

# The Effect Of Work Discipline And Incentives On Employee Performance Through Motivation Of Employees In The Regional Secretariat Of Lebak District

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## ABSTRACT

The performance of Regional Secretariat employees is a strategic factor in improving the quality of public services. However, discipline issues and dissatisfaction with incentives are still found in the Regional Secretariat of Lebak Regency, potentially reducing work motivation and impacting employee performance. This study aims to analyze the influence of work discipline and incentives on employee performance, with motivation as a mediating variable. The research method uses a quantitative approach with Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis techniques. Data were collected through distributing questionnaires to employees of the Regional Secretariat of Lebak Regency, then analyzed to test the direct and indirect effects between variables. The results show that work discipline and motivation have a significant positive effect on employee performance. Conversely, incentives do not have a direct effect on employee performance, although through motivation, incentives can have an indirect effect. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening a culture of discipline and work motivation as a more effective strategy than relying solely on incentive policies. Thus, human resource management within the Regional Secretariat of Lebak Regency needs to be more directed at improving discipline and empowering internal employee motivation.

## INTRODUCTION

In facing the increasingly complex challenges of globalization, human resource (HRM) management has become a crucial element in achieving organizational goals. (Herdilah et al., 2023) The human element of HRM is the company's workforce. Humans always play an active and dominant role in every organizational activity, as they are the planners, implementers, and determinants of the achievement of organizational goals. As the primary driver of an organization, HRM plays a central role in designing, implementing, and evaluating organizational strategies.

Employee performance is a measure of the results achieved through the implementation of tasks assigned by the organization. This performance assessment is important to assess the extent to which employees can meet predetermined targets and objectives. Employee performance is measured not only by the final results achieved, but also by the processes used to achieve those goals. This aligns with the view (Nurjaya, 2021), who states that performance is the level of achievement in carrying out tasks. Performance assessments can also be used as evaluation material for future improvements, both to increase employee work effectiveness and to assess their contribution to organizational goals.

Hasibuan (in Nawir et al., 2024) states that work discipline is a person's awareness and willingness to comply with all applicable regulations and norms within an organization. A high level of discipline will increase productivity and strengthen teamwork. According to Rivai (in Nawir et al., 2024), work discipline is an attitude of respecting, appreciating, and obeying applicable regulations, both written and unwritten,

and being able to implement them properly and voluntarily. Good discipline is reflected in consistent, timely, and responsible work behavior.

Work discipline carried out by the Regional Secretariat of Lebak Regency since 2023 is by creating an E-Office application for online employee attendance and attendance can only be done if the employee is in the office area, with this SETDA Lebak can improve work discipline and also improve employee performance. (Alexander Nova Vernando et al., 2022) Work discipline is defined as an attitude of respect, appreciation, obedience, and compliance with applicable regulations, both written and unwritten and being able to carry them out and not avoiding accepting sanctions if he violates the duties and authorities given to him. And according to Sutrisno in (Lestari et al., 2020) Work discipline is the attitude and behavior of an employee who has obedience, compliance, loyalty, regularity and order to the regulations and social norms that apply in a company. "Work discipline is a positive working situation and condition that will create a work ethic that leads to good work performance. Another opinion is that ensuring that everyone complies with the rules set by the agency is the main goal of work discipline, according to Simamora (Nanda Amelia Agustina et al., 2023).

The Lebak Regency Regional Secretariat faces challenges in improving employee performance through work discipline by utilizing the digitalization of the Lebak E-Office application. Many employees still experience errors in the application, such as the inability to take photos for attendance proof, the inability to access the location for attendance, and location errors, which prevent employees from completing attendance. This significantly impacts work discipline and the additional income or incentives employees receive.

One factor influencing performance is incentives. The incentives provided must reflect the work results expected by the organization. Incentives are a tool to motivate or encourage employees to perform better in order to achieve expected work performance (Oktariansyah & Usman, 2020). Meanwhile, according to (Ariansy & Kurnia, 2022), incentives are respondents' perceptions of the salary or remuneration given to employees by the company for employee performance or achievements that employees have contributed to the company.

The provision of incentives or Employee Income Supplements or TPP in Lebak Regency is regulated in Regent Regulation No. 29 of 2022 concerning the Provision of Additional Income Based on Workload for Civil Servants within the Lebak Regency Government. The provision of these incentives varies according to the employee's position. The receipt of TPP for employees of the Lebak Regency Regional Secretariat, where a very significant gap in the provision of performance allowances to employees is seen, as can be seen in the table above, executive employees receive an allowance of 1,500,000 while functional position employees receive an allowance of 6,250,000. This can affect employee motivation because it creates a sense of injustice and also a feeling of not being appreciated which has an impact on employee performance, and also the receipt is not certain to be obtained 100% because in the provision of TPP which is regulated in Perbub No. 29 of 2022 Article 10 where TPP payments are also based on work discipline, one of which is attendance or absence and there are also sanctions or deductions from TPP for absence of 3% in one day and 100% for one month of not coming to work, this can have an impact on employee performance.

This phenomenon can impact employee motivation, which can also directly impact employee performance. A large gap in benefits can lead to employees feeling underappreciated for their work.

Civil servants' work motivation can be affected by an imbalance between the incentives they receive and the workload they face. When employees perceive that the rewards or compensation they receive are not commensurate with their efforts, this can diminish their enthusiasm and commitment to work. Research by MS (2018) and Safitri (2021) suggests that factors such as incentives significantly influence employees' motivation to perform their duties. This mismatch between expectations and reality often hinders employee performance improvement. Based on the aforementioned background, this study

focuses on the influence of work discipline and incentives on employee performance through motivation at the Lebak Regency Regional Secretariat.

Based on the phenomena and background that have been explained, the formulation of the problem in this study is 1) does work discipline have a direct influence on employee performance 2) does incentive have a direct influence on employee performance 3) does work discipline have a direct influence on employee motivation 4) does incentive have a direct influence on employee motivation 5) does motivation have a direct influence on employee performance 6) is there an indirect influence of work discipline on employee performance through motivation 7) is there an indirect influence of incentive on employee performance through motivation.

## **Literature Review**

### **Employee Performance**

Marwansyah in (Wahyuni 2020) argues that performance is an achievement or accomplishment that an employee has achieved in completing the tasks or work entrusted to him. This is in accordance with Mangkunegara in Surya Kelana Basri & Rusdian Rauf (2021), who stated that performance is the work results in quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties according to the responsibilities given to them. Similarly, employee abilities are reflected through their performance, which refers to completing the workload by paying attention to work standards for carrying out the duties of each employee (Hariani et al., in (Retnowati et al., 2023). Performance is the comparison of employee work results with predetermined standards (Nurhandayani, 2024). To measure employee performance, the following indicators are used:

First, punctuality. This indicator measures the percentage of tasks completed on time and according to deadlines. Second, effectiveness, using the indicator of efficient use of working time. Third, attendance rate, using the indicator of attendance percentage compared to the number of workdays and punctuality in arriving and leaving work.

### **Work discipline**

Work discipline according to Pranitasari and Khusnul Khotimah (2021) is a means used by managers to communicate with employees so that they are willing to change their behavior and efforts to increase a person's awareness and willingness to comply with all company rules and applicable social norms. According to Hasibuan (2016) in (Ponco et al., 2021) discipline is the most important operative function of Human Resource Management (HRM) because the better the employee's discipline, the higher the work performance can be achieved. Currently, work discipline is a form of employee effort that tries to improve and shape employee knowledge, attitudes and behavior so that the employee's behavior voluntarily tries to work cooperatively with other employees according to Atria in (Indriani et al., 2023).

To measure work discipline in this study, indicators are used, namely: first, Punctuality in coming to work with indicators: Not recorded as late during the assessment period and Carrying out attendance on time without manipulation. Second, Punctuality in going home with indicators: Completing full working hours according to agency provisions and Not leaving the office before going home without permission. Third, Compliance with applicable regulations with indicators Following all applicable written and unwritten rules and Using the specified work uniform. Fourth, Responsibility in carrying out tasks. With indicators, Carrying out work tasks until completed every day.

### **Incentives**

Incentives are the provision of remuneration paid to workers or employees according to Hasibuan (2020) in the research of Sartika and Iryadana (2025). According to Sitorus (2027) in the research (Pardede et al., 2023) also explains that incentives are additional wages (bonuses) due to superior achievements that differentiate them from others, which are intended to increase employee productivity and retain high-

performing employees to remain in the organization. Larasati (2018) in the research of Bai Adu et al., (2025) said that incentives are awards given to motivate workers to have high productivity, which are not permanent or at any time. To measure incentives properly in this study, the following indicators were used:

First, financial incentives, such as salary or wages, commissions, and bonuses. Indicators include: The appropriateness of salary or wages to the employee's workload and the timeliness of bonus or commission payments. Second, non-financial financial incentives include awards or praise, training, certificates, and so on. Indicators include: Employee access to training and self-development programs and verbal or written recognition from superiors for good employee performance.

### **Motivation**

According to Muna and Isnowati (2022), motivation is a set of attitudes and values that influence individuals to achieve specific goals, originating from within themselves, not driven by others. Furthermore, according to Rahayu & Dahlia (2023), motivation is a state within a person that drives an individual's desire to undertake certain activities to achieve goals. Furthermore, according to Sukiyah et al. (2021), motivation is something that causes and supports human behavior so that they are willing to work hard and enthusiastically to achieve optimal results. This is also explained in research by Rahmawati et al. (2024). Motivation is something that causes, channels, and supports human behavior so that they are willing to work hard and enthusiastically to achieve optimal results. To measure motivation in this study, the following indicators were used:

First, Rewards with indicators: Appropriateness of salary or wages to responsibilities and workload and Timeliness in salary or honorarium payments. Second, Working Conditions with indicators: A safe, clean, and comfortable work environment and a work atmosphere that supports productivity (e.g., lighting, temperature, noise). Third, Work Facilities with indicators: Availability of adequate work tools and equipment.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Types of research**

This research uses a quantitative approach because it aims to test the influence in a measurable and objective manner. According to Hardani et al. (2020), a quantitative approach focuses on measuring and analyzing cause-and-effect relationships, and is conducted systematically and free from subjective values. Quantitative research is also descriptive in nature with an inductive approach that allows researchers to process numerical data to obtain empirical insights into a phenomenon.

### **Population and sample**

This research was conducted at the Lebak Regency Regional Secretariat. The population in this study included all ASN working within the Lebak Regency Regional Secretariat, totaling 137 employees. Based on this total population, the sample size was 100 respondents. To calculate how many samples were selected from the entire population in this study, the researcher used the Yamane formula to determine the sample size, as quoted by Sugiyono (2020).

### **Data collection techniques**

Data collection in this study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to respondents as the primary data source. A questionnaire, as stated by Sugiyono (2020), is a process in which respondents are asked to complete a set of questions or written statements as a data collection technique. The questionnaire was developed online using Google Form. The instruments assessed are employee performance

instruments, work discipline, incentives and motivation.

### Data analysis techniques

This study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze complex relationships. PLS-SEM was chosen based on its ability to test models involving mediating variables and its suitability for use in research with excessively large samples. Furthermore, this method is also considered effective in evaluating relationships between constructs in exploratory and predictive research models.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research result

Evaluation outer model is an evaluation of the tools used to collect research data. This analysis describing the correlation between each measuring instrument and its variables analyzed through outer model testing. Convergent validity is the value loading factor which is obtained from the latent variable with its manifest based on convergent validity from all indicators show figures loading factor  $> 0.70$ . According to Duryadi (2021), a value of 0.70 for confirmatory research, if the value construct validity and reliability is valid and reliable, which is marked all green, then the factor loading value can be accepted if it is more than 0.5. The results of the validity test are explained in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	information
Work discipline (X1)	X1-KA	0,838	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	X1-KJ	0,860	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	X1-KW	0,741	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	X1-TJ	0,796	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
Incentive (X2)	X2-IG	0,855	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	X2-IP	0,982	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
Employee Performance (Y)	Y-EF	0,904	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	Y-KW	0,820	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	Y-TK	0,881	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
Motivation (Z)	Z-BJ	0,792	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	Z-FK	0,816	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )
	Z-KK	0,871	Valid ( $\geq 0,70$ )

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS v3.2.9 (2025)

Based on Table 1, all indicators in the variables Work Discipline, Incentives, Motivation, and Employee Performance have an outer loading value above 0.70 so it can be said that they have met the criteria. Convergent Validity according to PLS-SEM guidelines. The composite reliability test is explained in Table 2.

Tabel 2. Composite Reliability

Variables	Composite Reliability	Information
Work Discipline	0,884	Reliable
Incentives	0,917	Reliable
Employee Performance	0,902	Reliable
Motivation	0,866	Reliable

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS v.3.2.9 (2025)

Based on Table 2, the test results show that all research variables show values above 0.70, namely Employee Performance (Z) = 0.902, Work Discipline (X1) = 0.884, Motivation (Y) = 0.866, and Incentives (X2) = 0.917. This indicates that each construct value has a very good level of consistency, so that each indicator used can be used to measure each variable. According to Hair et al. (2021), the value composite reliability. The recommended reliability is  $\geq 0.70$  for exploratory studies, while a value of  $\geq 0.80$  indicates good reliability and  $\geq 0.90$  indicates very high reliability. Thus, these results indicate that the research instrument has met the composite reliability criteria and can be used for further testing. Evaluation of measurement inner model can be seen from several tables 3 below:

Table 3. R2 Measurement Results

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Criteria
Officer Performance (Y)	0,910	0,907	strong
Moivasi (Z)	0,857	0,854	Strong

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS v.3.2.9 (2025)

Based on Table 3, the  $R^2$  value for the Employee Performance variable (Y) is 0.910 with  $R^2_{Adjusted}$  The same value, namely 0.907. This means that 91% of the variation in Employee Performance can be explained by the variables Work Discipline (X1), Incentives (X2), and Motivation (Z), while the remaining 19% is explained by other variables outside the research model. Meanwhile, the Motivation variable (Y) has an  $R^2$  value of 0.857 and an  $R^2$  of 0.857. Adjusted of 0.854, which means that 85.7% of the variation in Motivation can be explained by Work Discipline (X1) and Incentives (X2), while the remaining 15% is influenced by other factors that were not studied.

## Discussion

After conducting the data prerequisite test, a hypothesis test was then carried out to see how each variable is related, which will be explained in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Results of Direct Hypothesis Testing

Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistik ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Information
Work discipline (X1) -> Officer Performance (Y)	0,563	0,566	0,065	8,669	0,000	Proven
Work discipline (X1) -> Moivation (Z)	0,920	0,919	0,019	47,544	0,000	Proven
Incentive (X2) -> Employee Performance (Y)	-0,029	-0,031	0,028	1,031	0,303	No Proven
Incentive (X2) -> Moivation (Z)	-0,091	-0,088	0,045	2,034	0,042	Proven
Moivation (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0,408	0,407	0,067	6,045	0,000	Proven

Source: Data processed by SmartPLS v.3.2.9 (2025)

### **The influence of work discipline on employee performance**

The results of the study indicate that work discipline has a positive and highly significant effect on individual performance. This is evidenced by a coefficient value of 0.029, a T-statistic of 8.669 (greater than 1.96), and a P-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). These findings confirm that the higher the level of discipline applied, the greater the individual's performance in an organizational environment.

Work discipline not only establishes order but also fosters responsibility and consistency in completing tasks. In this regard, the role of leadership is crucial. Leaders who are able to set an example, possess a clear vision, and appropriately value and appreciate the performance of their subordinates tend to create a productive and results-oriented work environment. Therefore, strengthening work discipline coupled with inspirational leadership is key to improving overall organizational performance.

The results of this study align with the Performance Management theory proposed by Armstrong (2009), which states that work discipline is a crucial foundation in shaping employee behavior to achieve organizational targets (Sukiyah et al., 2021). Discipline is not only defined as compliance with rules but also as a form of individual awareness to regulate oneself to be productive at work. This theory is reinforced by Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory, which states that employee performance is influenced by the extent to which they believe that their efforts will result in optimal performance, and this is closely related to work discipline (Iddrisu, 2025).

Several previous studies also support these findings. Research conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2024) showed that work discipline has a significant positive influence on employee performance in local government agencies (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Similarly, research by Indriani et al. (2023) proved that discipline can increase work effectiveness by establishing order in task execution (Indriani et al., 2023). Furthermore, research by Pardede (2023) found that discipline, combined with transformational leadership, can improve employee performance more comprehensively. The consistency of these results confirms that the implementation of work discipline is not merely an administrative matter, but a managerial strategy that directly impacts the achievement of organizational goals (Pardede et al., 2023).

### **The influence of incentives on employee performance**

Based on the research results, incentives have a negative and insignificant effect on employee performance. This is indicated by a coefficient value of -0.029, a T-statistic of 1.031 (less than 1.96), and a P-value of 0.303 (greater than 0.05). This means that incentives do not have a significant impact on improving employee performance.

These findings indicate that providing incentives, particularly material ones, is not always effective in driving optimal performance, particularly when employees face heavy workloads and high task pressure. In such circumstances, work motivation cannot be built solely through financial rewards; it also requires non-material support such as recognition, a conducive work environment, supportive leadership, and opportunities for personal development. Therefore, organizations need to consider a more holistic approach to improving employee performance, rather than relying solely on incentives as a sole motivational tool.

Theoretically, these findings align with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which explains that motivating factors (such as recognition, responsibility, and self-development) play a greater role in improving performance than hygiene factors like incentives or salary. Incentives only serve to prevent dissatisfaction, but do not directly drive improved employee performance. Furthermore, Vroom's Expectancy Theory asserts that a person's motivation is influenced by expectations of future outcomes, the value of those outcomes, and the belief that effort will result in good performance. If incentives are

not perceived as sufficiently valuable or commensurate with the effort, their impact on performance is weakened (Lestari et al., 2020).

The results of this study are also supported by several previous studies that found that material incentives are not always positively related to employee performance. For example, research by Alexander et al. (2022) showed that financial incentives do not significantly impact performance if not accompanied by strong intrinsic motivation (Alexander et al., 2022). Similarly, research by Oktariansyah & Usman (2020) revealed that non-material factors such as leadership and work climate are more dominant in improving employee performance in the public sector than financial incentives. Thus, this study strengthens the argument that performance improvement strategies need to combine material incentives with other motivational factors in a balanced manner (Oktariansyah & Usman, 2020).

### **The influence of work discipline on motivation**

Based on the research results, work discipline has a positive and highly significant influence on motivation. This is evidenced by a coefficient value of 0.920, a T-statistic value of 47.544 (greater than 1.96), and a P-value of 0.00 (less than 0.05). These findings indicate that the higher a person's discipline in following work rules and regulations, the higher their level of motivation in carrying out their duties.

Good work discipline can create positive habits, increase a sense of responsibility, and foster commitment to completing work. In other words, compliance with regulations not only maintains order but can also boost morale and a strong work ethic. Therefore, building a disciplined work culture is a strategic step in increasing overall employee motivation and productivity.

These results align with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), which distinguishes between hygiene factors (such as salary and incentives) and motivating factors (such as recognition, responsibility, and achievement). According to this theory, incentives are considered hygiene factors that only prevent dissatisfaction but are not strong enough to create sustained performance improvement. In other words, financial incentives do not automatically increase employee intrinsic motivation (Retnowati et al., 2023).

Previous research also supports these findings. A study by Lestari (2020) showed that incentives do not significantly impact employee performance in the public sector because they are viewed more as organizational obligations, rather than as a form of reward. Similarly, research by Lestari (2020) found that incentives tend to be effective only in short-term, target-based work contexts, while for bureaucratic jobs that require long-term commitment, non-material factors are more dominant. Meanwhile, research by Lestari (2020) emphasized that supportive leadership and career development opportunities have a greater influence on employee performance than financial incentives alone (Lestari et al., 2020).

### **The influence of incentives on motivation**

Based on the research results, incentives have a positive and moderately significant effect on motivation, with a moderate level of influence. This is evidenced by a coefficient value of -0.091, a T-statistic of 2.034 (greater than 1.96), and a P-value of 0.042 (less than 0.05).

Although the coefficient value indicates a negative trend, statistical significance indicates that incentives still play a role in influencing motivation, albeit not a dominant one. This suggests that providing incentives can indeed increase motivation in certain contexts, but their effectiveness depends on how they are designed and tailored to employee needs and perceptions. Therefore, organizations need to evaluate their incentive systems to ensure they are truly relevant, fair, and optimally motivate employees.

This finding can be explained through the Equity Theory proposed by Adams (1965), which states that individuals will be motivated if they perceive the treatment they receive, including incentives, to be commensurate with their effort and fair compared to other coworkers. Therefore, although incentives influence motivation, perceptions of fairness and appropriateness are the determining factors in whether these incentives actually increase employee work motivation. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory also emphasizes that employee motivation is influenced not only by extrinsic factors (such as incentives) but also by intrinsic factors such as recognition, development opportunities, and autonomy at work (Oktariansyah & Usman, 2020).

In line with this, research by Faeni (2025) shows that incentives designed fairly and transparently can significantly increase employee work motivation (Faeni et al., 2025). Another study by Cosma (2025) confirms that incentives influence motivation, but their effectiveness is strongly influenced by perceptions of fairness and relevance to employee needs. Meanwhile, a study by Hidayat (2019) found that financial incentives are only effective in the short term, while in the long term, non-financial factors such as career development and moral rewards are more dominant in building sustainable work motivation (Cosma et al., 2025).

### **The influence of motivation on employee performance**

Based on the research results, motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This is evident from the coefficient value of 0.408, the T-statistic value of 6.045 (greater than 1.96), and the P-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). These findings indicate that the higher the level of employee motivation, the better their performance.

Motivation is a key factor in encouraging employees to work optimally, achieve targets, and contribute maximally to organizational goals. Both intrinsic motivation, such as a sense of responsibility and job satisfaction, and extrinsic motivation, such as rewards and recognition, play a crucial role in shaping work morale. Therefore, efforts to increase employee motivation through the right approach are crucial for improving overall productivity and work effectiveness.

These results align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (1943), which explains that motivation is a fundamental drive that drives individuals to achieve self-actualization through optimal performance. In the context of public organizations, motivation is the primary driver for employees to contribute their best, even when faced with limited resources. Locke's Goal-Setting Theory (1968) also emphasizes that high motivation encourages individuals to set clear and challenging work goals, thus leading to consistent performance improvement (Ahmad et al., 2025).

Previous research supports these findings. A study by Sadowski & Zamećk (2025) found that motivation significantly influences employee productivity in the government sector. Similarly, research by Sadowski & Zamećk (2025) showed that intrinsic motivation, such as job satisfaction and a sense of responsibility, has a stronger influence on performance than extrinsic motivation (Sadowski & Zamećki, 2025). Meanwhile, research by Anjum et al. (2019) confirmed that organizational strategies focused on increasing motivation through training, rewards, and a supportive work environment have been shown to improve employee performance sustainably. These findings reinforce the notion that motivation is a strategic factor that cannot be ignored in human resource management (Anjum et al., 2025).

### **The influence of work discipline on employee performance through motivation**

The results of the analysis show that work discipline has a significant indirect influence on employee performance through motivation, with a coefficient value of 0.375, a T-statistic value of 6.269

>1.96 and a P-Value of 0.000 <0.05. It can be concluded that effective work discipline can increase work motivation, which in turn contributes to improved performance. A form of disciplined commitment to work can encourage optimal performance through good motivation. Because the direct relationship between discipline and employee performance is also significant, work motivation plays a role. *partial mediation*, which means that work motivation strengthens the influence of discipline on performance.

This finding aligns with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which explains that consistent disciplined behavior can serve as a positive example that encourages the internalization of work values, thereby increasing individual motivation to perform better. In the context of public organizations, discipline functions not only as a formal rule but also as a mechanism for establishing a work culture that fosters intrinsic employee motivation. This is reinforced by Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination theory, which emphasizes that motivation arises when individuals perceive order, competence, and autonomy in their work—dimensions closely related to the application of work discipline (Abhari, 2025).

Previous research has also confirmed this relationship. A study by Stanikzai & Mittal (2025) found that high work discipline significantly increases motivation, which ultimately improves employee performance (Stanikzai & Mittal, 2025). Research by Ataei (2025) also confirms that motivation acts as a mediator between discipline and performance, where consistent discipline can increase employee work drive to complete tasks optimally (Ataei et al., 2025). Furthermore, research by Hecht (2025) shows that a culture of discipline strengthened through effective leadership can indirectly improve organizational performance by fostering sustainable work motivation. Thus, work discipline coupled with increased motivation is an important strategy in building sustainable employee performance (Hecht et al., 2025).

### **The influence of incentives on employee performance through motivation**

The results of the analysis show that work incentives have a significant indirect influence on employee performance through motivation, with a coefficient value of -0.037, a T-statistic value of 2.036 >1.96 and a P-Value of 0.021 > 0.05. It was concluded that effective incentives can increase work motivation, which in turn contributes to improved performance. The form of incentive commitment applied to work can encourage optimal performance with good motivation, but it can also have negative impacts. Because the direct relationship between incentives and employee performance is also significant, work motivation plays a role. *full mediation*, which means that work motivation strengthens the influence of incentives on performance.

This finding can be explained through Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory, which states that incentives will increase motivation if employees believe their efforts are directly related to work results that will receive appropriate rewards. However, if perceptions of incentives do not align with expectations or are considered unfair, then even though incentives statistically influence motivation, their impact can be negative on performance. Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory also supports this finding, stating that incentives only function as a hygiene factor that prevents dissatisfaction, but their role in building strong motivation and optimal performance remains limited (Anderson et al., 2025).

In line with this theory, previous research has shown consistent results. Research by Arora & Damarla (2025) found that incentives indirectly influence performance through motivation, although the effect tends to be weak if not balanced by non-material factors such as recognition and self-development (Arora & Damarla, 2025). A study by Lu et al. (2025) also proved that motivation can mediate the effect of incentives on performance, but the success of incentives in triggering motivation is highly dependent on perceptions of fairness and relevance to employee needs (Lu et al., 2025). Meanwhile, research by Mukherjee (2025) emphasized that although incentives can increase motivation, the relationship is often

complex and not always linear, so organizations need to design more adaptive incentive systems based on actual performance (Mukherjee et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis results, it can be concluded that 1) Work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. The higher the discipline applied, the better the employee performance. Discipline forms order, responsibility, and consistency in carrying out tasks. 2) Incentives have a negative and insignificant effect on employee performance. Providing material incentives is not always able to improve performance, so non-material factors such as recognition, supportive leadership, and a conducive work environment play a greater role in driving performance. 3) Work discipline has a positive and significant effect on motivation. Consistent implementation of discipline fosters a sense of responsibility, commitment, and positive habits, thus impacting increased work motivation. 4) Incentives have a positive and significant effect on employee motivation. Although not dominant, incentives that are managed fairly, transparently, and according to needs can increase work enthusiasm. 5) Motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Motivation is a key factor in encouraging employees to work optimally, achieve targets, and provide maximum contributions to the organization. 6) Work discipline has a significant effect on performance through motivation. Motivation strengthens the influence of discipline on performance, so that discipline accompanied by motivation can produce more optimal performance. 7) Incentives significantly influence performance through motivation, albeit in a negative direction. Incentives function more as a motivational trigger than a direct performance-enhancing factor. However, an orientation that focuses too much on material incentives can reduce the quality and creativity of employee work.

The value of this research can be seen from two perspectives: scientific knowledge and practical or policy. From a scientific perspective, this research contributes to the development of theory regarding the relationship between discipline, incentives, motivation, and employee performance in public organizations. The results demonstrate the complex dynamics between internal and external factors that influence performance, thereby enriching conceptual understanding of human resource management. Meanwhile, from a practical or policy perspective, these findings offer a basis for consideration for decision-makers in designing strategies to improve employee performance. The emphasis on discipline and motivation as dominant factors, along with fairer and more proportional incentive management, can serve as a reference for formulating more effective and sustainable personnel policies. Thus, this research is unique in uncovering the interactions of key variables that significantly influence the improvement of employee performance.

This study has four main limitations. First, the research subjects were limited to employees of the Lebak Regency Regional Secretariat, so the results cannot necessarily be generalized to other agencies with different characteristics. Second, the variables studied only covered work discipline and incentives, with motivation as an intervening variable, while other factors such as organizational culture, leadership, and the work environment were not taken into account. Third, the research instrument used a perception-based questionnaire, which could potentially introduce subjective bias among respondents. Fourth, the study was conducted within a specific period in 2025, so the findings only represent conditions at the time of the study.

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