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WORK ENVIRONMENT, DISCIPLINE, AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF INTERNAL MOTIVATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of work environment and work discipline on employee performance at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency in Lubuklinggau City, with internal motivation as a moderating variable. Using a quantitative approach, data from 67 employees were analysed through Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA). The results show that work environment and work discipline jointly explain approximately 70.7% of the variance in employee performance, with the work environment emerging as the more dominant predictor. Internal motivation was found to significantly strengthen the effect of both work environment and work discipline on performance, confirming its role as a moderating variable and underscoring the substantial contribution of psychological factors alongside physical working conditions. These findings suggest that local government agencies should pair improvements in physical working conditions and disciplinary enforcement with deliberate strategies to build employee internal motivation, such as merit-based recognition and career-development opportunities, to strengthen human-resource governance and sustain performance gains.

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INTRODUCTION

Advances in science and technology have transformed the way humans interact with their environment, leading to shifts in behavior, consumption patterns, and the way individuals meet their increasingly complex needs; organizations are therefore required to respond to these changes quickly and accurately (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2024). An organization's ability to adapt to change, whether through improved work methods, enhanced product and service quality, or product and service innovation, is essential for competing in an increasingly competitive environment, and none of these adaptation options is possible without the support of reliable human resources as operators (Zervas & Stiakakis, 2025). Although some routine human roles can now be performed by machines with artificial intelligence, the role of humans as operators and controllers remains irreplaceable (Dima et al., 2024); organizations must therefore pay attention to and improve the quality of their human resources in order to compete with other organizations (Hermanto et al., 2024).

The Lubuklinggau City Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency

(BPKAD) has also felt the impact of these changes. As a Regional Apparatus Organization (OPD) established under Mayoral Regulation Number 22 of 2022 concerning the Position, Organizational Structure, Duties, Functions, and Work Procedures of the Lubuklinggau City Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency, BPKAD has the primary task of exercising regional authority in managing regional finances and assets, as well as other assistance tasks (Setiawan et al., 2022). Implementing Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 2025 concerning Expenditure Efficiency in the Implementation of the State requires a series of efficiency and innovation efforts to ensure the organization's work programs and targets are realized (Mia et al., 2024); high performance from all BPKAD employees is therefore a determining factor in achieving organizational goals. Performance is the result of activities (output) achieved by employees over a specific period of time, and an individual's performance can be considered optimal if the resulting performance output meets or exceeds the performance target, though every organization has its own performance issues and challenges (Lorena & Bilawal, 2022). Issues related to performance at BPKAD include work quality, work quantity, and the implementation of duties and responsibilities. Work quality can be seen from the effectiveness and efficiency of an individual's work, and the quality of employee work at BPKAD is still suboptimal, as indicated by the realization of organizational performance achievements that do not meet performance targets; in addition to indicating suboptimal work quality, this deviation from performance achievement targets also indicates suboptimal employee work quantity (Korhonen et al., 2023).

The suboptimal achievement of performance targets is influenced by several factors, including delayed work program implementation schedules due to budgeting constraints, problems synchronizing central and regional regulations, and a lack of employee competency in finance and asset management (Krpálek et al., 2021); these factors impact not only the quality of work produced by employees but also its quantity, as well as the task execution process itself. Ideally, task execution should align with the work plan, implementation timeline, standard operating procedures, and applicable laws and regulations (Huang et al., 2022); however, due to deadline constraints, employees are sometimes forced to ignore standard operating procedures, resulting in suboptimal task execution (Zheng & Li, 2024). Executing tasks in accordance with laws and regulations and standard operating procedures is a form of work responsibility, which is influenced by an understanding of the duties and functions of the position and by the employee's level of competence; the lack of work responsibility among BPKAD employees is influenced by a lack of competence related to the duties and functions inherent in the position (Vermeeren & van der Heijden, 2022).

Performance is inextricably linked to the interaction between employees and their work environment: the better the quality of the work environment, the more it will impact employee performance (Kaushik et al., 2022). The quality of the work environment at BPKAD remains suboptimal, with issues including a lack of supporting work facilities such as computers, inadequate lighting and circulation, and a shortage of CCTV cameras (Horváth & Szabó, 2019). These operational symptoms point to a broader conceptual issue: the overall quality of the physical work environment, encompassing lighting, thermal comfort, ergonomic layout, noise control, and workplace security (Bueno et al., 2021; Dumitriu et al., 2025), falls short of established occupational-safety standards at BPKAD, a gap that prior work-environment research links directly to employee fatigue, safety perceptions, and ultimately performance

(Oyedeji & Lee, 2025). The number of CCTV units installed is insufficient to monitor the workspace from various angles, a situation that affects employees' perceived safety (Abeje & Luo, 2023; Zadow et al., 2023), particularly when leaving personal belongings in the workspace.

Work discipline is another crucial variable influencing employee performance, referring to the attitude and behavior that demonstrates employee compliance with organizational regulations and norms with the goal of creating an orderly and efficient work environment (Hassan & Gull, 2026). The work discipline of BPKAD employees remains suboptimal, as seen in declining levels of employee compliance with working hours and with applicable work standards and regulations. The organization has established standard operating procedures (SOPs) for each stage of work, designed to improve work efficiency, reduce errors, ensure work consistency, and enhance accountability (Hill & Plimmer, 2024); a lack of employee discipline can be seen in the lack of adherence to these SOPs, with several cases of employee disregard for SOPs still found. This disregard for procedures is caused by a lack of employee understanding of SOPs, constraints on work deadlines, and a lack of employee competency (Annisa & Helmi, 2024).

In carrying out their duties and functions, BPKAD employees refer to laws and regulations issued by the central and regional governments, and employee compliance with these regulations is an indicator of work discipline (Mehmood et al., 2022); this level of compliance remains suboptimal, and in some case employees must exercise discretion by setting aside laws and regulations. Revisions to laws and regulations by the central government sometimes require synchronization with existing regional regulations, forcing employees to interpret ambiguous procedures in order to keep work programs running (Poljašević et al., 2025).

Performance is also influenced by the extent to which employees are internally driven to carry out their duties, commonly known as internal motivation (Hoxha & Ramadani, 2024). The level of internal motivation among BPKAD employees can be seen in their levels of job satisfaction, performance, and development, and the agency continues to face challenges related to employee internal motivation; this lack of internal motivation is linked to a lack of employee performance, with unpaid employee allowances suspected as a factor influencing employee performance (Susanto & Yuliana, 2021). Employees with high internal motivation will demonstrate optimal work performance (Manzoor et al., 2021), whereas the realization of work programs that do not meet planned targets, together with decreased work performance, is an indication of decreased internal motivation.

The level of internal motivation is also influenced by the level of recognition received by employees, which can take the form of financial rewards, such as performance allowances, or non-financial rewards, such as health insurance, promotion opportunities, and the freedom to choose specific positions within the organization (Ki, 2022). Meritocracy in an organization influences the level of employee recognition, as a better meritocracy system will impact the recognition received by employees (Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2021); however, the ineffectiveness of meritocracy within BPKAD impacts the level of recognition received by employees, and practices of nepotism and power relations result in fewer promotion opportunities for employees (Vveinhardt & Bendaraviciene, 2022), since those who lack social and emotional closeness with their leaders will struggle to obtain promotions, which in turn affects internal motivation (Mehmood et al., 2023). The lack of recognition resulting from an ineffective

meritocracy system is reflected in declining employee performance (Akpoyibo, 2025).

Budget efficiency measures implemented by the central government have resulted in reduced regional spending, one item of which is employee education and training (Guo et al., 2024). BPKAD has an annual budget allocated for employee education and training; in the 2024 fiscal year, the organization sent six employees to participate in employee competency development training and six employees to participate in leadership training. As a result of the central government's budget efficiency policy, however, the Education and Training budget item was removed from the organization's annual budget, a situation that has impacted the career development process and, in turn, employee internal motivation levels (Ng et al., 2024).

While prior studies have separately examined work environment, work discipline, and employee performance in public-sector settings, comparatively little research has tested internal motivation as a variable that moderates, rather than merely mediates, these relationships within local government agencies. This distinction matters because a moderating role implies that motivation does not simply transmit the effect of physical and disciplinary conditions on performance, but actively strengthens or weakens it (Ren et al., 2021), a mechanism with direct implications for how such agencies should sequence and combine their human-resource interventions. This study addresses that gap by testing internal motivation as a moderator of the effects of work environment and work discipline on employee performance at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lubuklinggau City.

Conceptually, performance is defined as what employees should or should not do, and can also be understood as work achievement, measured by comparing work results with established standards; more specifically, performance is the work results or work productivity, both in quality and quantity, achieved by an individual or work team in carrying out tasks according to the responsibilities assigned by the organization. The work environment, in turn, encompasses all physical and non-physical elements surrounding employees during their duties, including tools, equipment, work procedures, and the organization of tasks, whether conducted individually or within a team; it consists of everything from office facilities, supporting infrastructure, and cleanliness, to lighting, noise levels, and interpersonal dynamics among coworkers. A well-structured and supportive work environment ensures that tasks are carried out efficiently, and creating a workplace that fosters motivation, comfort, and cooperation can improve employee performance, making attention to environmental factors crucial for sustaining productivity and employee well-being (Yang et al., 2024).

Work discipline, meanwhile, is a key factor needed as a warning to employees who refuse to change their character and behavior; an employee is said to be well-disciplined if they demonstrate a sense of responsibility for their assigned tasks, and work discipline is a tool used by managers to communicate with employees so that they become willing to change their behavior, increasing their awareness and willingness to comply with all organizational regulations, defined as an individual's or group's obedience to regulations or provisions as reflected in their actions and work ethic. Internal motivation refers to the drive that activates and sustains behavior from within an individual, without requiring external stimulation, because the individual already possesses an inherent drive to act; it directs behavior toward personally meaningful goals and produces a sense of satisfaction that does not depend on recognition from others or the surrounding environment (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). This conceptualization is consistent with self-determination theory, which distinguishes

autonomous forms of motivation, including intrinsic motivation, from controlled forms driven by external contingencies (Xu, 2022), and identifies autonomous motivation as a robust correlate of adaptive workplace outcomes such as engagement, satisfaction, and performance (McAnally & Hagger, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to collect and analyze measured data in numbers. Quantitative research is a research method that obtains data through various structured collection techniques, allowing researchers to conduct in depth statistical analysis (Lim, 2025). In this quantitative research tradition, numerical data will be analyzed using statistical software, such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The moderating role of internal motivation was tested using Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA), specified as $Y = a + b1X1 + b2M + b3(X1\times M) + e$ for the work-environment model and $Y = a + b1X2 + b2M + b3(X2\times M) + e$ for the work-discipline model, where Y is employee performance, X1 is work environment, X2 is work discipline, M is internal motivation, X1×M and X2×M are the interaction terms, a is the constant, b1–b3 are regression coefficients, and e is the error term (Cheung & Aguiar, 2025). All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) applied to indicators adapted from the underlying constructs of each variable. Prior to hypothesis testing, the research instrument was assessed for validity using Pearson product-moment correlation (item-total correlation greater than the r-table value) and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of 0.60 considered acceptable (Zakariya, 2022). In this study, the population that is the focus is asset management employees at the regional apparatus organization, the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lubuklinggau, totaling 57 people, together with 10 respondents from related institutions that interact directly with the agency, bringing the total population to 67 respondents. Because the population size is relatively small, this study applied a saturated sampling technique (total sampling), in which the entire population was used as the sample to maximise the reliability and validity of the research results. The data used in this study come from primary and secondary data. Primary data is information obtained directly from respondents through questionnaires distributed. In contrast, secondary data includes existing information, such as organizational documents and other relevant data. Data collection is done not only through questionnaires but also through direct observation, which allows researchers to gain deeper contextual insights. Observation, as a data collection technique, provides an opportunity for researchers to directly observe the phenomenon under study. This technique can be done in the field or through recordings. In addition, the questionnaire serves as a tool to collect written data from respondents, providing advantages in terms of efficiency and standardization of the questions given (Manata & Boster, 2024).

The observation and questionnaire activities complement the data collection process, providing a comprehensive picture of the research suject. By combining these methods, researchers can strengthen the validity of the results obtained, presenting a comprehensive quantitative picture of the research subject. Data analysis was carried out using quantitative descriptive methods, which aim to describe the characteristics of the data obtained and provide context to the analysis results. Through this analysis, researchers can explore existing patterns and relationships between the variables studied, providing deeper insight into the results obtained in the context of this study.

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The research process then ends with concluding the findings, which are based on data that has been carefully analyzed and interpreted (Bingham, 2023). A systematic and structured quantitative approach is used in this research to ensure that the information obtained can support better decision-making in the future in the context of organizational policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to assess the extent to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable and examine the role of a moderating variable. In this research, the independent variables include the work environment (X1) and work discipline (X2), while the dependent variable is employee performance (Y). Internal motivation serves as the moderating variable. This analysis aims to evaluate and validate the proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships among these variables.

Partial Significance Test (Test t)

In the regression model test, the independent variables of work environment and work discipline were partially tested against employee performance as the dependent variable. From the data processing results, the partial influence values of the work environment (X1) and work discipline (X2) variables on employee performance (Y) as the dependent variable were obtained. The magnitude of the partial influence values for each independent variable is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Test Result of Work Environment (X1) and Work Discipline (X2) on Employee Performance (Y)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14.828	2.144		2.252	.028
	Work Environment	.676	.031	.941	6.123	.000
	Work Discipline	.391	.038	.243	3.019	.001

Source: Data processing results, 2025

The analysis shows that the work environment variable has a t-value of 6.123, which exceeds the t-table value of 1.996, with a significance level of 0.000, below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates a significant impact of the work environment on employee performance, confirming the hypothesis. Similarly, the work discipline variable has a t-value of 3.019 and a significance value of 0.001, indicating a meaningful influence on performance. Thus, the second hypothesis is also accepted. Using Unstandardized Beta Coefficients, the regression coefficients are 0.676 for work environment and 0.391 for work discipline, forming the final regression equation.

Y= 14,828 + 0,676 X1 + 0,391 X2

Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination is used to assess how well the dependent variable is explained by variations in the independent variables. It reflects the proportion of the total variation in employee performance (Y) that can be attributed to factors such as the work environment (X1) and work discipline (X2). Meanwhile, the correlation coefficient indicates the strength of the relationship between employee

performance and these predictors. The R-square value, derived from the determination test, shows how much of the change in employee performance can be accounted for by changes in the independent variables, as presented in the following table.

Table 2. Coefficient of Determination of Work Environment (X1) and Work Discipline (X2) on Employee Performance (Y)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.781	.707	1.74949	.781

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work Discipline, Work Environment

Source: Data processing results, 2025

The coefficient of determination calculation yields an R-square value of 0.707. This indicates a positive relationship between the work environment and work discipline variables and employee performance, the dependent variable. The influence of the work environment and work discipline variables on employee performance is 0.707, or 70.7%. The remaining 29.3% of the influence comes from other variables not included in this study

Simultaneous Significance Test (F Test)

This study, conducted at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lubuklinggau City, focused on analyzing the impact of two independent variables work environment and work discipline on the dependent variable, employee performance. A simultaneous significance test was applied to evaluate the combined influence of these two factors. This test aimed to determine whether both the work environment and work discipline together have a statistically significant effect on employee performance. The outcome of the simultaneous test for these variables is presented in the following table.

Table 3. F Test Result

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	795.580	2	397.790	44.719	.000[b]
	Residual	104.032	64	1.625		
	Total	899.612	66			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Discipline, Work Environment

Source: Data processing results, 2025

The F-test results show that the combined influence of the work environment and work discipline on employee performance at the Lubuklinggau City Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency is significant, with Fcount = 44.719 > F-table = 3.14 and Sig = 0.000 < 0.05. This confirms that both variables jointly affect performance, supporting the proposed hypothesis and validating it at the 95% confidence level.

Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA)

Testing using the Moderated Regression Analysis, is a regression analysis that utilizes moderating variables. This study uses one moderating variable, namely interal motivation.

Table 4. MRA Test Result Work Environtment (X1) and Internal Motivation (M)

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Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	18.506	2.129		3.995	.000
	Work Environment	.468	.031	.095	22.336	.000
	Internal Motivation	.376	.040	.067	3.587	.001
	Environment x Motivation	.310	.027	.067	3.116	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

Source: Data processing results, 2025

The regression test results table above can produce the following regression equation model:

Y = 18,506 + 0,468 X1 + 0,376 M + 0,310 X1M

The value of the equation above can be interpreted as follows:

The constant value of 18.506 indicates that if the work environment (X1), work discipline (M), and moderating variable 1 (work environment × internal motivation) are held constant (zero), employee performance at the Lubuklinggau City Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency will increase by 18.506 units.

The coefficient value of the work environment (X1) variable of 0.468 indicates that if the internal motivation (M) and moderating variable 1 (work environment ×internal motivation) are held constant, then each additional unit of work environment will increase employee performance by 0.468 units.

The coefficient value of the internal motivation (M) variable of 0.376 indicates that if the work environment (X1) and moderating variable 1 (work environment ×internal motivation) are held constant, each additional unit of internal motivation will increase employee performance by 0.376 units.

The coefficient value of the moderating variable 1 (X1×M) of 0.310 indicates that if the work environment and internal motivation variables (M) are considered constant, then every additional 1 unit of moderating variable 1 will increase employee performance by 0.310 units.

Table 5. MRA Test Result Work Discipline (X2) and Internal Motivation (M)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23.682	7.320		5.967	.000
	Work Discipline	.379	.120	.039	3.590	.001
	Internal Motivation	.340	.122	.011	3.210	.003
	Work Discipline x Internal Motivation	.376	.027	.029	3.561	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

Source: Data processing results, 2025

The regression test results table above can produce the following regression equation model:

Y = 23,682 + 0,379 X2 + 0,340 M + 0,376 X2M

The values in the equation above can be interpreted as follows: A constant of 23.682 indicates that if the work discipline (X2), internal motivation (M), and moderating variable 2 (work discipline ≥ internal motivation) are considered constant (zero), then employee performance at the Regional Financial and Asset Management

Agency will increase by 23.682 units.

The coefficient value of the work discipline (X2) variable of 0.379 indicates that if the internal motivation (M) and moderating variable 2 (work discipline ≥ internal motivation) are considered constant. Each additional unit of work discipline will increase employee performance by 0.379 units. The coefficient value of the internal motivation (M) variable of 0.340 indicates that if the work discipline (X2) and moderating variable 2 (work discipline ≥ internal motivation) are considered constant. Each additional unit of internal motivation will increase employee performance by 0.340 units. The coefficient value of the moderating variable 2 (X2 x M) of 0.376 indicates that if the work discipline and internal motivation variables (M) are considered constant, then every additional 1 unit of moderating variable 2 will increase employee performance by 0.376.

DISCUSSION

The work environment has a significant partial effect on employee performance (t = 6.123, sig. = 0.000), confirming that the totality of tools, methods, and physical arrangements surrounding an employee's work remains a first-order determinant of performance in this setting. Rather than restating each descriptive indicator individually, the pattern across lighting, thermal comfort, ergonomic layout, noise, and workplace security described above is best read as evidence that hygiene-type conditions, in Herzberg's two-factor sense, are not yet satisfied at this agency; this interpretation is consistent with recent evidence that hygiene factors continue to exert a significant positive effect on job performance in government and public-sector settings specifically, operating primarily through their influence on job engagement and satisfaction (Gazi & Fenyvesi, 2025); when such baseline conditions are unmet, they actively suppress performance rather than merely failing to enhance it, which explains why the work environment emerged as the more dominant of the two direct predictors (Jung & Moon, 2024). This finding also aligns with evidence that the work environment functions as an integrated system of physical and non-physical components shaping employees' readiness to perform, with its effects on performance transmitted through mechanisms such as organizational commitment (Zhenjing et al., 2022).

Work discipline also has a significant partial effect on employee performance (t = 3.019, sig. = 0.001), and together with the work environment explains 70.7% of the variance in performance (F-test, Table 3). This combined result is consistent with compliance-based theories of organizational behavior, which hold that adherence to rules and procedures functions as a control mechanism that channels effort toward organizational goals; where that control mechanism is weak, as reflected in the disregard for standard operating procedures noted earlier, performance gains from a good physical environment alone are unlikely to be sustained (Hassan & Gull, 2026; Hill & Plimmer, 2024).

Internal motivation was found to significantly moderate both relationships (Table 4 and Table 5), strengthening the effect of the work environment and of work discipline on performance. This finding aligns with self-determination and intrinsic–extrinsic motivation theory, which distinguishes between motivation that arises from external conditions (such as physical facilities or enforced rules) and motivation that arises from an employee's internal drive for competence and recognition. The moderation results suggest that physical and disciplinary conditions alone are necessary but not sufficient: their translation into performance gains depends on the

extent to which employees are internally driven, which is consistent with international evidence that intrinsic motivation amplifies, rather than substitutes for, the effect of external working conditions on performance outcomes (Tang et al., 2024). Comparable evidence from other organizational settings similarly shows that intrinsic motivation functions as a mechanism through which favorable workplace conditions, such as supportive leadership, are converted into stronger creative and task performance, reinforcing the theoretical plausibility of motivation's role as a boundary condition rather than a simple additive predictor (Liu et al., 2024).

Taken together, these results indicate that improving physical facilities or enforcing discipline in isolation is unlikely to yield the largest performance gains; the marginal return on such investments is highest when they are paired with deliberate efforts to build internal motivation, such as merit-based recognition, participative decision-making, and clear career-development pathways (Akpoyibo, 2025; Ng et al., 2024), consistent with the meritocracy-related concerns raised in the Introduction.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to test five hypotheses concerning the effects of work environment and work discipline on employee performance, and the moderating role of internal motivation, among staff of the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lubuklinggau City. The results support all five hypotheses: work environment has a significant positive effect on employee performance (H1); work discipline has a significant positive effect on employee performance (H2); work environment and work discipline jointly explain a substantial share of the variance in performance (H3); internal motivation significantly moderates, and strengthens, the effect of work environment on performance (H4); and internal motivation significantly moderates, and strengthens, the effect of work discipline on performance (H5). Collectively, these findings indicate that performance in this setting is not simply a function of physical conditions or rule enforcement, but of how effectively internal motivation converts those conditions into sustained employee effort.

These findings carry direct implications for practice. For the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency and comparable local government bodies, investment in physical working conditions and disciplinary enforcement should be paired with deliberate strategies to build internal motivation, particularly merit-based recognition and career-development opportunities, since motivation determines how much performance benefit these investments ultimately deliver. Human-resource governance in local government agencies would therefore benefit from treating motivation-building not as a separate welfare initiative, but as a precondition for physical and disciplinary interventions to translate into measurable performance gains.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should guide the interpretation of its findings and future research. First, the sample was limited to 67 respondents from a single regional government agency, which may restrict the general of the results to other agencies or regions. With only 67 respondents, the statistical power to detect the interaction (moderation) effects tested in H4 and H5 is also limited, consistent with methodological guidance showing that interaction effects in regression-based designs require substantially larger samples than main effects to be reliably detected (Baranger et al., 2023). Second, the cross-sectional design captures relationships at a single point

in time and cannot establish the direction of causality between the study variables, nor how these relationships evolve. This limitation is consistent with broader methodological guidance cautioning that cross-sectional survey designs constrain causal inference and cannot rule out reverse causality as an alternative explanation for the observed relationships (Leszczensky & Wolbring, 2022). Future research should extend this work using longitudinal or mixed-methods designs across multiple agencies, in order to test the stability of the moderating role of internal motivation over time and across different institutional contexts.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence.

The author acknowledges the use of Deepl and Grammarly AI as a language editing aid during the preparation of this manuscript, used to support grammar checking and sentence clarity. All ideas, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this study remain entirely the author's responsibility.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, Author1; methodology, Author1 and Author2; data collection, Author1; data validation, Author1 and Author2; formal analysis, Author1 and Author2; writing, original draft preparation, Author1 and Author2; writing, review and editing, Author1 and Author2. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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