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Work Motivation and Employee Work Discipline: Evidence from Village Government Personnel in Indonesia

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Abstract

Employee work discipline is a fundamental factor in the quality of public services, particularly in village governments that interact directly with local communities. Work motivation is frequently assumed to be a key driver of discipline, yet evidence from small rural public organizations remains limited. This exploratory study examines the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline among village government personnel at the Rumpia Village Office, Majauleng District, Wajo Regency, Indonesia. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with all nine village government personnel using saturated (census) sampling. Work motivation was measured using indicators adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and work discipline was measured through five indicators: attendance frequency, work alertness, compliance with work standards, compliance with organizational regulations, and work ethics. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. Descriptively, both work motivation (94.00% of the ideal score) and work discipline (81.11%) were in the very good category. However, the relationship between the two variables was weak and not statistically significant ($r = 0.259$, $p = 0.501$; $R^2 = 0.067$); therefore, the hypothesis that work motivation predicts work discipline was not supported. Because the very small sample provided low statistical power, this result should be interpreted as inconclusive rather than as evidence that the two variables are unrelated. The findings suggest that, in small village offices, discipline may also be shaped by factors beyond individual motivation, which future studies with larger, multi-village samples should examine. The study offers preliminary evidence from an under-researched rural government context and highlights the need for cautious interpretation of motivation–discipline relationships in micro-organizations.

Keywords: Work Motivation, Employee Work Discipline, Village Government, Public Administration, Human Resource Management, Rural Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of public organizations is highly dependent on the quality of their human resources, particularly employees' ability to perform their duties responsibly, consistently, and in accordance with organizational regulations. In the public sector, employee discipline is considered one of the fundamental determinants of organizational effectiveness because it directly influences

administrative efficiency, accountability, and the quality of public service delivery. Employees who demonstrate high levels of discipline are generally more punctual, comply with organizational rules, complete assigned tasks responsibly, and contribute to achieving organizational objectives. Conversely, poor work discipline frequently results in absenteeism, reduced productivity, delayed public services, and declining public trust in government institutions (Arifianti et al., 2026; Hidayah & Noerman, 2026).

In recent years, improving the quality of public services has become one of the primary priorities of governments worldwide. Public organizations are increasingly expected to deliver services that are transparent, accountable, responsive, and citizen-oriented. These expectations require public employees not only to possess adequate technical competencies but also to maintain strong work discipline and professional commitment. Consequently, strengthening employee discipline has become an important concern in public human resource management because disciplined employees contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness and sustainable public sector performance (Hidayah & Noerman, 2026).

Within the Indonesian context, village governments occupy a strategic position as the closest governmental institutions to local communities. Following the implementation of village autonomy under Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages (Undang-Undang Nomor 6 Tahun 2014), village administrations have assumed broader responsibilities in public administration, community empowerment, local development, and the delivery of essential public services. These expanded responsibilities require village officials to perform their duties professionally while complying with administrative procedures and ethical standards. However, maintaining employee discipline remains a managerial challenge in many village governments, particularly in rural areas where organizational resources are relatively limited and working relationships tend to be more informal. Such conditions increase the importance of identifying organizational factors capable of strengthening employee discipline among village government personnel (Pamuji, 2026).

Examining the relationship between work motivation and employee discipline is particularly relevant in village governments for at least three reasons. First, village officials (*perangkat desa*) are generally not civil servants (ASN); consequently, the formal disciplinary regime that governs civil servants does not fully apply to them, and day-to-day discipline depends more heavily on village-level rules, the supervision of the village head, and the officials' own willingness to comply. Second, village offices usually employ very few personnel, so the absence or negligence of a single official can directly disrupt services to citizens. Third, the incentives available to village officials, such as income, career prospects, and recognition, are generally more limited than those of civil servants. It is therefore important to understand whether motivation, rather than formal sanctions alone, can sustain disciplined behavior in this setting.

Among the various determinants of employee behavior, work motivation has consistently been recognized as one of the most influential psychological and managerial factors affecting organizational outcomes. Work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that stimulate employees to exert effort, achieve organizational goals, and maintain positive work behavior. Motivated employees generally demonstrate greater enthusiasm, stronger organizational commitment, higher responsibility, and greater willingness to comply with organizational regulations than employees with lower motivational levels. Therefore, motivation has become an essential component of human resource management strategies designed to improve employee discipline and organizational effectiveness (Cerasoli et al., 2014; Arifianti et al., 2026).

Empirical evidence has increasingly supported the relationship between work motivation and employee discipline in public organizations. Recent studies have demonstrated that motivated employees are more likely to comply with organizational rules, maintain punctuality, complete assigned tasks responsibly, and contribute positively to organizational performance. For example, Arifianti et al. (2026), in a study of 150 personnel in 18 sub-district offices in Sidoarjo Regency, found that work motivation significantly influenced work discipline, which in turn mediated the effect of motivation on employee performance. Similarly, Hidayah and Noerman (2026) reported that public service motivation significantly influenced the work discipline of 274 civil servants at the BKKBN central office. At the village level, Pamuji (2026) examined work discipline as a mechanism linking work motivation to the performance of village officials in Padamara District, Purbalingga Regency. Zai and Tinambunan (2025) likewise found, among 345 civil servants in an Indonesian local government, that motivating factors such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility were the strongest predictors of employee performance and service quality, while work discipline also contributed positively. These findings suggest that motivation functions not merely as an individual psychological construct but also as an important managerial instrument for improving organizational behavior within the public sector.

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Despite these findings, several research gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly focused on employee performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or organizational performance as primary dependent variables, whereas employee work discipline has received comparatively less scholarly attention. Second, existing empirical studies have largely been conducted in ministries, regional government agencies, educational institutions, and health organizations, while research specifically examining village government personnel remains relatively limited. The organizational characteristics of village governments differ substantially from larger bureaucratic institutions because they operate with smaller organizational structures, closer interpersonal relationships, and direct interaction with rural communities. Consequently, findings obtained from larger government organizations cannot necessarily be generalized to village government settings. Third, most previous studies have reported significant positive effects using relatively large samples, and few have examined whether the relationship holds in micro-organizations, where close social ties and direct supervision may also shape employee behavior. Evidence from such settings is needed to test the boundary conditions of motivation theory.

Another limitation of previous studies concerns the geographical context of research. Most studies have been conducted in urban or district-level government organizations, whereas relatively little empirical evidence is available regarding rural local government institutions in eastern Indonesia. Considering the increasing strategic role of village governments in implementing public policies and delivering community services, understanding factors influencing employee discipline within village administrations has become increasingly important. Empirical evidence from rural government organizations is expected to enrich the literature on public human resource management while providing practical recommendations for improving governance quality at the grassroots level.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline among village government personnel at the Rumpia Village Office, Majauleng District, Wajo Regency, Indonesia. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on employee performance or organizational effectiveness, the present study specifically positions employee work discipline as the principal outcome variable. Furthermore, this research contributes empirical evidence from a rural village government, thereby extending current knowledge regarding human resource management practices within Indonesian local governments. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the literature on public human resource management and practical implications for village leaders in developing motivational strategies that strengthen employee discipline and improve public service quality. Because the study covers the entire personnel of a single village office, it is designed as an exploratory case study that aims to provide preliminary evidence and inform larger-scale research, rather than to produce generalizable estimates.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline among village government personnel in Rumpia Village, Majauleng District, Wajo Regency, Indonesia.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

Work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behavior. This study adopts Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs as its main framework. Maslow proposed that behavior is driven by five levels of needs, namely physiological, safety, social (belongingness), esteem, and self-actualization needs, and that once a lower-level need is reasonably satisfied, higher-level needs become the main source of motivation. In organizational settings, these levels are commonly translated into adequate income and working conditions (physiological needs), job security and clear rules (safety needs), good relationships with co-workers and leaders (social needs), recognition (esteem needs), and opportunities to use and develop one's abilities (self-actualization needs). The instrument used in this study operationalized four of these levels, namely physiological, safety, social, and self-actualization needs; esteem needs were not measured as a separate dimension, which is acknowledged as a limitation of the instrument. Complementary perspectives, such as Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, emphasize that motivation translates into behavior only when employees perceive a link between their effort, their performance, and outcomes they value (Lunenburg, 2011). In the public sector, motivation also has a distinctive prosocial component, known as public service motivation, which reflects a predisposition to respond to motives grounded in public institutions (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Employee work discipline refers to employees' awareness and willingness to comply with organizational rules, procedures, and prevailing norms in carrying out their duties (Robbins & Judge, 2023; Dessler, 2021). In this study, discipline is measured through five indicators: (1) attendance frequency, reflecting punctuality and presence at work; (2) work alertness, reflecting attentiveness and care in performing tasks; (3) compliance with work standards, reflecting adherence to procedures and

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service standards; (4) compliance with organizational regulations, reflecting adherence to the formal and informal rules of the office; and (5) work ethics, reflecting courteous and responsible conduct toward colleagues and citizens.

The theoretical link between the two constructs can be traced from each need dimension to the discipline indicators. When physiological needs are adequately met, for example through sufficient income, employees have less reason to seek additional work during office hours, which should support attendance frequency. Fulfilled safety needs, such as job security and clear rules, encourage employees to protect their position by complying with work standards and organizational regulations. Fulfilled social needs strengthen employees' attachment to their work group, so that group norms of punctuality and courtesy are more likely to be internalized, which is reflected in work ethics. Opportunities for self-actualization foster intrinsic interest in the work itself, which is expected to be expressed as greater work alertness and initiative. Expectancy theory adds that employees will behave in a disciplined manner when they believe that compliance leads to outcomes they value (Vroom, 1964; Lunenburg, 2011). At the same time, discipline may also result from external control, such as supervision and sanctions, regardless of an employee's motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2023). Self-determination theory adds that rules are followed more consistently when employees have internalized their value than when they comply only because of external pressure (Ryan & Deci, 2000), while rewards perceived as controlling may undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999). The strength of the motivation–discipline relationship may therefore vary across organizational contexts.

Based on this framework, the following hypothesis was proposed. H1: Work motivation has a positive effect on employee work discipline among village government personnel at the Rumpia Village Office.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline among village government personnel. A quantitative design was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to objectively measure the relationship between variables through statistical analysis and to test hypotheses using numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The research adopted a cross-sectional survey design, in which data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. This design is widely applied in organizational and public administration research because it provides an efficient means of examining associations between variables; however, a cross-sectional design does not allow causal inferences to be drawn (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

The study was conducted at the Rumpia Village Office, Majauleng District, Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research site was selected because village governments constitute the lowest level of public administration and play a strategic role in delivering administrative services, implementing development programs, and facilitating community empowerment. Consequently, employee work discipline is considered an essential factor in ensuring the effectiveness of village governance and improving the quality of public services.

The population comprised all village government personnel employed at the Rumpia Village Office. Considering that the total number of employees was relatively small, this study adopted a saturated sampling technique (census sampling), whereby all members of the population were included as research respondents. As a result, the study involved all nine village government personnel, so that the data represent the entire personnel of the office and are free from respondent-selection bias. The use of saturated sampling is appropriate when the research population is limited and every member can reasonably participate in the study (Sugiyono, 2022).

The census approach was chosen because the research question concerns the personnel of one specific village office and the population was too small for probability sampling. Nevertheless, the small number of respondents has important consequences. With $n = 9$, a two-tailed correlation test at $\alpha = 0.05$ has adequate statistical power (80%) only for very strong correlations ($r \geq$ approximately 0.82; Cohen, 1988), and the results cannot be generalized beyond the Rumpia Village Office. The study is therefore positioned as an exploratory case study, and its inferential results are interpreted with caution.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed according to the operational definitions of the research variables. The independent variable, work motivation, was

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measured using indicators adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, including physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, and self-actualization needs. Meanwhile, the dependent variable, employee work discipline, was measured through five dimensions: attendance frequency, work alertness, compliance with work standards, compliance with organizational regulations, and work ethics. Each variable was measured with 10 questionnaire items, so that the ideal score for each variable was 450 (10 items × 5 points × 9 respondents). All items were worded as statements and measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), where higher scores indicated stronger agreement with each statement. The use of Likert scales is widely recognized as an effective approach for measuring employees' attitudes and behavioral perceptions in organizational research (Hair et al., 2022).

Data were collected in 2023 by administering the questionnaire to all nine personnel of the Rumpia Village Office. All nine questionnaires were returned complete and were included in the analysis (response rate 100%).

Instrument validity was assessed using corrected item–total correlations, with an item considered valid if its correlation exceeded the critical value (r-table = 0.666 for n = 9, df = 7, α = 0.05, two-tailed). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values of at least 0.60 regarded as acceptable for exploratory research (Hair et al., 2022). Because these estimates are unstable in very small samples and are sensitive to responses concentrated at the upper end of the scale, the results are interpreted with caution.

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Descriptive statistical analysis was first conducted to summarize respondents' perceptions of work motivation and employee work discipline by calculating the frequency distribution, mean scores, and category classifications for each variable. Subsequently, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was employed to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline. Finally, simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether work motivation significantly predicts employee work discipline. The regression model used in this study is expressed as:

Where Y represents employee work discipline, X denotes work motivation, α is the regression constant, β represents the regression coefficient, and ε is the error term. The statistical significance of the regression coefficient was evaluated at a 95% confidence level (α = 0.05). A significance value below 0.05 indicates that work motivation has a statistically significant effect on employee work discipline, whereas a value greater than 0.05 indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant (Hair et al., 2022). The findings obtained from these analytical procedures were subsequently interpreted to explain the extent to which work motivation contributes to employee work discipline among village government personnel.

Before the regression analysis, the classical assumptions of simple linear regression were examined (Ghozali, 2021): normality of residuals using the Shapiro–Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965), which is suitable for small samples; linearity using the test for linearity (deviation from linearity) and a scatterplot; and homoscedasticity using the Glejser test and a scatterplot of standardized residuals against predicted values. Autocorrelation was not tested because the data are cross-sectional. Because these tests have limited power to detect violations in small samples, visual inspection of the plots was also considered. In addition to p-values, the 95% confidence interval of the correlation coefficient was calculated using Fisher's z transformation to show the precision of the estimate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent

This study involved all nine village government personnel employed at the Rumpia Village Office. Because the number of employees was limited, a saturated sampling technique was employed, allowing every member of the population to participate in the study. Consequently, the respondents represented the entire population of village government personnel within the organization, eliminating sampling bias associated with respondent selection.

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Instrument Validity, Reliability, and Regression Assumptions

The validity test showed that most items did not meet the criterion. Corrected item–total correlations ranged from −0.567 to 0.707 for work motivation and from −0.117 to 0.534 for work discipline; only one motivation item exceeded the critical value of 0.666, and three motivation items and four discipline items could not be evaluated because all respondents gave the same answer. Reliability was below the recommended threshold for both scales (Cronbach's α = −0.321 for work motivation and 0.487 for work discipline). These results reflect the strong concentration of responses at the upper end of the scale and are acknowledged as a limitation. The classical assumption tests indicated that the residuals were normally distributed (Shapiro–Wilk $W = 0.956$, $p = 0.761$), the relationship did not deviate significantly from linearity ($F = 0.337$, $p = 0.729$), and there was no indication of heteroscedasticity (Glejser test, $p = 0.180$).

Work Motivation

Work motivation was measured using four dimensions: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, and self-actualization needs. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Work Motivation

Variable	Obtained Score	Ideal Score	Percentage (%)	Category
Work Motivation	423	450	94.00	Very Good

Source: Research Results, 2023.

The descriptive analysis shows that work motivation achieved a total score of 423, representing 94.00% of the ideal score. This result places work motivation in the very good category, indicating that village government personnel generally possess high levels of motivation in performing their duties. The findings suggest that employees perceive their physiological, safety, social, and self-actualization needs to be relatively well fulfilled within the organization. Such conditions are expected to encourage employees to demonstrate greater responsibility, commitment, and willingness to perform their duties effectively. It should be noted, however, that a score this close to the maximum indicates a ceiling effect: responses were concentrated at the upper end of the scale and varied little between respondents.

Employee Work Discipline

Employee work discipline was assessed through five indicators, namely attendance frequency, work alertness, compliance with work standards, compliance with organizational regulations, and work ethics. The descriptive results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Employee Work Discipline

Variable	Obtained Score	Ideal Score	Percentage (%)	Category
Employee Work Discipline	365	450	81.11	Very Good

Source: Research Results, 2023.

As presented in Table 2, employee work discipline obtained a total score of 365, equivalent to 81.11% of the ideal score, which is categorized as very good. This finding indicates that employees generally comply with organizational regulations, maintain punctuality, perform assigned duties responsibly, and demonstrate appropriate workplace ethics. Overall, the results suggest that the level of employee discipline within the Rumpia Village Office is relatively high.

Correlation Analysis

To determine the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Work Motivation – Employee Work Discipline	0.259	0.501	Weak Positive Correlation

Source: Research Results, 2023.

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The Pearson correlation coefficient between work motivation and employee work discipline was 0.259, indicating a weak positive relationship. In this sample, respondents with higher motivation scores tended to have slightly higher discipline scores. However, the significance value of 0.501 exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating that the observed relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, although the sample coefficient is positive, the statistical evidence is insufficient to conclude that work motivation is significantly associated with employee work discipline. The 95% confidence interval for the correlation, calculated using Fisher's *z* transformation, ranged from −0.49 to 0.79. This very wide interval includes zero and negative values, which means that the data are compatible with a negative, null, or strong positive relationship; the direction of the relationship therefore cannot be established with confidence. Moreover, with $n = 9$, the power of the test to detect a correlation of the observed size was only about 10%.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine whether work motivation significantly predicts employee work discipline. The regression results are presented in Table 4. Because the assumption tests have very little power with nine observations, the regression estimates below are interpreted as exploratory.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	25.653	20.997	–	1.222	0.261
Work Motivation	0.316	0.446	0.259	0.710	0.501

Source: Research Results, 2023.

The regression analysis generated the equation Y = 25.653 + 0.316X, indicating that work motivation has a positive regression coefficient. Taken at face value, the coefficient implies that a one-point increase in the work motivation score corresponds to a 0.316-point increase in the work discipline score; however, this estimate is very imprecise (*SE* = 0.446). Moreover, the regression coefficient was not statistically significant ($p = 0.501 > 0.05$), suggesting that work motivation did not significantly predict employee work discipline among the respondents included in this study. Accordingly, hypothesis H1 was not supported.

Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination was calculated to estimate the proportion of variance in employee work discipline explained by work motivation. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination

Statistic	Value
R	0.259
R Square	0.067
Adjusted R Square	–0.066
Standard Error of Estimate	1.470

Source: Research Results, 2023.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.067$) indicates that work motivation explains only 6.7% of the variation in employee work discipline. The remaining 93.3% is attributable to factors that were not included in this study or to measurement error. Furthermore, the adjusted R^2 was negative (−0.066), indicating that, once the sample size and number of predictors are taken into account, the model has no explanatory power beyond what would be expected by chance. The factors that account for the remaining variation cannot be identified from the present data.

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Discussion

Work Motivation among Village Government Personnel

The descriptive analysis revealed that work motivation among village government personnel was categorized as very good, with an overall score of 423 out of a maximum score of 450. This finding indicates that employees generally possess positive attitudes toward their work and perceive that their basic and psychological needs are adequately fulfilled within the organization. The high level of motivation suggests that employees are willing to perform their responsibilities, maintain organizational commitment, and contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives.

This descriptive finding is consistent with motivational theory, which argues that employees who perceive their needs as being fulfilled are more likely to demonstrate positive work attitudes and greater commitment to organizational goals. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, employees are motivated not only by financial rewards but also by social recognition, security, opportunities for personal growth, and self-actualization. When these needs are fulfilled, employees tend to experience greater job satisfaction and become more willing to contribute to organizational success (Maslow, 1943). Although Maslow's theory remains a classical framework, recent studies continue to demonstrate that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors are essential determinants of employee behavior in public organizations (Cerasoli et al., 2014).

The relatively high motivation observed in this study may also reflect the organizational characteristics of village governments. Compared with larger bureaucratic organizations, village administrations generally have smaller organizational structures, closer interpersonal relationships, and more direct interaction between leaders and employees. Such conditions may foster stronger interpersonal support and social cohesion, which in turn enhance employees' intrinsic motivation.

Despite the high level of motivation identified in this study, motivation alone should not be considered sufficient to guarantee improvements in organizational outcomes. Contemporary human resource management literature emphasizes that employee behavior is multidimensional and influenced by numerous organizational and individual factors, including leadership quality, organizational culture, job satisfaction, supervision, compensation systems, and organizational commitment (Robbins & Judge, 2023; Dessler, 2021). Consequently, organizations should adopt comprehensive human resource management strategies rather than relying solely on motivational interventions to improve employee behavior and organizational performance.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that the Rumpia Village Office may have succeeded in creating a working environment that encourages employees to maintain positive attitudes toward their work. Nevertheless, village leaders should continue strengthening motivational practices by providing recognition for employee achievements, ensuring transparent communication, facilitating professional development opportunities, and encouraging employee participation in organizational decision-making. These managerial initiatives may help sustain employee motivation while supporting broader organizational goals related to public service quality and administrative effectiveness.

Employee Work Discipline among Village Government Personnel

The findings indicate that employee work discipline at the Rumpia Village Office was classified as very good, with an overall score of 365 out of the maximum possible score of 450. This result indicates that village government personnel generally comply with organizational rules, maintain punctuality, fulfill assigned responsibilities, and exhibit appropriate work ethics in carrying out public administrative duties. The high level of discipline suggests that employees recognize the importance of adhering to organizational standards as part of their professional responsibilities in delivering public services.

Work discipline has long been recognized as a fundamental element of organizational effectiveness, particularly in public sector institutions where employees are expected to provide reliable, transparent, and accountable services to the community. According to Robbins and Judge (2023), employee discipline reflects an individual's willingness to comply with organizational rules, procedures, and ethical standards without continuous supervision. Employees who consistently demonstrate disciplined behavior are more likely to complete their tasks efficiently, minimize administrative errors, and contribute positively to organizational performance. Similarly, Dessler (2021) emphasizes that work discipline represents one of the essential outcomes of effective human resource management because it strengthens employee accountability and organizational stability.

The relatively high level of employee discipline observed in this study may be attributed to the organizational characteristics of village governments. Village administrations generally operate within relatively small organizational structures where interactions among employees and supervisors occur more frequently than in larger government institutions. Such conditions facilitate closer supervision, more effective communication, and stronger interpersonal relationships, which may encourage

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employees to comply with organizational regulations and perform their responsibilities conscientiously. In small public organizations, social norms and interpersonal trust often function as informal mechanisms that reinforce disciplined behavior alongside formal administrative regulations.

The importance of discipline found here is consistent with previous studies in Indonesian public sector organizations. Arifianti et al. (2026) found that work discipline directly affected the performance of government personnel in sub-district offices in Sidoarjo Regency, and Hidayah and Noerman (2026) reported that work discipline significantly improved the performance of civil servants at the BKKBN central office and partially mediated the effect of public service motivation on performance. These studies suggest that disciplined employees are more likely to comply with established procedures and contribute to organizational performance. At the village level, Hente et al. (2026) found that work discipline had a positive and significant effect on the performance of 35 village officials in Kaidipang District, North Bolaang Mongondow Regency.

Although the overall level of employee discipline was categorized as very good, sustaining it requires attention to all five indicators, including work alertness and work ethics, which concern employees' attentiveness, initiative, and professional conduct rather than mere attendance. Rather than focusing exclusively on attendance or procedural compliance, village leaders should also encourage proactive work behavior, continuous learning, and stronger professional ethics to improve overall organizational performance.

From a public administration perspective, employee discipline is closely associated with the principles of good governance. Disciplined employees are more likely to deliver services that are timely, transparent, accountable, and responsive to citizens' needs. These characteristics contribute directly to strengthening public trust in government institutions and improving citizens' satisfaction with public services. Consequently, maintaining high levels of employee discipline should remain a strategic priority for village governments seeking to enhance organizational effectiveness and support sustainable rural development.

The practical implication of these findings is that maintaining employee discipline requires continuous managerial commitment rather than relying solely on formal regulations. Village leaders should regularly monitor employee performance, provide constructive feedback, recognize exemplary behavior, and establish clear performance expectations. In addition, creating a supportive organizational climate characterized by fairness, effective communication, and collaborative leadership may further reinforce disciplined work behavior. Such managerial practices are expected to sustain employees' commitment to organizational rules while fostering continuous improvements in public service quality.

Overall, the findings indicate that village government personnel at the Rumpia Village Office exhibit a high level of work discipline. Although the current level of discipline is satisfactory, continuous organizational efforts remain necessary to strengthen professional attitudes, improve work alertness, and encourage ethical behavior. These improvements will enable village governments to respond more effectively to increasing public expectations regarding efficient, accountable, and citizen-oriented public services.

Relationship between Work Motivation and Employee Work Discipline

The primary objective of this study was to examine whether work motivation predicts employee work discipline among village government personnel at the Rumpia Village Office. The statistical analysis revealed a positive but statistically insignificant relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline ($r = 0.259$, $p = 0.501$). Furthermore, the regression analysis indicated that work motivation explained only 6.7% of the variance in employee work discipline ($R^2 = 0.067$). Thus, hypothesis H1 was not supported: the data do not provide sufficient evidence that work motivation predicts employee work discipline in this organization.

Although the observed coefficient was positive, its wide confidence interval means that the present data cannot confirm the direction of the relationship. Employees who possess stronger motivation generally exhibit greater enthusiasm, responsibility, and willingness to complete assigned tasks. From the perspective of motivation theory, motivated employees are expected to demonstrate positive workplace behaviors because they perceive their work as meaningful and beneficial for achieving both personal and organizational goals. As explained by Maslow (1943), the fulfillment of human needs encourages individuals to perform more effectively and to maintain positive attitudes toward their work. Likewise, Vroom (1964), through Expectancy Theory, argues that employees are motivated when they believe that greater effort will lead to better performance and desirable outcomes. These theoretical perspectives explain why a positive relationship was hypothesized; the present study, however, was unable to confirm it statistically.

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However, the absence of statistical significance suggests that work motivation alone was not sufficient to explain variations in employee work discipline within the observed organization. One possible explanation concerns the very limited sample size. The present study involved only nine respondents, representing the total number of village government personnel employed at the Rumpia Village Office. Small sample sizes substantially reduce statistical power, making it more difficult to detect significant relationships even when positive associations exist (Hair et al., 2022). Consequently, the insignificant finding should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence that work motivation is unimportant, but rather that the available empirical data were insufficient to demonstrate a statistically reliable effect.

A further explanation concerns the distribution of the data, which also explains why both variables received high scores while their statistical relationship was weak. Work motivation reached 94% of the ideal score and work discipline 81%. When almost all respondents answer near the top of the scale, the differences between individuals become very small. The mean total scores were 47.00 for work motivation and 40.56 for work discipline (possible range 10–50), and the regression output implies standard deviations of only about 1.2 and 1.4 points, respectively. Such restricted variance (a ceiling effect) attenuates correlation coefficients, so a weak correlation can be observed even if the two constructs are related in the wider population of village officials. The high scores may also partly reflect social desirability bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), because both variables were self-reported by employees of a small office in which respondents could easily be identified, and discipline is a normatively loaded behavior that respondents may be reluctant to report as low. The combination of high descriptive scores and a weak, non-significant relationship is therefore not contradictory: it is consistent with a situation in which most employees report being both highly motivated and highly disciplined, leaving too little variation to detect a systematic relationship.

Another possible explanation is that employee work discipline within village government organizations may be influenced more strongly by organizational and contextual factors than by individual motivation alone. Village governments operate within relatively small organizational environments characterized by close interpersonal relationships, direct supervision, and strong community interactions. Under such circumstances, employees may comply with organizational regulations primarily because of administrative responsibilities, organizational norms, or supervisory control rather than personal motivational factors. This interpretation is consistent with the argument of Robbins and Judge (2023), who emphasize that employee behavior is influenced by multiple organizational variables, including leadership, organizational culture, supervision, reward systems, and organizational commitment. However, leadership, supervision, organizational culture, and compensation were not measured in the present study; this explanation is therefore a proposition to be tested in future research rather than a finding of this study.

The low coefficient of determination (R^2 = 6.7%; adjusted R^2 = −0.066) is consistent with this interpretation, although it does not by itself identify which factors matter. Most of the variation in employee work discipline is attributable to factors outside the research model or to measurement error. The human resource management literature has identified leadership style, organizational culture, compensation, work environment, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and supervisory practices as important determinants of employee discipline (Dessler, 2021; Robbins & Judge, 2023). Therefore, employee discipline may be better understood as a multidimensional organizational outcome rather than as a consequence of work motivation alone.

The findings of this study differ from several previous investigations that reported a significant positive effect of work motivation on employee discipline. For example, Arifianti et al. (2026) found that work motivation significantly influenced the work discipline of sub-district government personnel, and Hidayah and Noerman (2026) found that public service motivation significantly influenced the work discipline of civil servants. The differences between these studies and the present research may be attributed to variations in organizational context, sample size, institutional characteristics, measurement approaches, and analytical techniques. These studies involved substantially larger samples (150 and 274 respondents, respectively) and more heterogeneous organizational settings, thereby increasing the likelihood of detecting statistically significant relationships.

Although the present study could not confirm a relationship, this does not mean that motivation is irrelevant from a managerial perspective. Motivation should continue to be considered an important component of human resource management because motivated employees generally exhibit greater enthusiasm, stronger commitment, and higher responsibility toward organizational objectives. Nevertheless, efforts to improve employee discipline should not rely exclusively on motivational strategies. Village governments should adopt a more comprehensive approach by strengthening leadership effectiveness, improving organizational communication, establishing transparent performance evaluation systems, ensuring fair reward mechanisms, and fostering a supportive

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organizational culture. Whether such integrated practices are more effective than motivational interventions alone, however, needs to be tested in future research.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the public administration literature by suggesting that the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline may be context-dependent. In small rural public organizations, motivational factors may not always emerge as the strongest predictor of disciplinary behavior because organizational norms, interpersonal relationships, and administrative control mechanisms may play more dominant roles. This interpretation is in line with Nadya et al. (2026), who found that motivation had a significant negative partial effect on the performance of 96 civil servants in a provincial bureau and attributed this to the formal bureaucratic setting. Therefore, future studies should consider incorporating additional organizational variables and employing larger samples across multiple village governments to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of employee discipline in rural public administration.

Overall, the observed relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline was weak and not statistically significant within the research context, and because of the very small sample this result should be regarded as inconclusive. This result highlights the importance of considering broader organizational factors when designing human resource management strategies aimed at strengthening employee discipline in village government institutions.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide several theoretical and practical implications for the field of public administration and human resource management, particularly within village government organizations. Although the statistical analysis revealed that work motivation did not significantly predict employee work discipline, motivation remains theoretically relevant and should not be dismissed on the basis of a single small-sample study. The findings are consistent with the view that employee discipline may be shaped by a combination of organizational, managerial, and individual factors rather than by work motivation alone.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the literature on employee behavior in public organizations by suggesting that motivational theories may produce different empirical outcomes depending on the organizational context. Classical motivational theories, including Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Vroom's Expectancy Theory, argue that motivated employees tend to demonstrate more positive work attitudes and behaviors. However, the present findings suggest that these theoretical assumptions may not always be fully supported in small public organizations where formal regulations, supervisory mechanisms, and organizational norms strongly influence employee behavior. This proposition, however, requires confirmation with larger samples. Therefore, motivation should be viewed as one component of a broader organizational system that collectively determines employee discipline (Robbins & Judge, 2023; Dessler, 2021).

Another theoretical implication concerns the relatively low explanatory power of the regression model. The coefficient of determination indicates that work motivation accounted for only **6.7%** of the variance in employee work discipline. This finding suggests that future research should develop more comprehensive analytical models by incorporating additional variables such as leadership style, organizational culture, organizational commitment, compensation, supervision, job satisfaction, and organizational justice. Integrating these variables may provide a more complete understanding of employee discipline within village government institutions.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that improving employee discipline should not rely solely on increasing employee motivation. Village governments should implement integrated human resource management strategies that combine motivational programs with effective supervision, transparent performance evaluation, fair reward systems, and supportive leadership practices. Such strategies are expected to encourage employees not only to maintain high levels of motivation but also to consistently comply with organizational rules and professional standards.

Village leaders also play an important role in fostering a positive organizational climate. Regular communication, constructive feedback, recognition of employee achievements, and opportunities for professional development may strengthen employees' sense of responsibility and organizational commitment. In addition, strengthening organizational culture through shared values, teamwork, and accountability can reinforce disciplined behavior beyond individual motivational factors.

Finally, this study contributes empirical evidence from a village government institution, an organizational context that remains relatively underrepresented in public administration literature. As village governments continue to play an increasingly important role in implementing public policies and delivering community services in Indonesia, understanding the factors that influence employee behavior becomes essential for improving governance quality and achieving sustainable rural development.

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CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between work motivation and employee work discipline among all nine village government personnel at the Rumpia Village Office, Majauleng District, Wajo Regency. Descriptively, both work motivation and work discipline were in the very good category. However, the relationship between the two variables was weak and not statistically significant (r = 0.259, p = 0.501), and work motivation explained only 6.7% of the variance in work discipline (R^2 = 0.067). The hypothesis that work motivation positively affects employee work discipline was therefore not supported, and this study cannot conclude that work motivation predicts employee discipline in the observed organization. Because of the very low statistical power, this result should be interpreted as inconclusive rather than as evidence that motivation and discipline are unrelated.

This study contributes to the understanding of employee behavior within village government organizations by examining the role of work motivation in shaping employee work discipline. The findings suggest that employee discipline in small village offices may be influenced by various organizational and individual factors in addition to work motivation. Consequently, strengthening employee discipline may require a comprehensive human resource management approach that integrates motivational efforts with supportive organizational systems and effective managerial practices.

The study also expands the empirical literature on public human resource management by providing evidence from a rural village government context, which has received relatively limited attention in previous studies. Given the unique organizational characteristics of village governments, the findings highlight the importance of considering contextual factors when examining employee behavior in public sector organizations. Therefore, improving employee discipline should not only focus on enhancing individual motivation but also on creating an organizational environment that supports professionalism, accountability, and continuous performance improvement.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample consisted of only nine respondents from a single village office, which severely limits statistical power and prevents the findings from being generalized to other village governments. Second, the data were self-reported and collected at a single point in time, so they are vulnerable to social desirability bias and cannot establish causality. Third, the concentration of scores near the top of the scale restricted the variance of both variables, which may have attenuated the observed relationship. Fourth, the motivation instrument covered four of Maslow's five need levels, and the study did not measure other potential determinants of discipline, such as leadership, supervision, organizational culture, and compensation. Fifth, estimates of item validity, scale reliability, and regression assumptions based on nine respondents are unstable and should be interpreted with caution. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and their practical implications.

Recommendation

Taking into account the exploratory nature and limitations of this study, several recommendations can be proposed for both practice and future research. From a managerial perspective, village governments should adopt integrated human resource management strategies that strengthen leadership effectiveness, improve supervisory practices, establish transparent performance evaluation systems, and foster a supportive organizational culture. These initiatives are expected to create a work environment that encourages employees to maintain professional behavior and organizational responsibility.

For policymakers, capacity-building programs for village government personnel should emphasize not only technical competencies but also organizational values, ethical behavior, and professional commitment. Strengthening institutional governance through continuous training and performance monitoring may contribute to improving the quality of public services delivered at the village level.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies using larger and more diverse samples across multiple village governments to improve the generalizability of the findings. In addition, subsequent studies should incorporate other explanatory variables, such as leadership style, organizational culture, organizational commitment, compensation, job satisfaction, and work environment, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee work discipline in public organizations. Such studies should also have sufficient statistical power, complement self-reported data with objective records such as attendance logs, and consider longitudinal or multilevel designs.

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