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how intrinsic drives and extrinsic motivations interact with job satisfaction to influence employee performance. The findings reveal a highly intricate nomological network that challenges conventional assumptions derived from private-sector organizational behavior, highlighting the unique constraints and dynamics of public administration. The discussion below elaborates on these findings, with a particular emphasis on the unexpected pathways observed in the structural model.

The first major finding of this study confirms that work passion exerts a direct and significant influence on employee performance. In the context of the Indonesian Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN), passion operates as a profound intrinsic drive that transcends routine administrative duties. Drawing upon the Dualistic Model of Passion, civil servants who possess harmonious passion view their public service roles not merely as employment, but as a core component of their identity and a meaningful calling. This deep emotional and cognitive identification fosters a state of persistent engagement, resilience, and proactive problem-solving. Consequently, passionate employees willingly invest substantial cognitive and physical resources into their tasks, directly elevating their operational output, service quality, and overall productivity. In a bureaucratic environment where tasks can often become monotonous, this intrinsic passion serves as a vital psychological engine that sustains high-level performance without the immediate need for external validation.

However, a highly unexpected and theoretically significant finding of this research is the non-significant effect of work passion on job satisfaction within this public sector context. In many private-sector studies, passion is consistently identified as a primary antecedent of job satisfaction. Yet, in the rigid bureaucratic setting of the BKPSDM Tabanan, passion alone fails to translate into a satisfied workforce. This phenomenon can be explained by the fundamental distinction between the act of working and the evaluation of work conditions. Work passion is deeply tied to the task itself and the employee's internal sense of purpose. Conversely, job satisfaction is a broader affective evaluation of the entire work environment, encompassing extrinsic factors such as compensation, promotional opportunities, supervisory support, and organizational policies.

In the Indonesian public sector, ASN employees operate under stringent bureaucratic regulations, standardized operating procedures, and highly rigid job descriptions that severely limit individual autonomy. Even if a civil servant is deeply passionate about serving the public, this intrinsic drive cannot compensate for structural frustrations, such as administrative burdens, limited career mobility, or perceived inequities in the reward system. The bureaucratic formalism inherent in government agencies often suppresses the actualization of

passion, creating a dissonance where employees love the purpose of their work but remain dissatisfied with the conditions under which they execute it. Therefore, while passion successfully drives the behavioral outcome of performance, it is insufficient to generate holistic job satisfaction in an environment constrained by rigid public sector paradigms.

Parallel to the passion construct, the study revealed another unexpected finding: work motivation does not have a significant direct effect on employee performance. Traditionally, motivation is heralded as the most direct catalyst for productivity. However, in the specific context of regional government agencies, high motivation alone cannot bypass structural bottlenecks to directly improve performance. Motivation, particularly when conceptualized through the lens of fulfilling physical, security, and social needs, requires a highly supportive and responsive organizational environment to materialize into tangible output. In a bureaucratic setting characterized by red tape, hierarchical delays, and strict compliance requirements, a highly motivated civil servant may find their efforts stifled by systemic inefficiencies. The rigid job descriptions and standardized procedures dictate the pace and method of work, meaning that an employee's internal drive cannot unilaterally accelerate or enhance performance if the organizational structure does not permit flexibility. Thus, motivation in the public sector is not a direct behavioral trigger but rather a psychological prerequisite that requires organizational mediation.

This structural constraint perfectly explains the subsequent finding regarding the significant indirect effect of work motivation on performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction. According to Self-Determination Theory, motivation creates an expectation of need fulfillment. When civil servants are motivated, they anticipate that their efforts will be met with adequate extrinsic rewards, fair treatment, and a supportive work environment. It is the actual realization of these expectations – manifested as job satisfaction – that ultimately unlocks optimal performance. In the BKPSDM Tabanan, motivation drives employees to seek a harmonious and rewarding work environment. When the organization successfully meets these motivational needs through equitable compensation, supportive supervision, and positive coworker relations, it generates a high level of job satisfaction.

Once this affective state of satisfaction is achieved, it acts as the true catalyst for performance. Satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors, demonstrate higher compliance with public service standards, and maintain consistent productivity despite bureaucratic hurdles. Therefore, in the public sector, motivation does not directly produce performance; rather, it produces the psychological satisfaction necessary for employees to navigate the rigidities of their roles effectively. This sequential pathway underscores that in government agencies, extrinsic and social motivational drivers must first be validated by a satisfying work environment before they can translate into measurable administrative outcomes.

Furthermore, the study confirms that job satisfaction significantly and directly enhances employee performance. In public administration, where tasks are heavily regulated and often lack immediate market-driven feedback, an

employee's affective state is crucial for maintaining organizational cohesion and service quality. Satisfied civil servants possess a positive psychological orientation toward their institution, which reduces turnover intentions and fosters a proactive approach to public service delivery. When ASNs feel valued by their organization and comfortable within their work environment, they are more resilient to the stresses of bureaucratic demands and more committed to achieving institutional targets. This finding aligns with affective events theory, which posits that positive workplace evaluations lead to sustained effort and optimal behavioral outcomes. In the context of decentralized governance, where local agencies are tasked with delivering responsive public services, the satisfaction of the workforce is a non-negotiable prerequisite for institutional effectiveness.

Synthesizing these findings, this research illuminates a dual-pathway model of performance in the public sector. The first pathway is an intrinsic, identity-driven route wherein work passion directly fuels performance, bypassing the need for job satisfaction. This pathway highlights the resilience of public service motivation, where a deep-seated calling drives behavioral output regardless of environmental frustrations. The second pathway is an extrinsic, environment-dependent route wherein work motivation must first be transformed into job satisfaction before it can impact performance. This pathway reflects the realities of bureaucratic life, where structural constraints dictate that internal drives must be validated by organizational support to yield results.

These insights provide a profound theoretical enrichment to public administration literature. Previous studies often assumed that passion and motivation uniformly enhance both satisfaction and performance, extrapolating models from the private sector. This study dismantles that assumption, proving that the public sector's unique regulatory and structural environment fundamentally alters the psychological contracts of its employees. By demonstrating that passion can drive performance without satisfaction, and that motivation requires satisfaction to drive performance, this research offers a highly contextualized and realistic framework for understanding civil servant behavior. It underscores that public sector human resource management cannot rely on a monolithic approach; instead, it must recognize the distinct psychological mechanisms that govern intrinsic passion and extrinsic motivation within the boundaries of bureaucratic governance. Ultimately, optimizing civil service performance requires not only nurturing the passion for public service but also meticulously designing organizational conditions that satisfy the motivational needs of the workforce.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study set out to examine the complex mechanisms through which work passion and work motivation influence employee performance, with job satisfaction acting as an intervening variable within the public sector context of the Regional Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency (BKPSDM) of Tabanan Regency. Based on the empirical findings and the preceding discussion, several critical conclusions can be drawn. First, work

passion exerts a direct and significant influence on employee performance, yet it fails to significantly impact job satisfaction. This indicates that in a rigid bureaucratic environment, an employee's intrinsic love for their public service duties drives their operational output directly, bypassing the need for affective satisfaction with organizational conditions. Second, work motivation does not directly improve employee performance; rather, its effect is fully mediated by job satisfaction. This highlights that extrinsic and social motivational drivers in the public sector must first be validated by a satisfying work environment—characterized by fair rewards, supportive supervision, and harmonious coworker relations—before they can translate into measurable administrative outcomes. Finally, job satisfaction serves as a critical catalyst for performance, confirming that a positive psychological evaluation of the workplace is indispensable for sustaining civil service productivity.

Based on these conclusions, several practical recommendations are proposed for the management of BKPSDM Tabanan. To leverage the direct impact of work passion, the agency's leadership must prioritize person-job fit during the placement and rotation of civil servants. By aligning employees' personal interests and competencies with their specific bureaucratic roles, the agency can naturally stimulate harmonious passion, which in turn directly elevates service quality and task efficiency. Concurrently, because work motivation relies entirely on job satisfaction to influence performance, the agency cannot rely solely on motivational rhetoric or extrinsic incentives. Management must actively cultivate a highly satisfying work environment. This involves implementing equitable reward systems, ensuring transparent and accessible career promotion pathways, fostering supportive and participative leadership styles, and maintaining a comfortable, collaborative physical and social work environment. By systematically addressing these environmental and structural factors, BKPSDM Tabanan can successfully convert employee motivation into job satisfaction, thereby unlocking optimal and sustained civil servant performance.

SUGGESTION

Despite the robust theoretical and empirical contributions of this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research utilized a saturated sample of 66 employees from a single regional government agency. While this census approach eliminates sampling error for the specific population, the relatively small sample size and highly specific context limit the external validity and generalizability of the findings to other public sector organizations or larger populations. Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time. Consequently, while path analysis establishes statistical relationships, it cannot definitively prove long-term causal dynamics between psychological drivers and behavioral outcomes. Third, the data were collected using self-administered questionnaires.

This method introduces the potential for Common Method Variance (CMV) and self-reporting bias, as respondents might overstate their passion, motivation, or performance due to social desirability effects.

Future research should address these limitations by adopting a longitudinal research design, which would allow scholars to track the causal evolution of passion, motivation, and satisfaction over time. Additionally, subsequent studies should incorporate multi-source data collection, such as integrating supervisor-rated performance appraisals or objective administrative metrics, to mitigate CMV and provide a more objective assessment of employee performance. Researchers are also encouraged to expand the sample size by conducting multi-regional studies across various government agencies in Indonesia, enabling comparative analyses between different bureaucratic cultures. Finally, future investigations could explore potential moderating variables, such as bureaucratic red tape, transformational leadership, or organizational culture, to further unravel the boundary conditions that dictate how psychological drivers operate within the public sector.

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