

The Effect of Work Discipline and Work Motivation on Civil Servants' Performance: The Mediating Role of Work Commitment at the Education Office of Medan City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of work discipline and work motivation on the performance of civil servant employees (ASN), with work commitment as an intervening variable at the Education Office of Medan City. Employee performance is a critical factor in improving the quality of public services, particularly in the education sector. This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to ASN employees and analyzed using statistical techniques to examine both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The results indicate that work discipline and work motivation have a significant positive effect on employee performance. Furthermore, work commitment plays an important mediating role in strengthening the influence of work discipline and motivation on performance. These findings suggest that improving employee discipline, motivation, and commitment simultaneously can enhance ASN performance effectively. The study provides practical implications for public sector management, especially in designing human resource policies aimed at improving performance in government institutions.

Keywords: Work Discipline; Work Motivation; Work Commitment; Employee Performance

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Introduction

Employee performance is a crucial determinant of organizational effectiveness, particularly in public sector institutions that are responsible for delivering essential services to society. In the context of government organizations, civil servant employees (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) play a strategic role in ensuring the successful implementation of public policies, programs, and administrative services. The education sector, as one of the most fundamental public service areas, requires competent, disciplined, and motivated human resources to achieve national education goals and improve service quality [1]. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence ASN performance in educational institutions is an important issue in public administration and human resource management research.

Performance refers to the level of achievement of tasks and responsibilities assigned to employees in accordance with predetermined standards and objectives [2]. In public organizations, employee performance is often associated with service quality, efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness to public needs [3]. However, many government institutions still face challenges related to low productivity, weak commitment, lack of discipline, and declining work motivation among employees, which ultimately affect organizational performance [4]. These issues are also observed in local government agencies, including education offices at the municipal level.

One of the key factors influencing employee performance is work discipline. Work discipline reflects an employee's willingness and awareness to comply with organizational rules, procedures, and norms [5]. Discipline is essential in public sector organizations where bureaucratic structures, standard operating procedures, and regulatory compliance are dominant [6]. Employees with high work discipline tend to demonstrate punctuality, responsibility, and consistency in completing tasks, which positively affects performance outcomes [7]. Conversely, low discipline can result in absenteeism, delays in task completion, and reduced service quality [8].

In the context of public service institutions, work discipline is not merely a matter of rule enforcement but also reflects organizational culture and leadership effectiveness [9]. Previous studies have shown that disciplined employees are more likely to perform their duties efficiently and contribute to organizational goals [10]. However, discipline alone may not be sufficient to enhance performance if it is not accompanied by intrinsic motivation and psychological attachment to the organization.

Work motivation is another critical factor that significantly influences employee performance. Motivation refers to internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behavior [11]. In public organizations, motivation is often linked to both intrinsic factors, such as a sense of duty and public service motivation, and extrinsic factors, such as compensation, recognition, and career development opportunities [12]. Motivated employees tend to exhibit higher levels of enthusiasm, creativity, and persistence in performing their tasks [13].

Several studies have emphasized that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance in both private and public sectors [14], [15]. In the public sector, motivated employees are more likely to deliver high-quality services, comply with regulations, and support organizational reforms [16]. However, maintaining employee motivation in government institutions remains a challenge due to rigid bureaucratic systems, limited incentives, and unclear career paths [17]. As a result, low motivation can weaken employee commitment and reduce performance effectiveness.

Beyond discipline and motivation, work commitment plays a vital role in shaping employee performance. Work commitment reflects an employee's psychological attachment to the organization, including emotional involvement, loyalty, and willingness to remain a member

of the organization [18]. Organizational commitment is commonly conceptualized into three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment [19]. Employees with strong commitment are more likely to align their personal goals with organizational objectives and exert extra effort to achieve desired outcomes [20].

In public sector organizations, work commitment is particularly important because employees are expected to uphold public values, ethical standards, and accountability [21]. High levels of commitment can enhance employee performance by fostering responsibility, discipline, and motivation [22]. Conversely, low commitment may result in minimal effort, resistance to change, and reduced organizational effectiveness [23]. Therefore, commitment is not only an outcome of effective human resource management but also a mechanism through which discipline and motivation influence performance.

Previous empirical studies have suggested that work commitment can function as an intervening or mediating variable in the relationship between work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance [24], [25]. Employees who are disciplined and motivated are more likely to develop strong commitment to their organization, which in turn enhances their performance [26]. This mediating role of commitment highlights the importance of addressing psychological and attitudinal factors in improving employee performance, rather than focusing solely on behavioral control mechanisms.

In the context of the Education Office of Medan City, improving ASN performance is a strategic priority to support the effective implementation of education policies and programs. As a local government institution, the Education Office is responsible for managing educational administration, supervising schools, and ensuring the quality of education services for the community. However, like many public organizations, it faces challenges related to employee discipline, motivation, and commitment, which may hinder organizational performance and service delivery [27].

Despite the growing body of literature on employee performance in the public sector, studies that simultaneously examine the effects of work discipline and work motivation on ASN performance with work commitment as an intervening variable remain limited, particularly at the local government level in Indonesia. Most existing studies focus on direct relationships between variables, without adequately exploring the underlying mechanisms that explain how and why discipline and motivation influence performance [28]. This research gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive analytical model that integrates behavioral, motivational, and attitudinal factors.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of work discipline and work motivation on the performance of civil servant employees (ASN), with work commitment as an intervening variable, at the Education Office of Medan City. By adopting a quantitative approach, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence on both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of human resource management theory in the public sector, particularly regarding the role of commitment as a mediating mechanism.

Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers and public sector managers in designing effective strategies to improve ASN performance. By strengthening work discipline and motivation while simultaneously fostering employee commitment, government institutions can enhance performance and service quality more sustainably. Ultimately, improving ASN performance in the education sector will contribute to better governance and the achievement of national education objectives.

Literature Review 1.1 Employee Performance in the Public Sector

Employee performance has long been recognized as a key indicator of organizational success, particularly in public sector institutions where service quality and accountability are

essential. Performance generally refers to the extent to which employees accomplish tasks and responsibilities in accordance with established standards, objectives, and organizational expectations [1]. In the public sector, employee performance is closely related to efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and transparency in delivering public services [2].

Civil servant employees (ASN) are expected to demonstrate high levels of professionalism and responsibility, as their performance directly affects public trust and governance outcomes [3]. Unlike private organizations that emphasize profit orientation, public institutions focus on service delivery and policy implementation, making performance measurement more complex and multidimensional [4]. Therefore, improving ASN performance requires not only technical competence but also behavioral discipline, motivation, and commitment to organizational values.

Previous studies have shown that employee performance in government institutions is influenced by both individual and organizational factors, including leadership, organizational culture, discipline, motivation, and commitment [5]. Among these factors, work discipline and work motivation are considered fundamental drivers of employee behavior, while work commitment reflects the psychological bond between employees and their organization [6].

1.2 Work Discipline

Work discipline refers to an employee's willingness and awareness to comply with organizational rules, regulations, and norms that govern work behavior [7]. Discipline is often reflected in punctuality, obedience to procedures, adherence to policies, and consistency in performing assigned tasks [8]. In public sector organizations, discipline plays a critical role due to the bureaucratic nature of government institutions, which rely heavily on formal rules and standard operating procedures [9].

Several scholars argue that work discipline is a form of self-control that encourages employees to behave in ways that support organizational goals [10]. Employees with high discipline tend to manage their time effectively, minimize errors, and demonstrate accountability in their work, leading to improved performance [11]. Conversely, poor discipline may result in absenteeism, tardiness, and negligence, which negatively affect organizational effectiveness [12].

Empirical studies have consistently reported a positive relationship between work discipline and employee performance. Research conducted in public sector organizations found that disciplined employees exhibit higher productivity and service quality compared to those with low discipline levels [13], [14]. These findings suggest that discipline is not merely a regulatory mechanism but also a behavioral foundation for achieving performance excellence.

1.3 Work Motivation

Work motivation is defined as a set of internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behavior toward achieving organizational goals [15]. Motivation determines the level of effort, persistence, and enthusiasm employees bring to their jobs [16]. In the public sector, motivation is particularly important because employees often face structural constraints such as rigid procedures, limited incentives, and bureaucratic hierarchies [17].

Motivation can be classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arises from internal satisfaction, such as a sense of achievement, responsibility, and public service values, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards such as salary, promotion, and recognition [18]. Studies suggest that both forms of motivation play a significant role in shaping employee performance in government institutions [19].

Empirical evidence indicates that motivated employees are more likely to perform their duties effectively, demonstrate creativity, and show commitment to organizational objectives [20]. Research in public administration has shown that work motivation positively influences employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior [21], [22]. However, low motivation can reduce employee engagement and weaken performance outcomes, especially in public organizations with limited performance-based incentives [23].

1.4 Work Commitment

Work commitment, often referred to as organizational commitment, reflects the psychological attachment and loyalty of employees to their organization [24]. It represents the extent to which employees identify with organizational goals and are willing to exert effort on behalf of the organization [25]. Meyer and Allen conceptualized commitment into three dimensions: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation) [26].

In public sector organizations, work commitment is essential for maintaining stability, ethical behavior, and service quality [27]. Employees with strong commitment tend to show higher levels of responsibility, discipline, and motivation, which contribute positively to performance [28]. Commitment also reduces turnover intention and enhances employee willingness to support organizational change [29].

Previous studies have demonstrated a significant positive relationship between work commitment and employee performance. Employees who are emotionally attached to their organization are more likely to engage in proactive behavior and exceed formal job requirements [30]. In contrast, low commitment is associated with minimal effort, resistance to organizational goals, and declining performance [31].

1.5 Relationship between Work Discipline and Employee Performance

The relationship between work discipline and employee performance has been widely examined in human resource management literature. Discipline ensures that employees adhere to organizational standards and perform tasks efficiently and consistently [32]. In public sector settings, disciplined behavior supports administrative order and service reliability [33].

Empirical studies conducted in government institutions indicate that work discipline has a direct and significant effect on employee performance [34], [35]. Employees who comply with work rules and demonstrate responsibility tend to achieve higher performance levels. These findings highlight the importance of enforcing discipline not only through sanctions but also through leadership support and organizational culture [36].

1.6 Relation between Work Motivation and Employee Performance

Work motivation is widely recognized as a key predictor of employee performance. Motivated employees are more willing to invest effort and persist in overcoming work-related challenges [37]. In the public sector, motivation influences employees' willingness to serve the public interest and deliver quality services [38].

Numerous studies have reported a positive relationship between work motivation and employee performance in both private and public organizations [39], [40]. Research in government agencies shows that motivated employees exhibit higher productivity, better service quality, and stronger commitment to organizational objectives [41]. These findings emphasize the need for effective motivational strategies to enhance performance outcomes.

1.7 Work Commitment as an Intervening Variable

Recent studies suggest that work commitment may function as an intervening or mediating variable in the relationship between work discipline, work motivation, and employee

performance [42]. Discipline and motivation can strengthen employees' commitment to the organization, which in turn enhances performance [43]. This mediating role indicates that commitment serves as a psychological mechanism linking behavioral and motivational factors to performance outcomes.

Empirical research supports the mediating effect of work commitment in public sector contexts. Studies show that disciplined and motivated employees are more likely to develop strong organizational commitment, leading to improved performance [44], [45]. These findings suggest that focusing solely on discipline and motivation without fostering commitment may limit the effectiveness of performance improvement initiatives.

1.8 Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

Although previous studies have examined the relationships among work discipline, motivation, commitment, and performance, research that integrates these variables into a comprehensive model remains limited, particularly in local government institutions in Indonesia. Most studies focus on direct effects and overlook the mediating role of work commitment [46].

Therefore, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which work discipline and work motivation influence ASN performance both directly and indirectly through work commitment. By examining this model in the context of the Education Office of Medan City, this research seeks to contribute to the literature on public sector human resource management and provide empirical evidence to support more effective performance management strategies.

Research Methodology 2.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach with an explanatory research design. The purpose of this design is to explain the causal relationships among variables, particularly the effect of work discipline and work motivation on employee performance, with work commitment serving as an intervening variable. A survey method was used to collect primary data from civil servant employees (ASN) at the Education Office of Medan City. The quantitative approach is considered appropriate because it allows for objective measurement of variables and statistical testing of hypotheses.

2.2. Research Location and Time

The research was conducted at the Education Office of Medan City, Indonesia. This institution was selected because it plays a strategic role in implementing educational policies at the municipal level and involves a large number of ASN employees with diverse administrative responsibilities. Data collection was carried out over a specific period determined by research accessibility and institutional approval.

2.3. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of all civil servant employees (ASN) working at the Education Office of Medan City. Due to the relatively large population size, a sample was selected to represent the population. The sample size was determined using a probability sampling technique, ensuring that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. A simple random sampling method was applied to minimize sampling bias and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

The number of respondents was calculated using a standard sampling formula to achieve an acceptable level of accuracy. Respondents included ASN employees from various units and job positions within the Education Office to ensure diverse representation.

2.4. Research Variables and Measurement

This study involves four main variables: work discipline (independent variable), work motivation (independent variable), work commitment (intervening variable), and employee performance (dependent variable).

Work discipline was measured based on indicators such as compliance with organizational rules, punctuality, adherence to work procedures, and responsibility in completing tasks. Work motivation was measured using indicators related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, including enthusiasm for work, recognition, achievement, and incentives. Work commitment was measured using dimensions of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Employee performance was measured through indicators such as work quality, work quantity, timeliness, and responsibility.

All variables were measured using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

2.5. Data Collection Technique

Primary data were collected through the distribution of structured questionnaires to ASN employees at the Education Office of Medan City. The questionnaires were designed based on established theories and previous empirical studies to ensure content validity. Prior to full distribution, the instrument was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance of the items.

Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest responses. The completed questionnaires were then collected and prepared for data analysis.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using statistical analysis techniques to examine both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The analysis included descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of respondents and inferential statistics to test research hypotheses. To analyze the mediating role of work commitment, a path analysis approach was applied. This approach allows for the examination of causal relationships among multiple variables simultaneously and provides estimates of both direct and indirect effects. Hypothesis testing was conducted by evaluating the significance of path coefficients at a predetermined significance level.

2.7. Validity and Reliability Testing

The validity of the research instrument was assessed to ensure that each measurement item accurately reflects the intended variable. Construct validity was examined through correlation analysis between items and their respective variables. Reliability testing was conducted using internal consistency measures to ensure the stability and consistency of the instrument.

Only items that met the acceptable validity and reliability criteria were included in the final analysis. This process ensures that the research findings are based on reliable and valid measurements.

2.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Data collected from respondents were used solely for academic purposes and were kept confidential.

Results 3.1 Respondent Characteristics

The respondents of this study consisted of civil servant employees (ASN) working at the Education Office of Medan City. They represented various organizational units and job positions, ensuring diverse perspectives regarding work discipline, motivation, commitment, and performance. The demographic characteristics of respondents indicate a balanced distribution in terms of gender, age, length of service, and educational background, which supports the representativeness of the sample.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine respondents' perceptions of the research variables. Overall, the results show that work discipline, work motivation, work commitment, and employee performance were perceived at a moderate to high level. Respondents generally agreed that compliance with work rules, punctuality, and responsibility were important aspects of their daily work. Similarly, motivation-related items indicated that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contributed to employees' enthusiasm and willingness to perform their tasks.

Work commitment indicators revealed that most respondents demonstrated a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility toward the organization. Employee performance was also perceived positively, particularly in terms of task completion, work quality, and accountability.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing Results

Inferential analysis was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships among variables. The results indicate that work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This finding suggests that higher levels of discipline among ASN employees contribute to improved performance outcomes.

Work motivation was also found to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Employees who are more motivated tend to demonstrate higher levels of effort, persistence, and effectiveness in completing their work responsibilities.

Further analysis shows that work discipline has a significant positive effect on work commitment. Employees who consistently comply with organizational rules and demonstrate responsible work behavior tend to develop stronger commitment to the organization. Similarly, work motivation was found to have a significant positive effect on work commitment, indicating that motivated employees are more likely to feel emotionally and psychologically attached to the organization.

Work commitment was found to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This result confirms that committed employees tend to perform better, as they are more willing to exert effort and align their behavior with organizational goals.

3.4 Mediating Effect of Work Commitment

To examine the mediating role of work commitment, indirect effect analysis was conducted. The results show that work commitment partially mediates the relationship between work discipline and employee performance. This indicates that discipline not only directly affects performance but also indirectly enhances performance by strengthening employee commitment.

Similarly, work commitment was found to mediate the relationship between work motivation and employee performance. This finding suggests that motivated employees develop stronger commitment, which in turn leads to improved performance outcomes. The mediating role of work commitment highlights its importance as a psychological mechanism linking discipline and motivation to employee performance.

3.5 Summary of Findings

Overall, the results confirm that work discipline and work motivation play significant roles in improving ASN performance, both directly and indirectly through work commitment. Work commitment emerges as a crucial intervening variable that strengthens the influence of discipline and motivation on performance. These findings support the proposed research model and provide empirical evidence for the importance of integrating behavioral, motivational, and attitudinal factors in managing employee performance in public sector organizations.

Conclusion

This study concludes that work discipline and work motivation have a significant positive effect on the performance of civil servant employees (ASN) at the Education Office of Medan City. Employees who demonstrate higher levels of discipline and motivation tend to perform their duties more effectively and responsibly. In addition, both work discipline and work motivation significantly influence work commitment, indicating that disciplined and motivated employees are more likely to develop strong psychological attachment and loyalty to the organization.

Furthermore, work commitment has a significant positive effect on employee performance and serves as an important intervening variable in the relationship between work discipline, work motivation, and performance. The findings show that work commitment partially mediates the effects of discipline and motivation on employee performance, highlighting its role as a key mechanism that strengthens performance outcomes.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating work discipline, motivation, and commitment in human resource management practices within public sector organizations. Strengthening these factors simultaneously can enhance ASN performance and support the effectiveness of public service delivery, particularly in the education sector.

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