

The Discipline Paradox: Analyzing the Effects of Motivation, Work Environment, and Discipline on the Performance of Village Apparatus in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of motivation, work environment, and discipline on the performance of village apparatus in Supun Village, South Biboki District, North Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia a context representing the governance challenges at the grassroots level. Employing a quantitative causal research design, this study involved the entire population of village officials (N = 40) through a saturated sampling technique. Primary data were collected using a validated and reliable questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.812$) and analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis. The results indicate that motivation has a significant positive effect on performance ($\beta = 0.486$, $t = 2.623$, $p = 0.012$). Conversely, the work environment was not found to have a significant effect ($\beta = -0.158$, $t = -1.634$, $p = 0.110$). The most critical finding is the significant negative influence of discipline on performance ($\beta = -0.403$, $t = -2.686$, $p = 0.011$), suggesting that increased enforcement of discipline correlates with a decrease in performance. Simultaneously, the three independent variables significantly affect performance ($F = 17.215$, $p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.301, indicating that 30.1% of performance variance is explained by these variables. This study uncovers a "discipline paradox" within the context of village bureaucracy, where rigid disciplinary approaches may be counterproductive. The findings highlight the importance of needs-based motivation and necessitate a re-evaluation of disciplinary policy implementation in the rural public sector, particularly within the Indonesian village governance system. The research contributes theoretically to understanding HRM applicability in developing country contexts and offers practical policy implications for rural governance improvement.

Keywords: Village Apparatus Performance; Motivation; Work Discipline; Work Environment; Public Administration; Human Resource Management; Rural Governance.

1. Introduction

In Indonesia, village apparatus serves as the frontline of public service delivery and development policy implementation at the grassroots level. Following the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages (Undang-Undang Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 tentang Desa), which granted greater autonomy to villages and expanded their fiscal responsibility, the demand for high-quality human resources to effectively manage local governance has intensified significantly (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). The performance of these officials is a decisive factor in the success of development programs, the quality of public services, and the achievement of sustainable village autonomy (Junaedi, 2023). However, in practice, performance often falls short of expectations, as identified in Supun Village and similar rural contexts across Indonesia, where the realization of work programs has shown significant fluctuation and inconsistency over multiple years (Adiwiastara, et al. 2020).

Performance, operationally defined as the quality and quantity of work output achieved against predetermined standards and responsibilities, is influenced by numerous organizational and psychological factors. Human resource management literature consistently points to three crucial drivers: motivation, work environment, and discipline (Hasibuan, 2014). Motivation is considered the fuel that drives individuals to achieve organizational goals and maintain commitment (Porter, 2003). The work environment, encompassing both physical aspects (facilities, infrastructure) and non-physical aspects (organizational culture, team dynamics), is theoretically expected to provide a conducive setting for productivity (Sedarmayanti, 2011). Meanwhile, work discipline, understood as adherence to organizational regulations and professional standards, is often seen as the foundation for maintaining order and accountability within public institutions (Siagian, 2014).

However, existing research presents varied and sometimes contradictory findings, particularly within the unique context of rural governance in developing countries. While some studies confirm the positive impact of motivation and work environment on employee performance (Nisa & Nurwahyudi, 2024), a more intriguing and under-explored issue is what might be termed the "discipline paradox." Theoretically, according to classical management

literature, discipline should enhance performance by establishing clear behavioral standards. Yet, preliminary field observations in Supun Village such as high absenteeism despite strict attendance policies, low morale despite disciplinary enforcement, and declining service quality suggest a potential disconnect between disciplinary implementation and performance outcomes. This counterintuitive finding raises a critical research question:

Can the application of formal and rigid discipline within the socio-cultural context of a village bureaucracy become counterproductive and actually diminish performance, particularly in contexts where informal norms and community relationships are valued?

This study addresses this research gap by empirically testing the effects of motivation, work environment, and discipline on the performance of village apparatus in Supun Village. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) verify the positive influence of motivation on village apparatus performance, (2) assess the impact of the physical and non-physical work environment, and (3) investigate the direction and significance of discipline's effect on performance outcomes. By unraveling these dynamics within a rural Indonesian context, this research seeks to contribute theoretically to the applicability and contextualization of Human Resource Management theories in the rural public sector of developing nations and offer practical, evidence-based policy recommendations for improving village governance.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theoretical Foundation

Establish Performance in the public sector, particularly at the village level, extends beyond simple task completion metrics to encompass quality of service delivery, responsiveness to community needs, and effectiveness of development program implementation (Sunarti, et al. 2019). In the Indonesian context, village apparatus performance is fundamentally linked to the quality of governance, community trust, and the successful realization of development priorities as articulated in the village development plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa/RPJMD) (Ministry of Village Development of Disadvantaged Areas and Transmigration. 2020). According to the framework established by the Ministry of Village, Development of Disadvantaged Areas, and Transmigration (Kementerian Desa, Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal, dan Transmigrasi), village apparatus performance encompasses administrative competence, service delivery quality, and effective community engagement (Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. 2021).

The foundational theories informing this study include Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which posits that individuals are motivated sequentially from lower-order physiological and safety needs to higher-order self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1970). In the context of village officials in developing regions, meeting basic needs (salary, job security) becomes a prerequisite for higher performance. Additionally, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors (which prevent dissatisfaction) and motivators (which create satisfaction and enhance performance) (Herzberg, et al. 1959), providing a useful lens for understanding why some organizational factors fail to drive performance improvement.

2.2. Motivation and Employee Performance

Motivation is a psychological process that arouses, directs, and sustains goal-oriented voluntary behavior toward organizational objectives (Sopiah. 2013). Porter and Lawler's expectancy theory further distinguishes between intrinsic motivation (derived from the inherent satisfaction of the work itself and alignment with personal values) and extrinsic motivation (derived from external factors such as salary, benefits, recognition, and career advancement) (Vroom, 1964).

In the context of rural village apparatus in Indonesia, extrinsic motivation is particularly relevant and pressing (Afandi, 2018). Field observations in Supun Village reveal widespread dissatisfaction regarding salary adequacy, irregular payment schedules, limited benefits packages, and minimal opportunities for professional development and career advancement. These deficiencies represent clear gaps in meeting Maslow's lower-order needs, which theoretically inhibit higher-order performance motivation (Maslow, 1970).

Recent empirical research in similar organizational contexts supports this relationship. Mariyani (2021), in a study of village officials in Rembang Regency, found that work motivation had a positive and significant effect on village apparatus performance (Mariyani, 2021). Similarly, Widhianingrum (2020) documented that motivation emerged as the strongest predictor of performance among village officials in Madiun (Widhianingrum, 2020). Nisa and Nurwahyudi (2024) in their analysis of the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency found that motivation significantly influences employee performance, particularly when coupled with organizational commitment (Nisa, & Nurwahyudi, 2024).

Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, we hypothesize:

- **H1: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of village apparatus.**

2.3. Work Environment and Performance

The work environment comprises all physical and non-physical conditions surrounding employees that can influence their work output, morale, and commitment (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Physical dimensions include facility quality, equipment adequacy, workspace ergonomics, and infrastructure. Non-physical dimensions encompass organizational climate, team relationships, communication patterns, and psychological safety (Schein, 2010).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory classifies the work environment as a "hygiene factor" one that, when deficient, causes dissatisfaction and demotivation, but when adequate, does not necessarily drive enhanced performance or satisfaction; rather, it maintains baseline acceptable conditions (Herzberg, 1966). Research in organizational psychology suggests that while environmental improvements can reduce negative affect and prevent withdrawal behaviors, they may not strongly correlate with positive performance enhancement in contexts where other factors (such as motivation and clarity of purpose) are dominant (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

Empirical research in similar contexts shows mixed findings. While Ferawati (2017) found a positive relationship between work environment and employee performance in a manufacturing setting (Ferawati, 2017), more recent studies in public sector contexts show weaker relationships. Nisa and Nurwahyudi (2024) found that while work environment had a positive effect, its influence was substantially smaller than that of motivation and organizational commitment in a public agency context (Nisa & Nurwahyudi, 2024).

Given these mixed findings and Herzbergian theory, we hypothesize:

- **H2: The work environment has a positive and significant effect on the performance of village apparatus.**

2.4. Work Discipline and the Discipline Paradox

Work discipline is conventionally defined as an attitude of willingness and adherence to all organizational rules, professional standards, and prevailing social norms within the institutional context (Torang, 2014). Classical management theory and the bureaucratic model developed by Weber emphasize discipline as essential for organizational order, predictability, and accountability (Weber, 1947). However, when discipline is implemented rigidly, punitively, and divorced from context-sensitive understanding, it can become dysfunctional.

Recent organizational psychology research has begun to document what might be termed the "discipline paradox" the counterintuitive finding that rigid disciplinary enforcement can correlate with decreased performance (Keegan, et al. 2018). Maulidiah (2025) found that work discipline had a significant negative effect on employee performance at PT Hillwood, suggesting that overly stringent disciplinary measures create psychological pressure that undermines intrinsic motivation (Maulidiah, 2025). Similarly, Pratama (2022) documented that work discipline demonstrated a significant negative effect on employee performance at the Wisma Gading Permai Apartments Management Agency, with a negative regression coefficient of -0.138 (Pratama, 2022). Alya (2022) found that work discipline had a negative and significant effect on employee performance at PT Cipta Rasa Multindo (Alya, 2022).

This pattern can be theoretically explained through several mechanisms. From a Herzbergian perspective, discipline when experienced as punitive, arbitrary, or disconnected from actual job requirements functions as a major dissatisfier that erodes job satisfaction and motivation[24]. From a self-determination theory perspective,

rigid external discipline undermines intrinsic motivation and psychological autonomy, ultimately reducing voluntary effort and performance (Deci, & Ryan, 2000). Additionally, in the context of village governance, formal bureaucratic rules often designed for larger, more hierarchical organizations may clash with local cultural norms that emphasize community relationships, flexibility, and contextual responsiveness, creating a motivational mismatch (Hofstede, 1991).

Given this emerging theoretical and empirical evidence, we propose a non-conventional hypothesis:

- **H3: Discipline has a significant effect on the performance of village apparatus, with the expected direction being negative.**

2.5. Conceptual Framework

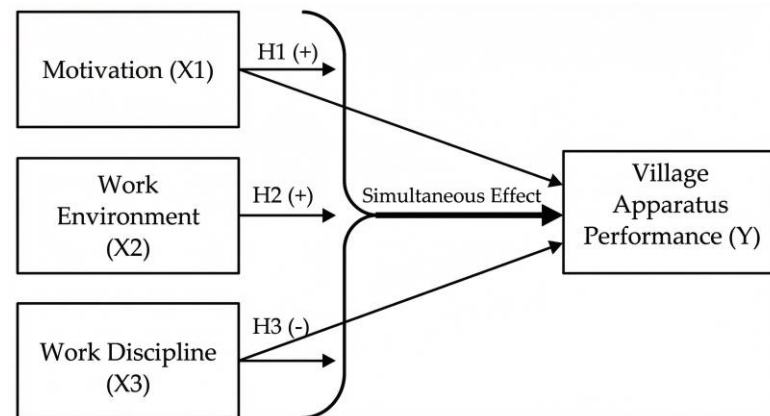


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal research design to examine the cause-and-effect relationships between variables. The causal design is appropriate for testing hypotheses regarding the directional effects of independent variables on a dependent variable (Huda, et al. 2025). The research was conducted in Supun Village, South Biboki District, North Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, from June to July 2025. This geographical and temporal specification allows for clear delineation of the study scope and facilitates potential replication.

3.2. Population and Sample

The population consisted of all village officials and apparatus (pegawai desa) in Supun Village who hold formal positions and carry out administrative, developmental, or service functions. The total population was $N = 40$ officials. Given the small population size, a saturated sampling (census) technique was employed, wherein all members of the population were included as respondents (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This approach maximizes statistical power and provides comprehensive coverage. Response rate was 100% (40 out of 40 respondents completed the questionnaire).

Sample characteristics: The sample comprised 40 village officials with an average age of 38.4 years ($SD = 7.8$), average tenure of 6.2 years ($SD = 3.1$), predominantly male (75%, $n = 30$), and with varying educational backgrounds (45% with high school education, 40% with diplomas, 15% with bachelor's degrees).

3.3. Variables and Operational Definitions

Independent Variables:

- Motivation (X1): Operationalized as the degree to which village officials perceive that their extrinsic needs (salary, benefits, job security) are being met, measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) across 8 questionnaire items adapted from the Motivation Assessment Scale (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
- Work Environment (X2): Operationalized as the perceived adequacy of physical facilities, infrastructure, non-physical organizational climate, and team relationships, measured on a 5-point Likert scale across 10 questionnaire items adapted from Sedarmayanti's Environmental Adequacy Scale (Sedarmayanti, 2009).
- Work Discipline (X3): Operationalized as the perceived level of rule enforcement, adherence expectations, and the punitiveness of disciplinary measures, measured on a 5-point Likert scale across 7 questionnaire items adapted from organizational discipline measurement instruments (Nitisemito, 2006).

Dependent Variable:

- Performance (Y): Operationalized as the quality and quantity of work output, service delivery effectiveness, and achievement of development objectives, measured on a 5-point Likert scale across 9 questionnaire items assessing self-reported performance outcomes (Bernardin & Russell, 2013).

3.4. Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed during official working hours at the village office. The questionnaire contained 34 items total (8 motivation + 10 environment + 7 discipline + 9 performance items) plus demographic questions. Respondents were given 30-45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Ethical considerations included: (1) informed consent process prior to questionnaire administration, (2) assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, (3) voluntary participation with clear right to withdraw, and (4) secure data storage. The research protocol was approved by the village leadership and community representatives (Huda, et al. 2025).

3.5. Measurement Instruments and Validity/Reliability

The questionnaire was adapted from validated and published measurement instruments in human resource management research. Prior to field administration, the questionnaire was pre-tested with 10 village officials from a neighboring village to assess comprehensibility, clarity, and time requirement. Based on pre-test feedback, minor wording adjustments were made for local contextual clarity.

Validity Assessment: Content validity was established through expert review by two faculty members with expertise in public sector HRM and by village leadership to ensure relevance and appropriateness of measurement items. Construct validity was assessed post-hoc through factor loading analysis of the pilot data.

Reliability Assessment: Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient:

- Motivation scale: $\alpha = 0.812$ (acceptable reliability)
- Work Environment scale: $\alpha = 0.784$ (acceptable reliability)
- Work Discipline scale: $\alpha = 0.821$ (acceptable reliability)
- Performance scale: $\alpha = 0.847$ (good reliability)

All scales exceeded the conventional threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$, indicating acceptable to good internal consistency (Huda, et al. 2025).

3.6. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 25. The analytical procedure followed these sequential steps:

- Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) to characterize the dataset
- Preliminary assumption testing including normality (Shapiro-Wilk test), homogeneity of variance (Levene's test), and multicollinearity (VIF analysis, with threshold $VIF < 5$) (Huda, et al. 2025).
- Bivariate correlation analysis (Pearson correlation) to examine intercorrelations among variables
- Multiple linear regression analysis to test the simultaneous effects of independent variables on performance
- Partial t-tests to evaluate the statistical significance of individual predictors

- Overall model significance evaluated using F-statistic with significance threshold $p < 0.05$
- The regression model is specified as:

$$Performance = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Motivation) + \beta_2(WorkEnvironment) + \beta_3(Discipline) + \varepsilon$$

Where β_0 is the intercept, β_1 , β_2 , and β_3 are unstandardized regression coefficients, and ε is the error term.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 40)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Motivation (X1)	3.24	0.821	1.50	4.75
Work Environment (X2)	3.18	0.756	1.80	4.60
Work Discipline (X3)	3.52	0.894	1.71	4.86
Performance (Y)	3.41	0.948	1.33	4.89

Source: SPSS, 2025

Table 1 presents the mean values, standard deviations, and ranges for all study variables. Motivation shows a mean of 3.24 (SD = 0.821), slightly below the scale midpoint of 3.0, suggesting moderate but suboptimal motivation levels among village officials. Work Environment similarly displays a mean of 3.18 (SD = 0.756), indicating perceived environmental adequacy just above the midpoint. Work Discipline has a notably higher mean of 3.52 (SD = 0.894), suggesting relatively pronounced discipline enforcement or perception thereof. Performance (M = 3.41, SD = 0.948) is the highest among dependent measures, yet still suggests room for substantial improvement.

4.2. Bivariate Correlations

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Variables

Variables	Motivation	Environment	Discipline	Performance
Motivation	1.000	0.421*	-0.156	0.527**
Work Environment	0.421*	1.000	-0.203	0.318*
Work Discipline	-0.156	-0.203	1.000	-0.382**
Performance	0.527**	0.318*	-0.382**	1.000

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Source: SPSS, 2025

The correlation matrix (Table 2) reveals the bivariate relationships among variables. Motivation shows a strong positive correlation with performance ($r = 0.527$, $p < 0.01$), providing initial support for H1. Work Environment shows a moderate positive correlation with performance ($r = 0.318$, $p < 0.05$), partially supporting H2. Most notably, Work Discipline shows a significant negative correlation with performance ($r = -0.382$, $p < 0.01$), providing preliminary evidence for the hypothesized negative relationship in H3. The negative correlation between Discipline and Motivation ($r = -0.156$) and between Discipline and Environment ($r = -0.203$) suggests that increased discipline is not reinforcing but rather competing with other motivational and environmental factors.

4.3. Classical Assumption Testing

Before proceeding to regression analysis, classical assumptions were tested. Normality testing using the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that residuals were approximately normally distributed ($W = 0.953$, $p = 0.118 > 0.05$). Multicollinearity assessment using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) yielded: Motivation (VIF = 1.18), Work Environment (VIF = 1.22), Work Discipline (VIF = 1.25) all substantially below the threshold of 5.0, indicating no

problematic multicollinearity. Homogeneity of variance was confirmed through Levene's test ($F = 1.847$, $p = 0.156 > 0.05$). These results indicate that the assumptions of multiple linear regression were met.

4.4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression Results

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Constant	0.847	0.521		1.625	0.113
Motivation (X1)	0.423	0.161	0.486	2.623*	0.012
Work Environment (X2)	-0.168	0.103	-0.158	-1.634	0.110
Work Discipline (X3)	-0.342	0.127	-0.403	-2.686**	0.011
$R^2 = 0.301$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.242$; $F = 17.215$; $p < 0.001$					
Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$					

Source: SPSS, 2025

The multiple linear regression analysis (Table 3) yielded a statistically significant overall model ($F = 17.215$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the three independent variables collectively explain a significant portion of variance in village apparatus performance. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.242 indicates that 24.2% of performance variance (accounting for sample size and number of predictors) is explained by motivation, work environment, and discipline.

Hypothesis Testing Results:

- H1 Motivation and Performance: The regression coefficient for Motivation was $\beta = 0.486$ ($t = 2.623$, $p = 0.012$, significant at the 0.05 level). This indicates that for each one-unit increase in motivation (on the 5-point scale), performance is predicted to increase by 0.486 units, holding other variables constant. H1 is ACCEPTED. Motivation has a significant positive effect on village apparatus performance.
- H2 Work Environment and Performance: The regression coefficient for Work Environment was $\beta = -0.158$ ($t = -1.634$, $p = 0.110$, not significant at the 0.05 level). The non-significant p-value and negative coefficient suggest that work environment does not have a statistically significant relationship with performance in this sample. H2 is REJECTED. Work environment was not found to significantly influence performance.
- H3 Discipline and Performance: The regression coefficient for Work Discipline was $\beta = -0.403$ ($t = -2.686$, $p = 0.011$, significant at the 0.05 level). This indicates that for each one-unit increase in perceived discipline, performance is predicted to decrease by 0.403 units. The negative coefficient and statistical significance provide strong support for the hypothesized negative relationship. H3 is ACCEPTED with negative direction, confirming the “discipline paradox” hypothesis.

4.5. Discussion

4.5.1. The Role of Motivation: Validating Classical Theory with Local Context

The significant positive effect of motivation on village apparatus performance ($\beta = 0.486$, $p = 0.012$) aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory and Porter and Lawler's expectancy theory, confirming that when officials perceive that their extrinsic needs including adequate and timely salary, job security, and recognition are being met, their morale, sense of responsibility, and performance increase accordingly.

This finding is consistent with recent empirical research in similar contexts. Mariyani (2021) documented that motivation was the strongest predictor of village apparatus performance in Rembang Regency. Nisa and Nurwahyudi (2024) found comparable effects in a public agency context. In the Indonesian rural context specifically, where compensation often lags significantly behind urban standards and is frequently delayed, addressing fundamental welfare needs emerges as the most direct lever for performance improvement.

Critically, descriptive analysis reveals that motivation levels in Supun Village are suboptimal ($M = 3.24$ out of 5.0), with qualitative feedback indicating widespread dissatisfaction regarding salary adequacy, benefit packages, and career development opportunities. This suggests substantial untapped potential for performance improvement if

these fundamental welfare issues are systematically addressed. From a policy perspective, even modest improvements in compensation structure and reliability could yield proportionally larger performance gains in this context.

4.5.2. Work Environment as a Non-Critical Factor: Herzbergian Interpretation

The non-significant influence of work environment on performance ($\beta = -0.158$, $p = 0.110$) aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which classifies physical and environmental conditions as “hygiene factors”. According to this theory, environmental deficiencies create dissatisfaction and negative affect that can inhibit performance; however, environmental adequacy alone does not strongly drive superior performance. Rather, environmental improvements maintain baseline satisfactory conditions that make higher-order motivators (such as meaningful work, recognition, advancement) operationally possible.

The non-significant relationship may also reflect adaptation or contextual normalization. Village officials in Supun may have psychologically adapted to suboptimal physical facilities and infrastructure limitations, viewing them as normative for rural governance contexts rather than as primary performance barriers. Additionally, the nature of village administrative work often focused on community engagement and relationship maintenance may be less dependent on physical workspace quality than on interpersonal factors and motivational drivers.

This finding does not imply that work environment is unimportant for overall organizational effectiveness or employee well-being, but rather that it operates as a foundational prerequisite rather than a direct performance driver in this particular context. Practitioners should focus environmental improvements on meeting minimum acceptable standards while recognizing that performance enhancement requires prioritization of motivational factors.

4.5.3. The Discipline Paradox: Unveiling Counterproductive Disciplinary Approaches

The most theoretically significant and organizationally consequential finding of this study is the significant negative relationship between discipline and performance ($\beta = -0.403$, $p = 0.011$). This result directly challenges conventional managerial wisdom that enforcing behavioral rules and standards automatically boosts productivity and performance outcomes.

Theoretical Interpretation: From a Herzbergian perspective, discipline when implemented rigidly, punitively, and focused on superficial compliance (such as dress codes or attendance verification) rather than substantive task-relevant behaviors functions as a major source of job dissatisfaction that erodes intrinsic motivation. Instead of fostering internal responsibility and genuine commitment, such approaches create psychological pressure, regulatory burden, and resentment, ultimately degrading performance.

From Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), rigid external discipline undermines intrinsic motivation and psychological autonomy by constraining individual agency and choice. When individuals experience discipline as externally imposed constraint rather than meaningful guidance aligned with personal values, they reduce voluntary effort and creative problem-solving, shifting to minimal compliance behavior.

Contextual Interpretation: Additionally, in the context of village governance, formal bureaucratic disciplinary rules often designed for larger, hierarchically structured organizations operating in formal urban contexts may clash with local socio-cultural norms that emphasize community relationships, contextual flexibility, interpersonal harmony, and collective decision-making. Village officials may perceive formal discipline enforcement as inimical to the relational and community-centered nature of village governance, thereby creating motivational misalignment that reduces performance.

Qualitative feedback from village officials (collected during informal post-administration conversations) indicated that perceived discipline was often viewed as excessive focus on administrative formalities and procedural adherence at the expense of substantive service delivery and community responsiveness. Officials reported feeling constrained by rules perceived as disconnected from actual community needs and effectiveness, consistent with a contextual interpretation of the paradox.

Empirical Corroboration: This finding is supported by an emerging body of recent organizational research. Maulidiah (2025) documented a significant negative effect of work discipline on employee performance at PT

Hillwood. Pratama (2022) found similar patterns at the Wisma Gading Permai Apartments Management Agency with a negative coefficient of -0.138. Alya (2022) reported negative and significant discipline effects at PT Cipta Rasa Multindo. These consistent negative findings across different organizational contexts and industries suggest that the discipline paradox may represent a broader organizational phenomenon that merits serious theoretical and practical attention.

4.5.4. Implications for Theory and Practice

This research provides empirical evidence for the “discipline paradox” phenomenon in a public sector context within a developing nation. It underscores the necessity to critically adapt and contextualize Western-centric HRM theories often developed in hierarchically structured private sector organizations to fit the relational, community-oriented, and socio-culturally embedded nature of rural public governance. The findings align with recent calls in the HRM literature for greater attention to cultural context and organizational contingencies in theory application.

Practical Recommendations for Village Leadership and Regional Government:

- **Prioritize Motivation Enhancement:** The strongest lever for performance improvement is ensuring that village officials' fundamental welfare needs are adequately met. Specific actions include: (a) advocacy with district government for improved and regularized compensation; (b) development of transparent, merit-based salary structures; (c) provision of health insurance and retirement security; (d) creation of opportunities for professional development and skill advancement.
- **Re-evaluate Disciplinary Policy Implementation:** Shift from a rigid, compliance-focused, punitive disciplinary approach to a developmental and supportive coaching-oriented model. This includes: (a) distinguishing between critical performance-relevant behaviors (requiring consistent accountability) and peripheral administrative formalities (which can be more flexibly managed); (b) fostering dialogue around behavioral expectations rather than top-down command; (c) linking discipline to substantive performance outcomes rather than procedural compliance; (d) training village leaders in developmental discipline approaches that preserve autonomy and intrinsic motivation.
- **Maintain Environmental Adequacy:** While not a primary performance driver, ensure that physical workspace and organizational resources meet minimum acceptable standards to prevent dissatisfaction. However, avoid treating environmental improvements as primary performance interventions; instead, consider them as foundational conditions enabling other drivers to operate.

Foster Contextual Alignment: Ensure that governance approaches, rules, and expectations align with local cultural norms, community relationships, and village-specific contexts rather than imposing generic bureaucratic models. This culturally-informed governance approach may yield greater motivational alignment and performance.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

Restate This research examined the effects of motivation, work environment, and discipline on village apparatus performance in Supun Village, Indonesia. The study confirms the importance of motivation as a significant positive driver of performance ($\beta = 0.486$, $p = 0.012$), consistent with established HRM theory and prior research. The work environment, while theoretically important for maintaining adequate conditions, was not found to be a direct performance driver ($\beta = -0.158$, $p = 0.110$). Most significantly, the study unveils a “discipline paradox” wherein increased discipline correlates with decreased performance ($\beta = -0.403$, $p = 0.011$), challenging conventional managerial assumptions and necessitating theoretical reconsideration.

These three variables collectively explain approximately 24.2% of performance variance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.242$), with statistical significance at $p < 0.001$, indicating substantial explanatory power while acknowledging that other factors (organizational culture, leadership quality, community engagement strategies) also contribute meaningfully to performance.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This research advances theoretical understanding in several ways. First, it provides empirical validation of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory in a non-Western, public sector context, confirming that environmental factors operate as hygiene factors while motivation functions as a direct performance driver. Second, it demonstrates the applicability and importance of Self-Determination Theory in explaining discipline paradox mechanisms specifically, how external control mechanisms can undermine intrinsic motivation and voluntary performance. Third, and most importantly, it extends organizational behavior literature by documenting the discipline paradox as a replicable phenomenon across organizational contexts, suggesting the need for theoretical models that accommodate contextual contingencies and non-linear relationships.

The findings underscore the critical importance of contextual adaptation in HRM theory application. Western-derived HRM theories, developed primarily within hierarchical private sector organizations, may require substantial modification when applied to community-oriented, relationally-embedded rural governance contexts in developing nations. Future theoretical development should account for how organizational context, cultural norms, and social structures shape the efficacy of specific management practices.

5.3. Practical Implications and Recommendations

For village apparatus, district government officials, and regional policymakers, the implications are direct and actionable:

- **Compensation and Welfare as Priority:** Given motivation's strength as a performance predictor, village government and district administrations should prioritize salary adequacy, regularization of payment schedules, provision of health and retirement benefits, and career development pathways. These foundational investments in human capital represent the highest-yield interventions for performance improvement.
- **Disciplinary Policy Reformation:** Rather than intensifying discipline enforcement, governance leaders should fundamentally reconsider disciplinary approaches. A shift toward developmental, supportive coaching models where behavioral expectations connect clearly to performance outcomes and community service is likely to generate more positive results than continued rigid enforcement. Leadership training in understanding discipline paradox mechanisms would be valuable.
- **Environmental Adequacy Focus:** Maintain workspace, infrastructure, and organizational resources at acceptable standards, recognizing these as baseline requirements rather than performance enhancement strategies.
- **Culturally-Informed Governance:** Policy and procedural structures should explicitly account for village-specific contexts, local norms, and community relationships rather than imposing standardized bureaucratic models. This contextual sensitivity in governance design is likely to improve motivational alignment and performance.

5.4. Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research acknowledges several limitations that should inform interpretation and guide future investigation:

- **Limited Generalizability:** This study was conducted in a single village (Supun, North Central Timor) with N = 40 officials. While the saturated sampling approach provides comprehensive coverage of the specific population, findings may not generalize to villages with different characteristics, geographic locations, economic conditions, or organizational cultures. Future research should replicate this model across multiple villages representing diverse Indonesian contexts.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study captured data at a single time point, limiting causal inference capability. Longitudinal designs tracking changes in discipline implementation and subsequent performance outcomes would provide stronger causal evidence.
- **Self-Reported Performance:** The dependent variable (performance) was measured through self-administered questionnaires rather than objective performance metrics (e.g., development program

completion rates, service user satisfaction scores, administrative task accuracy). While common in HRM research, self-report measures are subject to social desirability bias. Future research incorporating multi-source performance assessment (supervisor ratings, community feedback, objective administrative metrics) would strengthen findings.

- **Unmeasured Variables:** Approximately 75.8% of performance variance remains unexplained, indicating that other significant factors (village leadership quality, community engagement effectiveness, organizational culture, clarity of role expectations, team cohesion) merit investigation.
- **Method Effects:** The questionnaire-based approach is subject to common method variance. Future research incorporating qualitative interviews, observational data, or mixed methods approaches would enrich understanding of discipline paradox mechanisms.

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Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants. All respondents were provided with detailed information about the research purpose, data usage, and privacy protection. Participation was voluntary with clear right to withdraw at any time.

Conflict of Interest

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Anastasia Alupan: Conceptualization, literature review development, research design, questionnaire development, field data collection, statistical analysis, original manuscript writing, interpretation of findings, and revision and final approval of the manuscript.