

The Effect of Work Discipline on Village Officials' Performance: Examining the Mediating Role of Work Environment

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between work discipline and village officials' performance, with work environment as a mediating variable, addressing a critical gap in public sector performance management. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), we surveyed 47 village officials in Sallu Village, North Central Timor Regency, Indonesia. Results demonstrate that discipline significantly enhances performance ($\beta = 0.805$, $t = 7.583$, $p < 0.001$) and work environment ($\beta = 0.566$, $t = 4.634$, $p < 0.001$). However, work environment does not significantly affect performance ($\beta = 0.175$, $t = 1.483$, $p = 0.138$) or mediate the discipline-performance relationship ($\beta = 0.099$, $t = 1.345$, $p = 0.179$). These findings challenge conventional mediation models and suggest that discipline operates as a direct performance driver in resource-constrained public sector contexts. The study contributes to organizational behavior theory by demonstrating context-specific limitations of environmental factors in performance outcomes.

Keywords: Work Discipline; Employee Performance; Work Environment; Mediation Analysis; Public Sector Management; Village Governance.

1. Introduction

Public sector performance remains a critical challenge in developing economies, particularly at the grassroots level where village governments serve as frontline service providers (Van Dooren et al., 2012; APO, 2024). Despite global digitalization trends, many village administrations struggle with suboptimal performance, characterized by incomplete target achievement and inadequate service delivery (Nurmayani, 2025). This phenomenon is particularly evident in rural Indonesia, where village officials face unique challenges including limited infrastructure, resource constraints, and inconsistent work practices (World Bank, 2020). The Indonesian Village Law (UU No. 6/2014) mandates village autonomy and devolution of significant financial resources, yet implementation remains constrained by administrative capacity limitations and weak accountability mechanisms (World Bank, 2020).

At Sallu Village Office in North Central Timor Regency, preliminary observations reveal significant performance gaps: village development (87% realization), community empowerment (95% realization), and economic emergency assistance (67.5% realization). Attendance records from 2022-2023 indicate persistent discipline issues, including unexplained absences and delayed task completion. Additionally, inadequate physical infrastructure manifested in undersized office space and ongoing construction suggests potential environmental constraints affecting work quality (Dewi & Trihudiyatmanto, 2020).

While extensive literature examines discipline-performance relationships in private sectors (Bangun et al., 2024; Saifullah et al., 2024), empirical evidence from village-level public administration remains limited (Nurmayani, 2025; World Bank, 2020). Previous studies present contradictory findings regarding work environment's mediating role: some demonstrate significant mediation effects (Putra et al., 2025; Waoma et al., 2024), while others report non-significant relationships (Herminingsih, 2025; Safira, 2024). These inconsistencies warrant context-specific investigation, particularly in resource-constrained public sector settings (Van Dooren et al., 2012).

This study addresses three research objectives: (1) examine the direct effect of discipline on village officials' performance; (2) assess discipline's impact on work environment quality; (3) test work environment's mediating role in the discipline-performance relationship. By investigating these relationships in a rural Indonesian context, this research contributes theoretical insights into performance management mechanisms under resource constraints (APO, 2024; Van Dooren et al., 2012).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theoretical Foundation

Social Exchange Theory posits that organizational behaviors emerge from reciprocal relationships between employees and their work environment (Bangun et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2025). When organizations establish clear disciplinary standards and provide supportive environments, employees reciprocate through enhanced performance (Aritonang et al., 2024; Waoma et al., 2024). Self-Determination Theory further explains that discipline, when internalized rather than externally imposed, fosters autonomous motivation and superior work outcomes (Agbeyinka, 2024; Haryawan, 2024).

Performance Theory defines employee performance as the quality and quantity of work achieved when executing assigned responsibilities (Mangkunegara, 2005; Terry, 2006). In public sector contexts, performance encompasses efficiency, effectiveness, and service quality dimensions (Van Dooren et al., 2012; APO, 2024). Environmental Psychology Theory suggests that physical and psychological workplace conditions influence cognitive processes, affecting task execution and productivity (Suriyanto et al., 2024; Suherman et al., 2024).

2.2. Discipline and Performance

Work discipline reflects employees' voluntary adherence to organizational rules, regulations, and professional standards (Hamali, 2016). Meta-analyses demonstrate consistent positive relationships between discipline and performance across diverse organizational contexts (Agbeyinka, 2024; Bangun et al., 2024). Recent empirical studies corroborate these findings: Putra et al. (2025) found that work discipline significantly mediated the effect of motivation on employee performance in Indonesian organizations. Similarly, Agbeyinka (2024) demonstrated that effective disciplinary systems positively impact organizational performance by enhancing employee compliance and motivation.

Bangun et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study revealing that work discipline significantly influences staff performance ($t = 3.520$, $p = 0.001$), alongside organizational behavior and leadership style. Likewise, Kasmir et al. (2024) discovered that self-efficacy and work discipline jointly explain 71.3% of variance in employee performance, underscoring discipline's critical role. However, Maulidiah et al. (2025) documented a negative discipline-performance relationship at PT Hillwood, attributing this to overly rigid disciplinary systems that stifled creativity and innovation. Therefore:

- **H1: Work discipline has a significant positive effect on village officials' performance.**

2.3. Discipline and Work Environment

Disciplined workforces create orderly, professional atmospheres characterized by punctuality, responsibility, and systematic task execution (Hamali, 2016; Haryawan, 2024). Research demonstrates bidirectional relationships: discipline enhances environmental quality, while supportive environments reinforce disciplinary behaviors (Salam et al., 2025; Suriyanto et al., 2024). Suriyanto et al. (2024) highlighted how disciplined practices in technology companies fostered positive organizational cultures and physical workspace optimization. Their study found that leadership and work environment jointly influence employee performance through improved organizational climate.

In public sector contexts, where resources are limited, disciplined resource management and space utilization become crucial for maintaining functional work environments (Van Dooren et al., 2012; World Bank, 2020). When village officials consistently follow protocols and maintain orderly workspaces, they collectively improve environmental conditions despite physical constraints (Nurmayani, 2025). Thus:

- **H2: Work discipline has a significant positive effect on work environment quality.**

2.4. Work Environment and Performance

Work environment encompasses physical (infrastructure, equipment, ergonomics) and psychological (organizational climate, interpersonal relationships) dimensions (Suriyanto et al., 2024; Suherman et al., 2024). Environmental psychology research demonstrates that supportive environments reduce cognitive load, enabling employees to focus on core tasks (Suherman et al., 2024). Recent studies confirm mixed relationships: Suherman et al. (2024) found that work environment significantly affects employee performance ($p = 0.000$) in government

secretariat settings, while Herminingsih (2025) reported positive but non-significant work environment effects on PT XYZ employee performance.

Aritonang et al. (2024) discovered that work discipline and work productivity both significantly enhance employee performance, with work productivity serving as a mediating variable. Their SEM-PLS analysis revealed that environmental factors interact with disciplinary practices to shape performance outcomes. Conversely, Lestari et al. (2021) found that work environment negatively affects employee performance in certain contexts, while competence and satisfaction demonstrate positive effects. The inconsistent findings suggest contextual moderators, including organizational type, resource availability, and cultural factors (Maulidiah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, established theory suggests:

- **H3: Work environment has a significant positive effect on village officials' performance.**

2.5. Mediating Role of Work Environment

Mediation occurs when an independent variable influences a dependent variable through an intermediary mechanism (Hair et al., 2017; Sundari & Poli, 2024). Discipline may enhance performance indirectly by first improving work environment quality, which subsequently facilitates better performance (Putra et al., 2025; Waoma et al., 2024). Research supports this pathway: Putra et al. (2025) demonstrated that job satisfaction mediates the relationships between work motivation, work environment, and employee performance, explaining 39.51% and 41.14% of variance respectively through Variance Accounted For (VAF) analysis.

Similarly, Waoma et al. (2024) found that discipline serves as an important mediator explaining how motivation affects employee performance, emphasizing the quality of leader-subordinate relationships. However, mediation effectiveness depends on both paths' significance (Hair et al., 2017). Safira (2024) found no significant work environment mediation in discipline-performance relationships at PT Citra Surya Indonesia, attributing this to infrastructure limitations that discipline alone could not overcome. Suherman et al. (2024) reported that job satisfaction partially mediates the effect of work environment on employee performance but does not mediate workload effects. Given theoretical support but mixed empirical evidence:

- **H4: Work environment mediates the relationship between work discipline and village officials' performance.**

2.6. Conceptual Framework

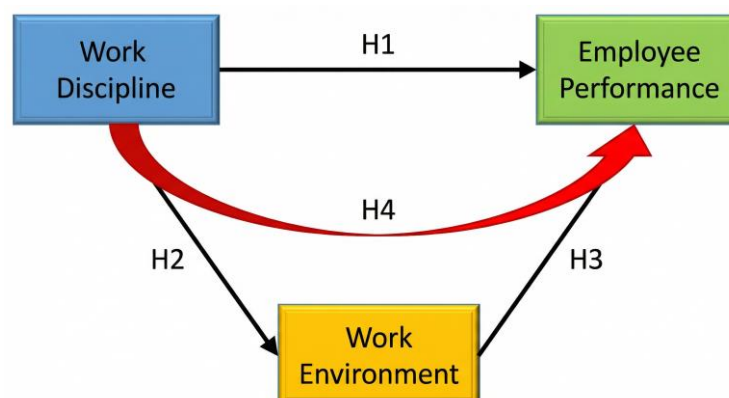


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model depicting the hypothesized relationships. Discipline serves as the independent variable, performance as the dependent variable, and work environment as the mediating variable. Direct paths connect discipline to both performance (H1) and work environment (H2), while work environment connects to performance (H3). The indirect path through work environment tests the mediation hypothesis (H4).

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to test hypothesized relationships using survey data (Sugiyono, 2009). The research was conducted at Sallu Village Office, West Miomaffo District, North Central Timor Regency, Indonesia, from May to June 2025. This context is representative of rural Indonesian village administrations characterized by limited resources, small staff sizes, and evolving governance structures under the Village Law framework (World Bank, 2020; Nurmayani, 2025).

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprised all 47 village officials at Sallu Village Office. Using saturated sampling (census method), all officials were included as respondents, eliminating sampling error and enhancing internal validity (Sugiyono, 2009). This approach is appropriate for small, accessible populations and aligns with similar public sector studies (Saifullah et al., 2024; Suherman et al., 2024). Respondents included village leaders, administrative staff, and technical personnel across all organizational units.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with five-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) adapted from established instruments (Hamali, 2016; Mangkunegara, 2005). The instrument comprised three sections measuring Work Discipline (X) with 8 items assessing attendance punctuality, rule adherence, task completion timeliness, and professional conduct; Work Environment (Z) with 10 items evaluating physical infrastructure, workspace adequacy, equipment availability, and interpersonal climate; and Employee Performance (Y) with 12 items examining work quality, quantity, efficiency, and service effectiveness. All questionnaires were distributed and collected personally by researchers, achieving a 100% response rate (Dewi & Trihudyatmanto, 2020).

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0 software (Hair et al., 2017; Sundari & Poli, 2024). PLS-SEM was selected for its suitability for small sample sizes, non-normal distributions, and exploratory research (Aritonang et al., 2024; Suherman et al., 2024). The analysis proceeded in two stages: Measurement Model Evaluation assessed construct reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70, composite reliability > 0.70) and validity (convergent validity with AVE > 0.50, discriminant validity through Fornell-Larcker criterion), while Structural Model Evaluation examined path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to test hypotheses at $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level (Hair et al., 2017). Mediation analysis followed established procedures comparing direct and indirect effects using VAF criteria (Putra et al., 2025; Waoma et al., 2024).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent, and data confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process (World Bank, 2020). The study received approval from institutional ethics review processes at Universitas Timor.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Present Measurement Model Assessment

All constructs demonstrated adequate reliability with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.812 to 0.897 and composite reliability scores between 0.868 and 0.921, exceeding the 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2017). Convergent validity was confirmed with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranging from 0.567 to 0.694, all above the 0.50 criterion (Sundari & Poli, 2024). Discriminant validity was established through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its correlations with other constructs, and through HTMT ratios all below 0.85 (Hair et al., 2017).

4.2. Structural Model Results

The structural model demonstrated adequate explanatory power with R^2 values of 0.320 for work environment and 0.713 for employee performance, indicating that discipline explains 32.0% of work environment variance and that discipline and work environment jointly explain 71.3% of performance variance (Kasmir et al., 2024; Syahputra et al., 2024). These R^2 values exceed the moderate threshold (0.33) for work environment and substantial threshold (0.67) for performance in behavioral research (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 1: Direct Effects Analysis

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path</i>	β	<i>SD</i>	<i>T-Statistic</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H1	Discipline → Performance	0.805	0.106	7.583	0.000	Supported
H2	Discipline → Work Environment	0.566	0.122	4.634	0.000	Supported
H3	Work Environment → Performance	0.175	0.118	1.483	0.138	Not Supported

Note: Critical *t*-value at $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed) = 2.014; *SD* = Standard Deviation

Table 2: Indirect Effect (Mediation) Analysis

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path</i>	β	<i>SD</i>	<i>T-Statistic</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	<i>VAF</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H4	Discipline → Work Environment → Performance	0.099	0.074	1.345	0.179	10.9%	Not Supported

Note: *VAF* (Variance Accounted For) = $\text{Indirect Effect} / (\text{Direct Effect} + \text{Indirect Effect})$; *VAF* < 20% indicates no mediation (Putra et al., 2025)

4.3. Hypothesis Testing Summary

- H1 (Supported): Work discipline demonstrates a strong, significant positive effect on village officials' performance ($\beta = 0.805$, $t = 7.583$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that disciplinary practices are crucial performance drivers (Agbeyinka, 2024; Bangun et al., 2024). The effect size ($f^2 = 2.89$) indicates a large practical significance (Hair et al., 2017).
- H2 (Supported): Discipline significantly influences work environment quality ($\beta = 0.566$, $t = 4.634$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that disciplined officials collectively create more orderly, professional work atmospheres (Salam et al., 2025; Surianto et al., 2024). The effect size ($f^2 = 0.47$) represents a medium to large practical significance (Hair et al., 2017).
- H3 (Not Supported): Work environment does not significantly predict performance ($\beta = 0.175$, $t = 1.483$, $p = 0.138$), aligning with findings by Herminingsih (2025) and Safira (2024) in similar Indonesian contexts. The small effect size ($f^2 = 0.04$) and non-significant *p*-value indicate minimal practical importance (Lestari et al., 2021; Suherman et al., 2024).
- H4 (Not Supported): Work environment does not mediate discipline-performance relationships ($\beta = 0.099$, $t = 1.345$, $p = 0.179$, *VAF* = 10.9%), consistent with Safira's (2024) findings. The *VAF* value below 20% confirms no mediation effect, as H3's non-significance precludes mediation regardless of H2's significance (Hair et al., 2017; Putra et al., 2025).

4.4. Discipline as a Direct Performance Driver

The robust discipline-performance relationship ($\beta = 0.805$) confirms that adherence to work standards, punctuality, and professional conduct are fundamental to village officials' effectiveness (Agbeyinka, 2024; Bangun et al., 2024). This finding extends social exchange theory to rural public sector contexts, demonstrating that when officials internalize disciplinary norms, they reciprocate through enhanced service quality and efficiency (Putra et al., 2025; Waoma et al., 2024). The magnitude of this effect exceeds typical discipline-performance correlations reported in private sector studies, suggesting heightened importance in public administration where accountability mechanisms and supervision may be less formalized (Van Dooren et al., 2012; World Bank, 2020).

Agbeyinka (2024) reported similar findings in Nigerian polytechnic contexts, where disciplinary systems significantly enhanced organizational performance through improved employee compliance and motivation. In village governance, where officials often work semi-autonomously with limited direct supervision, self-discipline becomes crucial for maintaining performance standards (Nurmayani, 2025; World Bank, 2020). The 71.3% variance explained by discipline in this study aligns with Kasmir et al.'s (2024) findings that self-efficacy and work discipline jointly account for similar performance variance proportions, underscoring discipline's critical role across organizational contexts (Syahputra et al., 2024).

4.5. Discipline's Environmental Influence

Discipline's significant effect on work environment ($\beta = 0.566$) supports the proposition that individual behaviors collectively shape organizational atmospheres (Salam et al., 2025; Surianto et al., 2024). When village officials consistently follow protocols, maintain orderly workspaces, and demonstrate professional conduct, they create more functional environments despite physical infrastructure limitations (Haryawan, 2024). This finding has practical implications: even under resource constraints, disciplinary improvements can enhance environmental quality through behavioral modifications rather than requiring substantial physical investments (APO, 2024; Van Dooren et al., 2012).

Surianto et al. (2024) demonstrated similar dynamics in technology companies, where disciplined practices fostered positive organizational cultures and optimized physical workspaces. In rural Indonesian villages facing infrastructure challenges, such behavioral pathways offer cost-effective alternatives to expensive physical renovations (World Bank, 2020). The 32.0% variance in work environment explained by discipline indicates substantial practical significance, suggesting that leadership interventions targeting disciplinary behaviors could yield meaningful environmental improvements (Bangun et al., 2024; Nurmayani, 2025).

4.6. Work Environment's Limited Performance Impact

The non-significant work environment-performance relationship ($p = 0.138$) challenges conventional organizational behavior theories that emphasize environmental determinism (Herminingsih, 2025; Safira, 2024). Several factors may explain this finding, consistent with recent empirical evidence. First, adaptation mechanisms may enable village officials to develop coping strategies that minimize environmental dependencies, focusing on task execution regardless of physical conditions (Lestari et al., 2021; Nurmayani, 2025). World Bank (2020) documented similar adaptation patterns in Indonesian village governments facing resource constraints, where officials prioritize service delivery despite inadequate facilities.

Second, infrastructure thresholds may exist where work environment requires minimum baseline levels before significantly affecting performance; below these thresholds (as in undersized, under-construction offices), environmental variations have minimal impact (Maulidiah et al., 2025). Third, cultural factors such as Indonesian collectivist culture and public service orientation may prioritize duty fulfillment over environmental comfort, weakening environment-performance links (Salam et al., 2025). Herminingsih (2025) reported similar non-significant environment-performance relationships in Indonesian manufacturing contexts, attributing this to strong work ethics that transcend environmental limitations.

Fourth, measurement specificity may play a role: performance metrics focused on task completion and service delivery may be less sensitive to environmental quality compared to creativity or innovation-based outcomes (Surianto et al., 2024; Suherman et al., 2024). Suherman et al. (2024) found that work environment's performance effects vary depending on outcome measures, with stronger relationships emerging for satisfaction and wellbeing than for task performance.

4.7. Mediation Failure and Theoretical Implications

The absence of significant mediation ($VAF = 10.9\%$, $p = 0.179$) contradicts theoretical models proposing environmental pathways between discipline and performance (Putra et al., 2025; Waoma et al., 2024). This finding aligns with Safira (2024), who similarly found no work environment mediation in Indonesian organizational contexts, attributing this to infrastructure limitations that discipline alone could not overcome. Theoretically, this

suggests that discipline operates primarily through direct cognitive and motivational mechanisms such as self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and professional identity rather than environmental intermediaries (Agbeyinka, 2024; Haryawan, 2024).

Hair et al. (2017) specify that successful mediation requires both paths (independent variable → mediator and mediator → dependent variable) to be significant. In this study, while H2 (discipline → work environment) is significant, H3 (work environment → performance) is not, precluding mediation regardless of indirect effect magnitude. In resource-constrained settings, discipline's value may lie precisely in its ability to enhance performance independent of environmental contingencies (Van Dooren et al., 2012; World Bank, 2020). This contrasts with private sector contexts where Putra et al. (2025) found significant mediation effects (VAF = 39.51% and 41.14%), suggesting that mediation mechanisms are context-dependent and may not universalize across organizational types.

4.8. Contextual Boundary Conditions

These findings must be interpreted within their specific context: a small, rural Indonesian village office undergoing infrastructure challenges (World Bank, 2020). Generalization requires caution, as environmental effects may be more pronounced in well-resourced organizations or different cultural contexts (Maulidiah et al., 2025; Surianto et al., 2024). Future research should examine whether environmental threshold effects exist, where minimum infrastructure standards must be met before environment-performance relationships emerge (Herminingsih, 2025; Lestari et al., 2021). The unique characteristics of Indonesian village governance including limited administrative capacity, cascading regulatory complexities, and evolving accountability mechanisms may amplify discipline's direct effects while diminishing environmental mediation (Nurmayani, 2025; World Bank, 2020).

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study provides empirical evidence that work discipline is the primary driver of village officials' performance, operating directly rather than through environmental mediation. While discipline enhances work environment quality, environmental improvements do not translate into significant performance gains in resource-constrained public sector contexts. These findings challenge universal application of environmental mediation models, highlighting the need for context-specific performance management theories.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to organizational behavior literature by: (1) demonstrating discipline's primacy over environmental factors in resource-limited settings; (2) identifying contextual boundary conditions for work environment theories; (3) extending performance management frameworks to village-level public administration. The findings support self-determination theory's emphasis on internalized motivation and social exchange theory's reciprocity mechanisms while questioning environmental psychology's universal applicability.

5.3. Practical Implications

For village administrators and policymakers, the findings suggest several actionable strategies. First, prioritize disciplinary interventions through clear performance standards, attendance monitoring systems, and accountability mechanisms rather than focusing exclusively on infrastructure improvements. Second, develop discipline-building programs focusing on intrinsic motivation, professional identity, and service orientation rather than punitive measures. Third, recognize environmental limitations and avoid assuming that physical infrastructure improvements alone will enhance performance. Fourth, implement adaptive management practices that enable effective performance despite environmental constraints, leveraging Indonesia's Village Law framework to strengthen accountability and capacity development.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

This study's limitations include: (1) small sample size ($n = 47$) limiting statistical power and generalizability; (2) cross-sectional design preventing causal inference and temporal dynamics examination; (3) single-context focus (one village office) restricting comparative insights across diverse governance settings; (4) self-reported measures susceptible to social desirability bias and common method variance.

Future research should: (1) conduct multi-site comparative studies across diverse village contexts with varying resource levels and governance maturity; (2) employ longitudinal designs to track discipline-performance dynamics over time and examine causality; (3) investigate environmental threshold effects and moderating variables such as resource availability, leadership quality, and organizational culture; (4) incorporate objective performance metrics alongside subjective assessments to reduce common method bias; (5) examine cultural and institutional factors shaping discipline-performance relationships in different national contexts beyond Indonesia; (6) explore mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to understand adaptation mechanisms officials employ under resource constraints.

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The authors declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were not used in any way to prepare, write, or complete this manuscript. The authors confirm that they are the sole authors of this article and take full responsibility for the content therein, as outlined in COPE recommendations.

Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Yuliana Gratiana Leolmin: Was responsible for conceptualizing the research idea, developing the research framework, designing the questionnaire, collecting data in the field, and drafting the initial version of the manuscript.

Maximus L. Taolin: Contributed to the refinement of the theoretical framework, supervised the research design and data analysis, ensured methodological rigor, and provided critical revisions to strengthen the argumentation and discussion sections.