THE INFLUENCE OF WORK STRESS AND WORK DISCIPLINE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE WITH WORK MOTIVATION AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE ON SEARCH AND RESCUE OFFICE EMPLOYEES IN WEST SUMATRA

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Employee performance, Job stress, Work discipline, Work motivation	This study aims to analyze the effect of work stress and work discipline on employee performance with work motivation as a mediating variable in Search and Rescue Office employees in West Sumatra. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method and an associative design. The research sample consisted of 127 employees selected through total sampling with a minimum work period of six months. The research instrument was a Likert scale questionnaire with 42 statements related to work stress, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance on a 1-5 scale. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) to test validity, reliability, and relationships between variables, as well as hypothesis testing using bootstrapping techniques. The results showed that work discipline had a significant positive effect on employee performance, while work stress did not have a direct effect on performance. However, work stress had a significant effect on work motivation, and work motivation had a significant positive effect on employee performance. In addition, work discipline was also shown to increase work motivation. These findings confirm that optimal performance is not only influenced by discipline, but also by work motivation that can transform stress into productive drive. Thus, strengthening intrinsic motivation becomes an important strategy in improving employee performance in high-workload search and rescue agencies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing competition and demands for professionalism create significant pressures for individuals to face in the workplace. In addition to these pressures, Indonesia's economic situation remains unstable, and the impact of the prolonged crisis also has the potential to create stress (Lotu, D.W., Z., 2022). This pressure directly impacts the quality of human resources (HR), even though HR is a key factor in determining organizational performance. Unfortunately, some businesses still view employees as a cost burden, rather than a strategic asset (Adha et al.,

2019). Improving HR quality can be achieved through education, training, increased discipline, strict sanctions, and performance appraisals, which can encourage improvements in employee skills and work quality (Anita, 2022). Employees are truly an organization's most valuable asset, as their success depends heavily on their optimal contribution. However, in practice, many employees are neglected and not properly treated as important assets (Prabawati et al., 2022; Arwidiana, & Citrawati, 2023).

Employee performance is the tangible attitude produced by each person as the performance produced by employees according to their respective roles and duties within a business entity. Business entities operating must pay attention to human resource performance and work stress in employees. Performance is an achievement or result of a person's work based on the quantity and quality achieved in carrying out their functions according to the responsibilities accepted (Yolinza, N., & Marlius, 2023). According to Mangkunegara, (2017), performance is the result of the quantity and quality of an employee in carrying out their duties according to their responsibilities. To achieve good performance, employees must have the ability to control the work stress they experience. However, the higher the motivation to do a good job, the work stress will be experienced with higher levels of productivity and efficiency.

Employee performance is a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization, including within government agencies (Effendi, 2021). Based on internal data from the Mentawai Search and Rescue Office, the 2024 KPI achievement remains in the "Sufficient" category, indicating that employee performance has not yet reached the minimum standard of "Good" as stipulated in Ministerial Regulation of the State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (PermenPANRB) Number 53 of 2014 (KemenPANRB, 2014).

This situation indicates that the organization is not optimally carrying out its functions and responsibilities, raising questions about the factors causing low employee performance. Initial observations indicate several indications of problems, including a lack of work accuracy, low accountability resulting in slow task completion, suboptimal use of work time, minimal attention to high-performing employees, low performance consistency, and the continued presence of various violations such as tardiness and being outside the office during working hours.
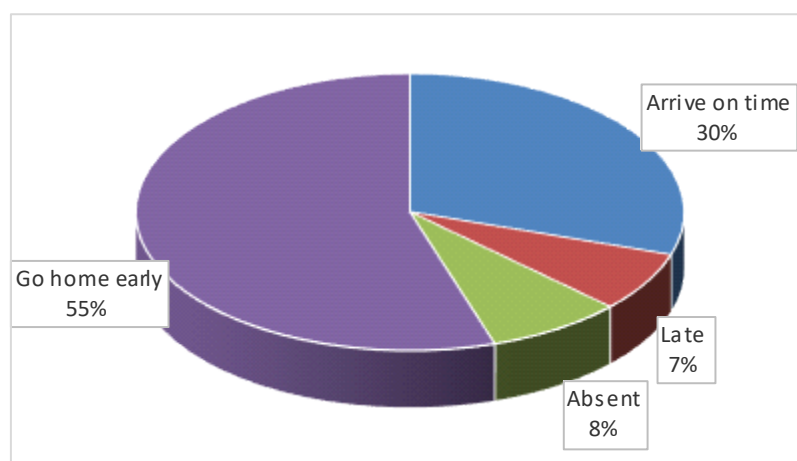

Figure 1. Percentage of Absenteeism of West Sumatra Regional Search and Rescue Office Employees in September 2024

Based on the above phenomena, the West Sumatra Regional Search and Rescue Office's performance indicators have not been satisfactorily achieved. This is evident in the low employee performance, reflected in the punctuality rate of only 30%, while 55% of employees leave early, 7% are late, and 8% are absent.

Employee performance can be affected by work stress and work discipline. High work stress tends to reduce employee productivity because it can cause physical and mental fatigue, impaired concentration, and even reduce the quality of employee decisions (Mentari et al., 2023). Conversely, good work discipline helps employees complete tasks on time and according to expected standards, thereby increasing work effectiveness (Tamrin & Trisilo, 2024).

However, the relationship between work stress and work discipline on performance is not always linear, as both are often influenced by other factors, such as work motivation. Work motivation acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between work stress, discipline, and employee performance. This is because work motivation explains the mechanisms by which work stress and discipline affect performance (Tamrin & Trisilo (2024).

Work stress is a condition where an individual experiences tension due to various demands that affect them, and this is almost always experienced by employees in their daily activities. The dynamics of information technology utilization and the increasing demands for professionalism make stress in the workplace increasingly

difficult to avoid. Employees often face deadlines, excessive workloads, diverse role demands, and even family issues, making stress an inseparable factor in the world of work (Iswandi, 2021; Halawa et al., 2021). In addition to stress, the level of work discipline also plays a significant role in influencing employee performance. Discipline reflects employees' respect for and compliance with organizational rules, which is the foundation for creating work effectiveness and efficiency (Lestari & Afifah, 2020; Arifin & Sasana, 2022). High discipline helps employees resolve problems quickly, maintain responsibilities, and support the achievement of organizational goals (Hasibuan, 2013; Sitompul et al., 2021; Cangiano et al., 2019).

In efforts to improve employee discipline and performance, work motivation plays a crucial role as a primary driver of individual behavior and effort. Motivation is understood as the attitudes, ideals, and beliefs that drive a person to act in accordance with desired goals, both intrinsic and extrinsic (Dewi & Trihudiyatmanto, 2020; Lotu, 2022; Beltrán & Bou, 2018; Prabawati et al., 2022). Motivation can be enhanced through rewards, praise, punishment, and the creation of clear and realistic work goals. In the context of the influence of stress and discipline on performance, work motivation can act as a moderating variable, strengthening or weakening the relationship between the two. Therefore, motivation acts not as a mediator but as a factor determining the strength or weakness of the influence of stress and discipline on employee performance.

Research by Tamrin & Trisilo (2024) shows that high work motivation can weaken the negative impact of work stress on employee performance. Similarly, in the relationship between work discipline and employee performance, work motivation can strengthen the positive influence of discipline on performance. As explained by Mentari et al. (2023), high work discipline reflects time discipline, adherence to rules, and individual responsibility. To understand the complex relationship between these factors, this study used the Job Demand-Resources Theory (JD-R Theory) approach developed by Demerouti (Shohib, M., & Hadi, 2020). This theory explains that every job has two main dimensions: job demands and job resources (Aprilianingsih, A., & Frianto, 2022).

Although numerous studies have addressed work stress, discipline, and motivation, several research gaps remain largely unexplored. First, little research has been conducted in the search and rescue (SAR) sector, despite the fact that this sector presents different physical and mental demands than other agencies. Second, empirical findings on the effect of stress on performance are inconsistent, necessitating further testing in high-risk work contexts. Third, previous research tends to position motivation as a mediator, whereas from the perspective of JD-R Theory, motivation is more appropriately positioned as a moderating variable. Fourth, there are still few studies examining work stress, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance in a single, comprehensive analytical model.

Based on these research issues and gaps, the objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the effect of work stress on employee performance at the West Sumatra Regional Search and Rescue Office; (2) to analyze the effect of work discipline on employee performance; (3) to examine the role of work motivation as a moderating variable in the effect of work stress on performance; (4) to examine the role of work motivation as a moderator in the effect of work discipline on performance; and (5) to develop an empirical model based on Job Demand-Resources Theory to explain the performance dynamics of employees in the SAR sector. Based on this urgency, this research was conducted with the title "The Effect of Work Stress and Work Discipline on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable on Search and Rescue Office Employees in the West Sumatra Region."

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach with a survey method and an associative design to examine the relationship between variables using standardized instruments and statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2020). The study population included all employees of the Mentawai and Padang Search and Rescue Offices, with a sample of 127 people through total sampling and purposive sampling based on the criteria of active employees with a minimum work period of six months. The research instrument consisted of a 1–5 Likert scale questionnaire containing 42 statements related to work stress, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance, as well as documentation in the form of archives and supporting data. Data collection was carried out through closed questionnaires, literature studies, and documentation. Data analysis included descriptive and verification analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) version 3.0 to test the validity, reliability, relationships between variables, and predictivity of the model through evaluation of the outer model and inner model. Hypothesis testing was carried out using bootstrapping techniques using the criteria of p-value < 0.05 and t-statistic > 1.96, and mediation analysis included testing the direct effect, indirect effect, significance of mediation effect, and determination of the type of mediation.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This study aims to determine the effect of work stress and work discipline on employee performance, with work motivation as a mediating variable, on employees of the Search and Rescue Office in West Sumatra. To answer this objective, a descriptive analysis was conducted on each research variable: work stress, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance. The descriptive analysis includes the average value, standard deviation, minimum value, maximum value, and respondents' perceptions of each variable indicator. The description of respondents' perceptions of all variables in this study can be explained as follows.

Variable Test Results
Outer Model
Validity Test

Convergent validity testing was conducted to ensure that the indicators used were able to consistently measure the same construct. The criterion used was the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, which must be greater than or equal to 0.50 (Hair et al. 2017). The test results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Validity Test

Construct	AVE	Validity Status
Work Discipline	0.513	Valid
Employee Performance	0.527	Valid
Work Motivation	0.558	Valid
Work Stress	0.498	Not Valid

The results in Table 1 show that most constructs Work Discipline, Employee Performance, and Work Motivation have AVE values above the 0.50 threshold, thus meeting convergent validity. However, for the Job Stress variable, the AVE value does not meet the threshold. Therefore, it is necessary to further examine whether there are indicators with outer loading values below 0.7, which significantly affect this AVE value. The Outer Loading values per indicator can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Outer Loading

Indicator Code	Outer Loading	Indicator Code	Outer Loading
M1	0.759	X2_2	0.613
M2	0.787	X2_3	0.668
M3	0.749	X2_4	0.725
M4	0.822	X2_5	0.710
M5	0.660	X2_6	0.784
M6	0.785	X2_7	0.712
M7	0.713	X2_8	0.748
M8	0.783	X2_9	0.740
M9	0.644	Y1	0.773
X1_1	0.666	Y10	0.672
X1_10	0.742	Y11	0.787
X1_11	0.728	Y12	0.797
X1_12	0.648	Y2	0.787
X1_2	0.663	Y3	0.677
X1_3	0.660	Y4	0.668
X1_4	0.611	Y5	0.733
X1_5	0.768	Y6	0.732
X1_6	0.785	Y7	0.643
X1_7	0.725	Y8	0.695
X1_8	0.714	Y9	0.765
X1_9	0.732		

Table 2 shows that the Outer Loading value for indicator X1_4 is the lowest, at 0.611. Therefore, this item needs to be dropped or removed to ensure the questionnaire's validity. After removing it, a re-validation test was conducted on the data. The results of the re-validation test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Second Validity Test

Konstruk	AVE	Description
Work Discipline	0.558	Valid
Employee Performance	0.511	Valid
Work Motivation	0.513	Valid
Work Stress	0.527	Valid

The second validity test, conducted after removing indicator X1_4, showed that all variables were valid and could proceed to reliability testing.

The validity test in this study serves as a scientific instrument to ensure that each indicator truly represents the latent construct being measured. In the PLS-SEM approach, convergent validity is assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, where a minimum threshold of 0.50 indicates that more than half of the indicator's variance can be comprehensively explained by the construct (Evi & Rachbini, 2023). In other words, the higher the AVE value, the stronger the indicator's representation of the theoretical phenomenon being measured.

The results in Table 1 show that the three main constructs Work Discipline, Employee Performance, and Work Motivation have exceeded the threshold value, thus connotatively demonstrating alignment between theoretical concepts and empirical reality. This condition aligns with the view of Fornell and Larcker (1981), who asserted that indicators that correlate highly with a construct will reflect an adequate level of validity (Karim & Rambe, 2025). However, the Job Stress construct showed an AVE value of 0.498, slightly below the minimum standard, thus indicating conceptual instability that requires further examination.

To identify the source of this discrepancy, an analysis of the outer loading values, which reflect the contribution of each indicator to explaining the construct, was conducted. Based on Table 1.2, indicator X1_4 had the lowest loading value (0.611), which, methodologically, has the potential to weaken the construct's integrity. Although this value remains within the minimum tolerance limit (0.60), its significant difference compared to other indicators makes this item connotative of a "measurement anomaly" that could disrupt model harmony. Common scientific practice recommends removing such indicators as a form of model refinement (Karyasa et al., 2023).

After eliminating indicator X1_4 and retesting, all constructs achieved AVE values above 0.50 (Table 1.3). This indicates that the measurement model has improved in quality and reflects the principle of a parsimonious model, namely a model that is simpler but still has high explanatory power. This improvement also confirms that each indicator is now in a more scientific and consistent theoretical and empirical alignment.

Reliability Test

Construct reliability testing is used to assess the internal consistency of the construct's components. The criteria used are Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), which must be greater than or equal to 0.70 (Ghozali, 2021). The results of the reliability testing are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Konstruk	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Description
Work Discipline	0.881	0.904	Reliabel
Employee Performance	0.918	0.921	Reliabel
Work Motivation	0.900	0.919	Reliabel
Work Stress	0.904	0.920	Reliabel

As seen in Table 4, all constructs had Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values well above 0.70. This indicates that the indicators used to measure each construct have excellent internal consistency and can be trusted as reliable measuring instruments in this study.

After validity has been met, the next step is to ensure the internal consistency of the indicators through reliability testing. Reliability is the scientific foundation that determines whether a measuring instrument can produce stable and replicable results. The two main parameters used are Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), where a value ≥ 0.70 indicates a high level of reliability (Frahestika & Sukiswo, 2025).

The reliability test results in Table 4 show that all constructs, including Work Discipline, Employee Performance, Work Motivation, and Job Stress, have Cronbach's Alpha and CR values well above the minimum threshold. Scientifically, this demonstrates that the indicators are not only consistent but also able to describe the construct cohesively and harmoniously. This consistent, high reliability value connotes that each variable possesses strong "measurement fidelity" to the underlying theoretical concept.

Furthermore, Composite Reliability is considered superior to Cronbach's Alpha because it considers the weights of the different indicators in the model, resulting in more precise reliability measurements (Hudaya &

Ikhsani, 2023). Therefore, the excellent reliability results for all constructs confirm that this measurement model has met strong scientific standards and is suitable for use in the next stage of structural analysis.

Overall, the series of validity and reliability tests demonstrate that the research instrument has undergone a systematic scientific screening process. The removal of indicator X1_4 has been shown to improve the integrity of the model, resulting in a construct that is simultaneously valid and reliable. This harmony between empirical data and methodological principles creates a solid analytical foundation for proceeding to examine the structural relationships between variables.
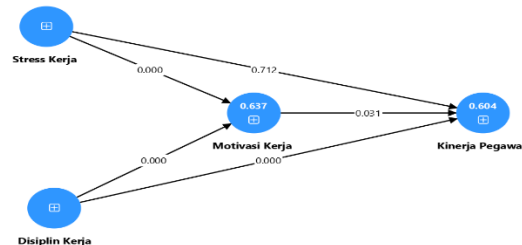
Inner Model

Figure 2. Model graph

The figure above shows the estimated relationships between the latent variables in the research model: work stress, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance. The values listed above the path represent the path coefficients, while the numbers below the path indicate the p-value as a measure of significance.

Table 5. Total Effect

Source Variable	Target Variable	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T statistics	P values
Work discipline	Employee Performance	0.730	0.737	0.042	17.452	0.000
Work discipline	Work Motivation	0.440	0.441	0.062	7.067	0.000
Work Motivation	Employee Performance	0.289	0.285	0.133	2.164	0.031
Work Stress	Employee Performance	0.143	0.143	0.060	2.369	0.018
Work Stress	Work Motivation	0.623	0.628	0.053	11.692	0.000

The results of the Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis produce estimates of the influence between variables, which are displayed in the Total Effects Table. This table illustrates the magnitude of the direct and indirect influence between the exogenous, mediator, and endogenous variables in the research model. The Original Sample (O) value indicates the strength of the relationship between variables, while the T-Statistics and P-Values indicate their level of significance.

The results of the inner model analysis in this study illustrate the causal relationship between latent variables consisting of work stress, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance. This evaluation was conducted using the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) approach, where path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values are the main indicators for assessing the strength and significance of the relationships between variables (Robani, 2025). The structural model graph shows the direction and magnitude of influence flowing from the exogenous to the endogenous variables, while the Total Effects Table provides a quantitative overview of the direct and indirect effects occurring within the research model.

The results of the study indicate that work discipline has the most dominant influence on employee performance with a coefficient value of 0.730 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the higher the level of employee discipline, the better the work performance produced. This finding is consistent with the view of Faridah et al., (2025) who stated that discipline is a key determinant of productivity because it forms order, accuracy, and employee compliance in carrying out tasks. In addition, work discipline also has a significant influence on work motivation with a coefficient value of 0.440 and a p-value of 0.000. This relationship indicates that an orderly and structured work environment is able to build a conducive psychological atmosphere, thereby strengthening employee motivation. This is in line with Laoli, (2025) who emphasized that discipline is the foundation for the growth of responsibility and a stronger work ethic.

In this study, work motivation was also shown to have a significant influence on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.289 and a p-value of 0.031. Although its influence is not as significant as work discipline, motivation still plays a crucial role as an internal driver for employees to increase productivity, creativity, and achievement orientation. This finding supports Herzberg's (1966) motivation theory, which emphasizes that highly motivated individuals will demonstrate more optimal performance than those who are unmotivated

(Wahjono et al., 2022). Thus, motivation can be viewed as a psychological mechanism linking work behavior to work outcomes.

Job stress is another variable that also showed a significant influence in the research model. The analysis showed that job stress affected employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.143 and a p-value of 0.018. Although the effect is relatively small, this finding still indicates that stress can weaken employees' ability to work effectively. Febri (2024) explains that stress is an adaptive response that has the potential to reduce concentration, resilience, and emotional energy, thus directly impacting the quality and quantity of performance. Furthermore, work stress also significantly impacted work motivation, with a coefficient of 0.623 and a p-value of 0.000. This significant effect indicates that high stress can reduce employees' internal drive to perform optimally. Jatmiko (2024) even asserted that chronic stress can reduce work interest and enthusiasm, potentially leading to disengagement.

Overall, the results of this inner model indicate that work discipline and work stress are variables that have a strong influence on employee motivation and performance, both directly and indirectly. Work motivation plays a mediating role, channeling the influence of work discipline and work stress toward employee performance. This finding provides scientific significance that efforts to improve employee performance cannot be separated from strategies for strengthening discipline and effective stress management. With the harmonious relationship between the variables in this model, this study strengthens the theoretical link between work behavior, psychological factors, and work outcomes as described in the organizational behavior literature.

R-Square Test

The R-Square (R^2) value measures how much variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. According to Chin (1998), an R^2 value of 0.67 is categorized as strong, 0.33 as moderate, and 0.19 as weak. The results of the R^2 test are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. R-Square

Variabel Endogen	R^2	Description
Employee Performance	0.605	Strong category
Work Motivation	0.640	Strong category

The results in Table 6 indicate that the research model has high explanatory power. The independent variables in the model explain 60.4% of the variation in Employee Performance and 63.7% of the variation in Work Motivation. With an R^2 value in the strong category, this model is very good at predicting relationships between variables and is suitable for further hypothesis testing.

The R-Square (R^2) test results provide an overview of the structural model's ability to explain variation in the endogenous variables studied. In the context of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the R^2 value is a key indicator for assessing the model's predictive power. The higher the R^2 value, the greater the proportion of the dependent variable's variance that can be explained by the independent variables (Ananda Marta, 2024). Referring to the categories proposed by Chin (1998), an R^2 value of 0.67 is categorized as strong, 0.33 as moderate, and 0.19 as weak. Thus, R^2 serves as a substantive measure that assesses the quality of model adequacy, not simply a technical statistical measure.

Based on the data processing results presented in Table 1.6, it is known that the Employee Performance variable has an R^2 value of 0.605, while the Work Motivation variable has an R^2 value of 0.640. Both values fall into the strong category according to the criteria. This means that the independent variables, consisting of work discipline and work stress, are able to explain 60.5% of the variation in employee performance and 63.7% of the variation in work motivation. These proportions indicate that the research model has substantial explanatory power and contributes strongly to describing the dynamics of the relationships between the variables studied.

These findings align with Sofyani's (2025) view, which states that a high R^2 value indicates that the independent construct significantly influences the behavior of the endogenous variable. Therefore, empirically, this model meets the requirements for structural adequacy, as it reliably predicts motivation and performance variables. Furthermore, these results reinforce theories of organizational behavior that place work discipline and psychological stress as important determinants of employee motivation and performance (Krisna & Sungkawati, 2025). At this point, the R^2 not only illustrates predictive power but also provides empirical evidence that the theoretical relationship between variables is solidly grounded and confirmed by field data.

With an R^2 value in the strong category, this research model can be said to have high predictive validity and is suitable for use in further hypothesis testing. Furthermore, the strong explanatory power of the model indicates that the variables of work discipline, work stress, and work motivation have a significant connotative contribution to shaping employee performance, thus having important implications for the development of human resource management policies. These findings indicate that organizations need to strengthen discipline management and stress management as key strategies in sustainably improving employee motivation and performance.

Direct Effect Test

The direct effect test, or indirect effect, can be seen through the Path Coefficients values used to evaluate the direct influence and significance between constructs. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Direct Effect Test

Relationship	Coefficient	T-Stat	P-Value	Description
Work Discipline → Employe Performance	0.610	8.320	0.000	Significant
Work Discipline → Work Motivation	0.434	6.926	0.000	Significant
Work Motivation → Employe Performance	0.295	2.231	0.026	Significant
Work Stress → Employe Performance	-0.044	0.448	0.654	Not significant
Work Stress → Work Motivation	0.626	11.794	0.000	Significant

Based on the test results, several important findings were discovered:

1. Work Discipline has been shown to have a positive and significant direct effect on Employee Performance (coefficient = 0.610, p-value = 0.000). These results confirm that the higher the work discipline, the better the performance achieved.
2. Work Stress does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Performance (coefficient = -0.044, p-value = 0.654).
3. However, Work Stress significantly influences Work Motivation (coefficient = 0.626, p-value = 0.000).
4. Work Motivation itself has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (coefficient = 0.295, p-value = 0.026).
5. In addition, Work Discipline also has a significant positive effect on Work Motivation (coefficient = 0.434, p-value = 0.000).

These findings demonstrate the complexity of the relationships between variables. Work discipline is a factor that directly and substantially influences performance, while work stress plays a more psychological role with a strong influence on motivation.

The results of the Path Coefficients analysis provide an in-depth overview of the direct influence between constructs in the structural model. In the PLS-SEM approach, path coefficients serve to assess the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between latent variables, with the T-statistic and p-value being the basis for determining the significance of the relationship (Robani, 2025). This direct effect test is important because it can identify how exogenous variables influence endogenous variables without going through a mediator, thus providing a more explicit understanding of causality within the research model framework.

Based on the results in Table 1.7, work discipline demonstrates a positive and significant direct influence on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.610 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding indicates that improving work discipline connotatively impacts the quality of employee performance. These results align with Budi (2022), who stated that discipline is a crucial indicator in developing effective work behavior and achieving individual productivity. In the context of modern organizations, good discipline serves as the foundation for creating order, consistent work, and a results-oriented approach, ensuring its contribution to improved performance is substantial and long-term.

In addition to directly influencing performance, work discipline also has a significant influence on work motivation (coefficient 0.434; p-value 0.000). This suggests that a structured, orderly environment with clear work standards can create a sense of psychological safety, encouraging employees to work with greater enthusiasm and dedication. These findings support the motivation theory proposed by Nasir (2024), who explains that good and orderly working conditions are hygiene factors that can encourage increased motivation if managed effectively.

On the other hand, work stress was not shown to have a significant direct effect on employee performance (coefficient -0.044; p-value 0.654). These results indicate that the presence of stress at a certain level does not necessarily reduce employee performance. Organizational behavior literature suggests that moderate levels of stress can be adaptive or even increase alertness, so its effects on performance can vary (Honkley, 2024). However, this study's findings suggest that work stress plays a more indirect role through other psychological variables.

This is reinforced by the results showing that work stress has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (coefficient 0.626; p-value 0.000). Although theoretically, stress is often considered a factor that reduces motivation, in certain contexts, stress can be constructive if employees are able to manage it adaptively.

Ariska et al. (2024) emphasized that eustress, or positive stress, can stimulate the drive to complete tasks with greater focus and efficiency. This study's findings can be interpreted as meaning that the stress experienced by employees may be challenging (a challenge stressor), thus encouraging them to increase their work motivation.

In this study, work motivation was also shown to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.295 and a p-value of 0.026. These findings support the theoretical framework of work motivation, which positions motivation as an internal driver that influences commitment, persistence, and the quality of individual work output (Pamungkas & Nursyamsi, 2024). This confirms that motivation is an important mediating variable in bridging the relationship between situational factors such as discipline and stress and employee performance.

Overall, the results of the direct effects test demonstrate a complex dynamic relationship between the research variables. Work discipline plays a dominant role, directly influencing both motivation and performance. Meanwhile, work stress influences motivation more than performance, thus its role is psychological and indirect. These relationships confirm that improving employee performance is inextricably linked to strengthening discipline and effective stress management, while ensuring that work motivation remains at an optimal level.

Indirect Effect Test

This test evaluates the role of the mediating variable, in this case, Work Motivation, in mediating the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results are presented in Table 1.8.

Table 8. Indirect Effect Test

Relationship	Coefficient	T-Stat	P-Value	Description
Work Stress → Work Motivation → Performance	0.185	2.182	0.029	Full Mediation
Work Discipline → Work Motivation → Performance	0.128	2.089	0.037	Partial Mediation

The test results demonstrate that work motivation significantly mediates the relationship between work stress and work discipline on employee performance. This means that work motivation mediation constitutes a full mediation. This is crucial, especially in the relationship between work stress and performance, where the direct effect is insignificant. Mediation by motivation indicates that work stress does not directly affect performance, but rather through changes in employee motivation levels. Meanwhile, in the relationship between work discipline and performance, mediation by work motivation further strengthens the existing positive effect. Therefore, there is a partial mediation effect generated by work motivation on work discipline.

The results of the indirect effects test indicate that work motivation plays a significant mediating role in the model, as presented in Table 1.8. This finding confirms that the relationship between the independent variables, namely work stress and work discipline, on employee performance is not entirely direct, but operates through the psychological mechanism of motivation. The mediation coefficient of Work Stress → Work Motivation → Employee Performance of 0.185 (p-value = 0.029) indicates full mediation, while the relationship between Work Discipline → Work Motivation → Employee Performance of 0.128 (p-value = 0.037) indicates partial mediation. This pattern illustrates that work motivation plays a crucial role as a bridge connecting work pressure and behavioral regulation with employee performance outcomes.

Theoretically, these results align with Alkadri's (2024) view, which asserts that motivation is an internal energy that drives individuals to direct their behavior toward achieving organizational goals. In the context of work stress, Ulhaq et al. (2025) explain that stress can reduce a person's capacity to work optimally, but this impact is often moderated or mediated by psychological factors such as motivation. The full mediation findings in this study on the relationship between work stress and employee performance support this theory, as stress was not shown to have a direct effect on performance, but significantly impacted motivation, which in turn increased or decreased performance. In other words, motivation is a psychological mechanism that transfers the effects of stress on employee work behavior.

Meanwhile, regarding the relationship between work discipline and employee performance, partial mediation findings indicate that discipline not only directly influences performance but also strengthens performance by increasing motivation. This is in line with the opinion of Pamungkas & Nursyamsi (2024), who stated that work discipline can create an internal drive for employees to work more effectively, because regular behavior fosters a sense of responsibility and commitment to their work. Furthermore, previous research by Pamungkas & Nursyamsi (2024) also showed that good discipline increases employees' intrinsic motivation, which ultimately has a positive impact on performance quality.

Thus, the results of this study confirm that work motivation is a substantial psychological component in the model of inter-variable relationships. Motivation not only acts as a mediating variable but also as a determining mechanism for how stress or discipline affects overall work behavior. Therefore, efforts to improve employee

performance should not be solely carried out through discipline enforcement or reducing sources of stress but should also be directed at strategies to increase motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic. These findings enrich the human resource management literature and provide an empirical basis for organizations to design more comprehensive, psychologically grounded work policies

4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that work discipline, work stress, and work motivation play interrelated roles in shaping the performance of Search and Rescue Office employees in West Sumatra. The most important finding indicates that work discipline is the most dominant factor directly improving performance, while work stress has no direct effect but influences performance through work motivation, acting as a full mediator. This provides a scientific lesson that optimizing performance cannot rely solely on improving formal work procedures, but also on managing employee psychological well-being. Furthermore, work motivation has proven to be a crucial link that channels the positive and negative impacts of other variables on work performance, thus reinforcing theories of organizational behavior that place motivation at the center of performance dynamics. The main lesson from this study is that employee performance is influenced not only by technical aspects but also by psychological conditions and the quality of discipline, which collectively create a productive and adaptive work environment. Scientifically, this study makes a significant contribution by presenting an empirical SEM-PLS-based model that simultaneously examines the complex relationships among work stress, work discipline, motivation, and performance. This study enriches the literature by demonstrating full mediation in the relationship between work stress and performance and partial mediation in the relationship between work discipline and performance—a finding rarely addressed in similar research in the search and rescue sector. The strengths of this study lie in the use of standardized instruments, robust analytical methods, and a survey design capable of capturing employee psychological and behavioral dynamics in greater depth. However, this study has limitations, particularly the scope of the location, which only covers two offices, and the homogenous characteristics of respondents in terms of job type and length of service. These methodological limitations open up opportunities for further research to explore other variables such as differences in gender, age, and personality traits, as well as the use of broader survey methods to produce a more comprehensive picture of employee performance and serve as a basis for formulating more targeted organizational policies.

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