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## *Job Satisfaction Drivers in Public Institutions: Evidence from Balikpapan's Tourism Office*

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### ABSTRACT

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*This study investigates the determinants of employee satisfaction within a public sector institution in an emerging economy context, focusing on the Department of Youth, Sports, and Tourism in Balikpapan, Indonesia. Specifically, it examines the influence of motivation, work environment, and work discipline on employee satisfaction. Employing a quantitative approach, the research surveyed the entire population of 46 civil servants using a census method. Data were collected through observation, structured interviews, and standardized questionnaires, then analyzed using multiple linear regression with SmartPLS software. The findings reveal that both motivation and work environment have a positive and significant impact on employee satisfaction, indicating that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors as well as conducive workplace conditions are critical to enhancing job fulfillment in public institutions. Conversely, work discipline shows a negative and statistically insignificant effect on employee satisfaction, suggesting that disciplinary measures alone may not contribute meaningfully to job satisfaction without complementary motivational and environmental support. These results provide empirical insights for human resource management practices in local government agencies, particularly in the context of developing regions. The study contributes to the literature on public administration and organizational behavior by highlighting context-specific factors influencing employee well-being in the public sector.*

## INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations are increasingly expected to deliver high-quality services to the community. To meet these expectations, competent and satisfied human resources (HR) are vital to achieving institutional goals (Amin, 2020). Human resources play a strategic role, starting from the recruitment and selection process to task execution in accordance with their assigned responsibilities (Jufri et al., 2018). In this context, managing employees effectively becomes a key determinant of organizational success. One essential function of human resource management is to create conditions that foster job satisfaction (Irma & Yusuf, 2020),

as satisfied employees tend to demonstrate higher commitment, better performance, and increased innovation in their roles.

Job satisfaction reflects how employees perceive and feel about their work, including their tasks, environment, and the organizational support they receive. Research shows that motivation, work environment, and discipline are among the primary variables influencing job satisfaction. For instance, motivation has been found to significantly improve job satisfaction (Mubaroqah & Yusuf, 2020), although opposing findings suggest no significant effect (Sa'adah et al., 2021). Similarly, a supportive work environment can enhance employees' well-being and satisfaction (Astuti & Iverizkinawati, 2018; Naim, 2021), but some studies report that environmental conditions have limited influence (Pradana & Santoso, 2021). Disciplinary practices also present mixed outcomes, with some evidence indicating a positive effect on satisfaction (Daroji, 2023), while others suggest no significant relationship (Sabirin & Ilham, 2020).

In light of these inconsistencies and the urgent need to improve internal human resource management, this study aims to examine the influence of motivation, work environment, and work discipline on employee satisfaction at the Balikpapan Youth, Sports, and Tourism Office. As a government institution operating in a developing urban context, the department faces unique challenges in maintaining employee engagement and service quality. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to both theory and practice by identifying effective strategies to enhance job satisfaction in local government institutions, particularly in emerging economies such as Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction is a central construct in organizational behavior studies, often defined as an emotional or affective response toward various aspects of one's job. Sutrisno (2020) describes job satisfaction as an individual's feeling toward the work they receive from an institution. Afandi (2018) links satisfaction with aspects such as working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and rewards. Rivai et al. (2018) emphasize that job satisfaction results from both internal and external factors, involving affective evaluations and individual responses toward their work context. Several theoretical models support this construct, including Discrepancy Theory, Equity Theory, and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which emphasize the importance of motivational and hygiene factors in shaping job satisfaction.

Motivation is one of the key determinants that may influence job satisfaction. It refers to the internal and external forces that drive individuals to achieve certain goals. Sutrisno (2020) classifies motivational factors into internal (e.g., desire for life, ownership, recognition, power) and external (e.g., work environment, compensation, job security, flexibility). Supporting this, Hasibuan (2020) and Afandi (2018) define motivation as a psychological urge that inspires behavior toward productive activities. Theoretical approaches such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and McClelland's Theory of Needs are often used to explain the motivational mechanism behind employee satisfaction and performance.

Another critical variable is the work environment, which consists of both physical and non-physical elements that surround employees during task execution. According to Sedarmayanti (2019), the work environment includes equipment, methods, atmosphere, and arrangement. A conducive work environment provides comfort, safety, and support, thus enhancing employee satisfaction (Enny, 2019; Siagian, 2015). Afandi (2018) notes that environmental quality can influence psychological well-being, motivation, and productivity. Both tangible factors (lighting, layout, noise) and intangible ones (interpersonal relationships, leadership) are believed to contribute to employee satisfaction.

Discipline is another variable studied for its potential influence on satisfaction. Discipline reflects an employee's willingness and awareness to comply with organizational rules and norms (Hasibuan, 2020). Rivai et al. (2018) explain that discipline serves as a managerial tool to promote behavioral adjustment and reinforce accountability. Preventive discipline promotes voluntary compliance, while corrective discipline involves consequences for violations (Sinambela, 2018). A disciplined workforce is likely to show greater responsibility, enthusiasm, and consistency in performance, which may, in turn, influence their sense of satisfaction. Based on the literature review and theoretical models, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. Motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at the Department of Youth, Sports, and Tourism in Balikpapan.
2. Work environment has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at the same institution.

3. Work discipline has a significant effect on employee job satisfaction, either positive or negative, depending on contextual factors.

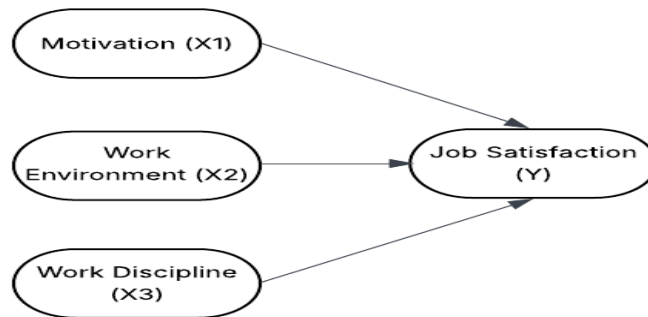


Figure 1. Research Model

## METHODS

The implementation of this research begins by identifying the entire population of employees at the Department of Youth, Sports, and Tourism of Balikpapan as the study subject. According to Sugiyono (2017, p. 80), population is defined as a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that possess certain qualities and characteristics to be studied and from which conclusions are drawn. The total population in this study comprises 46 employees, including 32 civil servants (PNS) and 14 non-civil servants (Non-PNS), based on official data from the department in 2022. Given the relatively small number, the research employs a census sampling technique—also referred to as saturated sampling—in which all population members are included as respondents. This method is appropriate when the entire population is manageable and accessible for data collection (Sugiyono, 2017, p. 81).

To systematically analyze the problem of job satisfaction and its influencing factors, this study uses a quantitative approach through the application of Partial Least Squares (PLS) for structural equation modeling. The model involves one endogenous latent variable (job satisfaction) and three exogenous latent variables (motivation, work environment, and work discipline). The inner model equation is structured as follows:  $\eta = \beta X_1 + \beta X_2 + \beta X_3 + \varepsilon_r$ , where  $\eta$  represents the endogenous latent variable,  $\beta X$  indicates the path coefficients of exogenous latent variables, and  $\varepsilon_r$  denotes the error term or residual. This model allows researchers to quantitatively describe the influence of each predictor variable and test the proposed hypotheses based on observed empirical data, thereby offering a structured solution to enhance employee satisfaction within the department.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study present empirical findings obtained from the analysis of the structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model evaluation confirms that all constructs meet the criteria for validity and reliability, indicating that the indicators adequately represent their respective variables. Furthermore, the structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with an R-square value of 0.799, suggesting that motivation, work environment, and work discipline collectively explain a substantial proportion of the variance in job satisfaction. The path coefficient results reveal that motivation has the strongest positive influence, followed by the work environment, while work discipline shows a negative and insignificant relationship. These findings indicate that psychological and social factors play a more dominant role than formal control mechanisms in shaping employee job satisfaction. The structural relationships among the variables are visually illustrated in Figure 2, which presents the inner model of this study.

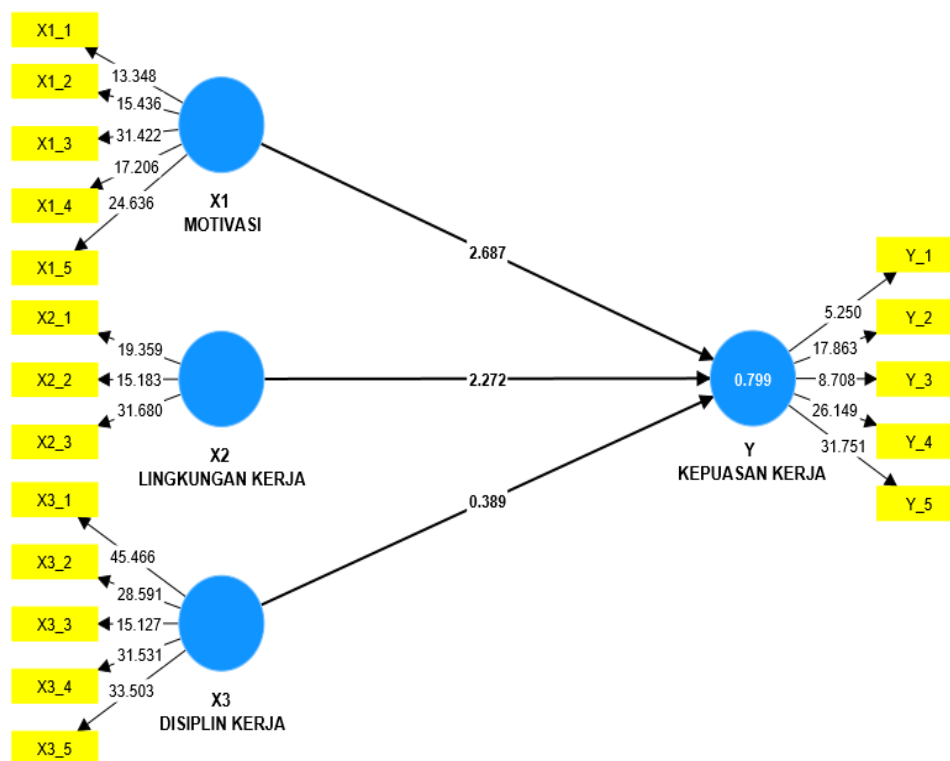


Figure 2. Illustrated Structural Model

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The measurement model evaluation confirms that all constructs meet the required criteria for validity and reliability, as presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. Convergent validity is established, as all outer loading values exceed the threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.737 to 0.960, indicating that each indicator adequately represents its respective construct. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above 0.50, with values of 0.768 for motivation, 0.801 for work environment, 0.855 for work discipline, and 0.707 for job satisfaction, confirming good discriminant validity. Reliability testing also shows strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.876 to 0.957 and Composite Reliability values between 0.923 and 0.967. These results indicate that the measurement model is robust and suitable for further structural analysis, with detailed results presented in Table 1 (Convergent Validity), Table 2 (AVE), and Table 3 (Reliability).

Table 1. Convergent Validity

Indicator	Motivation (X1)	Work Environment (X2)	Work Discipline (X3)	Job Satisfaction (Y)
X1_1	0,818			
X1_2	0,866			
X1_3	0,928			
X1_4	0,879			
X1_5	0,889			
X2_1		0,893		
X2_2		0,878		
X2_3		0,915		
X3_1			0,960	
X3_2			0,908	
X3_3			0,864	
X3_4			0,932	
X3_5			0,957	
Y_1				0,737
Y_2				0,863
Y_3				0,824
Y_4				0,879
Y_5				0,893

Source: Output Smart PLS 4 (2023)

The discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 2, all AVE values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating adequate convergent validity. In addition, the square root of AVE for each construct was higher than 0.70, suggesting that the constructs had satisfactory discriminant validity.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Square Root of AVE
Motivation	0,768	0,877
Work Environment	0,801	0,895
Work Discipline	0,855	0,925
Job Satisfaction	0,707	0,841

Source: Output Smart PLS 4 (2023)

The reliability of the constructs was evaluated using Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability, as presented in Table 3. All variables show values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, with Cronbach’s Alpha ranging from 0.876 to 0.957 and Composite Reliability ranging from 0.923 to 0.967. These results indicate that all constructs have strong internal consistency and are considered reliable for further analysis.

Tabel 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability
Motivation	0.924	0.943
Work Environment	0.876	0.924
Work Discipline	0.957	0.967
Job Satisfaction	0.896	0.923

Source: Output Smart PLS 4 (2023)

The coefficient of determination (R-square) is used to assess the explanatory power of the structural model. As shown in Table 4, the R-square value for job satisfaction is 0.799, indicating that 79.9% of the variance in job satisfaction is explained by motivation, work environment, and work discipline. The adjusted R-square value of 0.785 further confirms the robustness of the model, suggesting a strong level of predictive accuracy.

Table 4. R-Square Results

Variable	R-Square (R <sup>2</sup> )	Adjusted R-Square
Job Satisfaction	0.799	0.785

Source: Output Smart PLS 4 (2023)

The hypothesis testing results, as presented in Table 5, indicate that motivation has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.540$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. This finding suggests that higher levels of employee motivation lead to increased job satisfaction. Similarly, the work environment shows a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.407$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), supporting Hypothesis 2, which highlights the importance of a supportive and conducive workplace. In contrast, work discipline does not have a significant effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.045$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 3. This result indicates that work discipline, as a formal control mechanism, does not directly contribute to enhancing employee satisfaction in this context.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1	Motivation → Job Satisfaction	0.540	> 1.96	< 0.05	Supported
H2	Work Environment → Job Satisfaction	0.407	> 1.96	< 0.05	Supported
H3	Work Discipline → Job Satisfaction	-0.045	< 1.96	> 0.05	Not Supported

Source: Output Smart PLS 4 (2023)

The discussion of this study is initiated by examining the first finding, which demonstrates that motivation has a significant influence on job satisfaction among employees at the Department of Youth, Sports, and Tourism in Balikpapan. This is evidenced by the high agreement on motivational indicators such as self-actualization, physiological needs, social affiliation, safety, and esteem – aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Hasibuan, 2020; Sutrisno, 2020). These results are consistent with studies by Mubaroqah & Yusuf (2020) and Pratama et al. (2022), which found that intrinsic motivation increases employee engagement and satisfaction. In public sector settings, especially those with limited financial rewards, non-monetary motivators such as recognition and purpose-driven work play a crucial role in enhancing job outcomes.

The second result shows that the work environment has a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction. Respondents emphasized aspects such as collegial relationships, collaboration among staff, and harmonious communication with supervisors. These align with Sedarmayanti (2019) and Enny (2019) who argue that both physical and psychosocial work conditions shape employees' emotional well-being. This finding reinforces earlier empirical evidence from Angga et al. (2022) and Jufri et al. (2018), who noted that safe, friendly, and inclusive work environments positively correlate with satisfaction, especially in government agencies that rely on bureaucratic coordination and teamwork.

Interestingly, the third result reveals that work discipline has a negative and insignificant effect on job satisfaction. Despite strong adherence to ethical standards, attendance, alertness, and rule compliance reported by respondents, these elements did not translate into increased satisfaction. This contrasts with the findings of Daroji (2023) but supports earlier research by Sabirin & Ilham (2020), which suggest that discipline, if perceived as rigid or punitive, may undermine morale. This suggests a need to reevaluate disciplinary strategies – not merely as control mechanisms, but as part of a supportive culture. The implications of these findings highlight the importance of motivation and environment as

levers for public HR development, while also calling for innovation in fostering discipline without diminishing job satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

This research aimed to examine the influence of motivation, work environment, and work discipline on job satisfaction among employees at the Department of Youth, Sports, and Tourism in Balikpapan. Based on the analysis of quantitative data using the SmartPLS application and the interpretation of path coefficients, it was found that motivation and work environment each have a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction, while work discipline has a negative and insignificant effect. These findings support two of the proposed hypotheses and reject one, demonstrating that psychological and relational factors are more influential in determining job satisfaction in public sector institutions.

The achievement of research objectives is reflected in the identification of specific variables that can be prioritized to enhance employee satisfaction. Motivation, particularly the fulfillment of self-actualization and safety needs, plays a vital role in shaping satisfaction. Likewise, a comfortable and respectful work environment strengthens interpersonal relationships and enhances overall performance. On the other hand, discipline, although essential, needs to be implemented not as a rigid mechanism but as a constructive aspect of organizational culture. The results of this study provide practical implications for human resource development strategies in public institutions and contribute to the empirical literature on public employee satisfaction in emerging economies.

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