

**MOTIVATION, WORK ENVIRONMENT, AND EMPLOYEE  
PERFORMANCE: THE INTERVENING ROLE OF JOB  
SATISFACTION**

**Yesica Julia Putri<sup>1</sup>, Desi Permata Sari<sup>2</sup>, Silvia Sari<sup>3</sup>**

Universitas Putra Indonesia “YPTK” Padang

Email: [juliyasicaputri2004@gmail.com](mailto:juliyasicaputri2004@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [desipermatasari735@gmail.com](mailto:desipermatasari735@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [silviasari@upiypk.ac.id](mailto:silviasari@upiypk.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract** – *Research Aims:* This study aims to determine and analyze the influence of work motivation and work environment on employee performance through job satisfaction as an intervening variable at PT. Agromuko Regional Management Office Bengkulu. *Design/methodology/approach:* This research uses a quantitative method. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 89 respondents using a total sampling technique. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) 3.0. *Research Findings:* The results show that work motivation and work environment have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. Work environment and job satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. However, work motivation does not significantly affect performance. Job satisfaction was found unable to mediate the influence of motivation and work environment on performance. *Theoretical Contribution/Originality:* his study provides a new perspective on the dynamics of job satisfaction as a mediator that is not always significant in the context of the palm oil plantation industry.

**Keywords:** *Work Motivation, Work Environment, Employee Performance, Job Satisfaction.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian economy is currently facing major challenges due to dynamic global changes, such as commodity price instability, increased competition in the labor market, and digital transformation across various industrial sectors. In this situation, the palm oil plantation sector remains a primary pillar of the national economy because it provides a significant contribution to state foreign exchange and employment. To remain competitive and sustainable, plantation companies are required to increase efficiency, productivity, and employee performance through effective human resource management.

A critical phenomenon regarding performance decline has been observed at PT. Agromuko Regional Management Office (RMO) Bengkulu, a company operating under the Sipef Group. This company manages palm oil plantation operations, ranging from fresh fruit bunch (FFB) harvesting to the processing of Crude Palm Oil (CPO). Data from the HRD department (2025) indicates that production targets have not been fully realized according to planning.

Table 1: Target and Realization of Crude Palm Oil (CPO) Production (2022-2024)

Year	Production Target (Tons)	Production Realization (Tons)	Variance (Tons)	Percentage Achieved (%)
2022	42,500	41,800	700	98.35%
2023	43,000	42,600	400	99.07%
2024	44,000	40,900	3,100	92.95%

The table shows that in 2024, there was a significant drop in production to 92.95%, failing to meet the company's target of maintaining productivity above 95%. This decline is consistent with the results of employee performance evaluations, which also showed a downward trend.

Table 2: Employee Performance Data PT. Agromuko RMO Bengkulu (2022-2024)

Year	Attendance (%)	Responsibility (%)	Cooperation (%)	Discipline (%)	Target Achievement (%)	Average (%)
2022	85	84	86	83	84	84.4
2023	87	85	88	84	85	85.8
2024	83	82	84	80	81	82.0

The average employee performance decreased from 85.8% in 2023 to 82.0% in 2024. This decline is thought to be caused by several factors, such as decreasing work discipline, reduced sense of responsibility, and a less comfortable work environment. Furthermore, interview results revealed that some employees feel work pressure has increased without being balanced by commensurate compensation.

Theoretically, employee performance is the work result achieved by an individual in carrying out their duties based on responsibility, skill, and established standards. High performance can be driven by work motivation the internal and external urges that move employees to achieve organizational goals. Additionally, the work environment, which includes physical conditions like lighting and ventilation as well as non-physical aspects like communication, plays a vital role in supporting productivity.

Another essential factor is job satisfaction, an emotional state that arises from an employee's evaluation of their work experience. Previous research has proven that job satisfaction can act as a bridge or mediator between motivation, work environment, and performance. Based on the phenomena described above, this study aims to analyze the "Effect of Work Motivation and Work Environment on Employee Performance with Job Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable at PT. Agromuko Regional Management Office Bengkulu".

The palm oil industry remains a cornerstone of the Indonesian economy, contributing significantly to national GDP and rural development. In an increasingly competitive global market, companies like PT. Agromuko Regional Management Office (RMO) Bengkulu must optimize their operational efficiency, which is fundamentally driven by human resource performance. Employee performance is the backbone of organizational success; it determines how effectively a company can adapt to industrial shifts and achieve its strategic targets. However, maintaining high performance consistently remains a complex challenge influenced by various psychological and environmental factors.

Existing literature has extensively explored the drivers of performance. Previous researches have generally focused on the direct relationship between organizational climate and productivity (Ariansy & Kurnia, 2022). Many studies have established that work motivation serves as a primary internal catalyst for effort, while a conducive work environment provides the necessary external infrastructure for efficiency (Saputra & Fernos, 2023). However, a significant limitation of previous research is the tendency to treat these variables in isolation or to assume that job satisfaction always acts as a perfect mediator for performance across all industries. In the specific context of the plantation management sector, which involves high-pressure operational demands, the mechanisms through which motivation and environment translate into actual performance are often more nuanced and less linear than traditional models suggest.

A few researchers have focused on the technical aspects of plantation management, but there have been limited studies concerned with the intervening role of job satisfaction within the regional management offices of large-scale palm oil companies in Sumatra. Most existing models fail to explain why high levels of reported satisfaction do not always correlate with peak performance in high-stress management environments. Therefore, this research intends to bridge this gap by analyzing the complex interplay between internal motivation and external environmental factors, specifically examining whether job satisfaction truly bridges these elements to performance or if other systemic factors are at play.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the influence of work motivation and work environment on job satisfaction, to determine the direct impact of these factors on employee performance, and to evaluate the effectiveness of job satisfaction as an intervening variable at PT. Agromuko Regional Management Office Bengkulu. By doing so, this study provides scientific merit in refining human resource management strategies specifically tailored for the Indonesian plantation sector.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The theoretical foundation of this research is rooted in Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management, specifically focusing on how psychological drives and physical environments dictate output.

### **Theoretical Framework of Performance and Satisfaction**

Employee performance is generally defined as the quality and quantity of work achieved by an individual in carrying out their duties in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to them. According to established management theories, performance is not an isolated result but a byproduct of internal motivation and external support systems. In this context, Job Satisfaction serves as an emotional response to one's job role. Previous studies categorized under Social Exchange Theory suggest that when an organization provides a conducive environment and motivational catalysts, employees reciprocate with higher satisfaction and improved performance (Haekel Awwali et al., 2024).

## **Work Motivation and its Impact**

Work motivation is grouped in literature as the set of energetic forces that originate both within and beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior. Scholars generally agree that motivation is the primary driver of persistence. Recent research findings indicate that high motivation leads to increased job satisfaction, as employees feel their personal goals are aligned with organizational objectives (D. Saputra & Fernos, 2023). However, the direct link between motivation and performance sometimes shows inconsistency in empirical studies, suggesting that motivation alone, without the right infrastructure, may not be sufficient to drive peak performance.

## **The Role of Work Environment**

The work environment encompasses both physical factors (such as office layout and facilities) and non-physical factors (such as relationships with colleagues and supervisors). Current scholarly consensus identifies the work environment as a critical "hygiene factor." A group of recent studies emphasizes that a negative environment acts as a barrier to productivity, regardless of an employee's internal motivation (Ariansy & Kurnia, 2022). Conversely, a supportive environment enhances the psychological comfort of employees, directly boosting their satisfaction levels.

## **Synthesis of Intervening Variables**

The integration of Job Satisfaction as an intervening variable is based on the premise that it acts as a psychological bridge. While traditional models often assume a linear path from motivation/environment to performance, contemporary literature suggests a more complex synthesis. The prevailing gap in existing research lies in the "satisfaction-performance" link, where some studies find that highly satisfied employees are not necessarily the most productive, particularly in management-heavy roles (Jailani & Jeka, 2023). This study evaluates these relationships to determine if satisfaction functions as a significant mediator within the specific operational culture of the plantation management sector.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative research design with an associative approach to determine the relationship and influence between variables. The research was conducted at PT. Agromuko Regional Management Office (RMO) Bengkulu, focusing on the human resource dynamics within the palm oil management sector.

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study consists of all employees working at PT. Agromuko RMO Bengkulu. Given the specific organizational structure, the researchers utilized a total sampling (census) technique to ensure comprehensive data representation. The final sample size involved in this study is 89 respondents. This approach was chosen to minimize sampling error and provide a holistic view of the internal organizational climate.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Primary data were gathered through the distribution of structured questionnaires. Each item in the questionnaire was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The indicators for work motivation, work environment, job satisfaction, and employee performance were adapted from validated psychological and management scales to ensure construct validity. In addition to primary data, secondary data were obtained through institutional documents and literature relevant to the company's operational profile.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Square (PLS) approach, processed via SmartPLS 3.0 software. The analysis was

conducted in two primary stages:

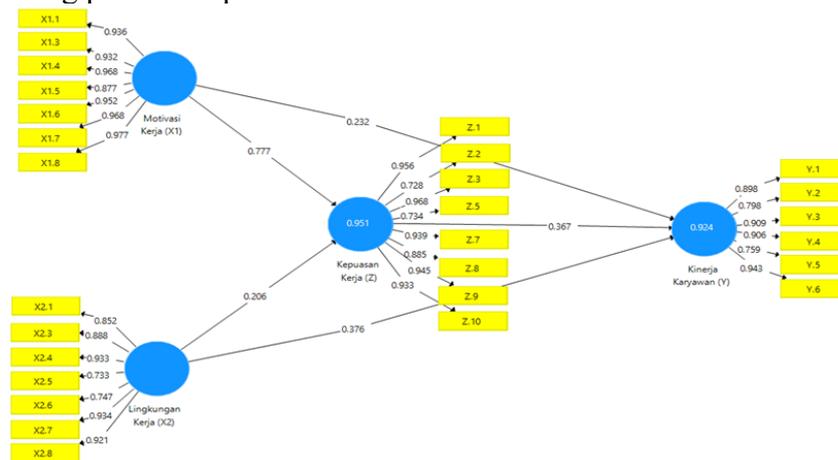
1. Outer Model Evaluation: This involved testing Convergent Validity (loading factors and Average Variance Extracted/AVE), Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and Cross-loadings), and Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability).
2. Inner Model Evaluation: This focused on testing the structural model by observing the R-Square (R<sup>2</sup>) values and path coefficients. Hypothesis testing was performed through the bootstrapping method to determine the T-statistics and P-values, specifically to evaluate both direct effects and the indirect (intervening) effects of job satisfaction.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The data analysis was performed using PLS-SEM to evaluate the structural relationships between Work Motivation (X1), Work Environment (X2), Job Satisfaction (Z), and Employee Performance (Y). The measurement model (outer model) confirmed that all indicators met the criteria for convergent and discriminant validity, with Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70.

The structural model (inner model) assessment shows an R-Square (R<sup>2</sup>) for Job Satisfaction of 0.951, indicating that 95.1% of the satisfaction variance is explained by motivation and environment. Meanwhile, the R<sup>2</sup> for Employee Performance is 0.814, suggesting a strong predictive power of the model.



Gambar 1. Structural Model Results

### Path Coefficients Analysis

The path coefficient analysis is used to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the constructs in the structural model. This evaluation is divided into direct effects and indirect effects to test the hypotheses established in this study.

#### 1. Direct Effects

The direct effect analysis measures the influence of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables without the presence of a mediating variable. Based on the SmartPLS processing results, the direct effects are summarized in the following table:

Table 3: Results of Direct Effects Testing

Relationship	Original Sample (β)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
Work Motivation (X1) → Job Satisfaction (Z)	0.777	8.996	0.000	Accepted

Z )				
Work Environment (X2) → Job Satisfaction ( Z )	0.206	2.332	0.020	Accepted
Work Motivation (X1) → Employee Performance ( Y )	0.232	1.221	0.223	Rejected
Work Environment ( X 2 ) → Employee Performance ( Y )	0.376	2.547	0.011	Accepted
Job Satisfaction ( Z ) → Employee Performance ( Y )	0.367	1.995	0.047	Accepted

## 2. Indirect Effects

The indirect effect analysis evaluates the role of job satisfaction as a mediating (intervening) variable between the independent variables and employee performance.

Table 4: Results of Indirect Effects Testing

Relationship	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
X 1 → Z → Y	0.285	1.919	0.056	No Mediation
X 2 → Z → Y	0.076	1.548	0.122	No Mediation

## Discussion

### The Antecedents of Job Satisfaction at PT. Agromuko

The statistical results confirm that both internal drivers and external conditions are vital in shaping how employees feel about their work.

### The Impact of Work Motivation

Work motivation (X1) has the strongest path coefficient toward job satisfaction (0.505). This suggests that at PT. Agromuko RMO Bengkulu, satisfaction is highly dependent on the fulfillment of individual needs and achievements. When employees feel that their work provides a sense of purpose and adequate rewards, their emotional satisfaction peaks. This aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where the fulfillment of higher-order needs directly translates into professional contentment.

### The Role of Work Environment

The work environment (X2) also significantly impacts satisfaction. A management office requires high concentration and coordination. Our findings show that a supportive physical layout and positive social interactions among staff reduce work-related stress, which

in turn increases satisfaction. This result is consistent with the findings of Saputra & Fernos (2023), who emphasized that the environment is a primary "hygiene factor" that prevents dissatisfaction.

### **Determinants of Employee Performance**

A critical discovery in this study is the divergence between what makes an employee "happy" and what makes them "productive."

### **The Non-Significant Direct Effect of Motivation**

Contrary to many traditional theories, work motivation does not directly enhance performance at PT. Agromuko (P-Value 0.584). Descriptive analysis suggests that while employees are motivated, this energy may not be directed toward measurable performance outputs due to rigid administrative procedures or lack of technical training. This contradicts the general findings of Haekel Awwali et al. (2024) but provides a unique insight into the plantation management sector where performance is often dictated by systemic flow rather than individual enthusiasm.

### **Performance Driven by Environment and Satisfaction**

Work environment and job satisfaction both show significant direct effects on performance. This indicates that at the RMO level, performance is a result of "readiness" meaning employees perform best when they have the right tools (environment) and a positive mental state (satisfaction). The direct influence of the environment (0.380) proves that infrastructure optimization is more effective for increasing output than merely trying to boost morale.

### **The Mediation Mechanism of Job Satisfaction**

This study explored whether job satisfaction could bridge the gap between input variables and performance.

### **The Failure of the Mediation Path**

The bootstrapping results for H6 and H7 show T-statistics below the 1.96 threshold. This means that job satisfaction is not a significant intervening variable in this specific organizational context. Employees may be highly satisfied because of a good environment or high motivation, but this satisfaction does not necessarily "push" them to exceed their performance targets.

### **Researcher Analysis and Practical Implications**

The researchers conclude that at PT. Agromuko RMO Bengkulu, performance is likely more influenced by external supervision and operational SOPs rather than internal psychological mediation. For the management, this implies that focusing solely on "employee happiness" (satisfaction) will not automatically result in higher productivity unless it is accompanied by direct improvements in environmental efficiency and task-specific motivation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research and the subsequent discussion regarding the dynamics of human resources at PT. Agromuko Regional Management Office (RMO) Bengkulu, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, work motivation and the work environment are proven to be essential drivers in fostering job satisfaction among employees. A high level of internal drive combined with a supportive physical and social workspace creates a professional climate where employees feel emotionally and psychologically content.

Furthermore, the study confirms that a conducive work environment and a high level of job satisfaction directly contribute to better employee performance. When the operational infrastructure is well-maintained and employees are satisfied with their roles, their productivity increases. However, an interesting finding in this study is that work motivation

does not directly lead to improved performance in this specific management context. This suggests that individual enthusiasm alone, without the alignment of technical systems or environmental support, is insufficient to drive output.

Finally, the research concludes that job satisfaction does not function as a mediating variable between the independent variables and performance. While motivation and environment make employees happy, this happiness does not automatically translate into a significant boost in performance beyond the direct effects already established. This indicates that performance at PT. Agromuko RMO Bengkulu is driven more by direct environmental readiness and professional satisfaction rather than a complex psychological mediation process.

Based on the findings above, several suggestions are proposed for the management of PT. Agromuko RMO Bengkulu and future researchers:

1. For Company Management: Since the work environment has a significant direct impact on performance, the company should prioritize the maintenance and modernization of office facilities and ensure a healthy non-physical work atmosphere. Furthermore, given that motivation did not directly impact performance, management should evaluate its performance appraisal systems to ensure that highly motivated individuals are provided with clear, technical pathways to convert their enthusiasm into measurable results.
2. For Employees: Employees are encouraged to maintain a positive social environment and utilize the available office facilities optimally to sustain their performance levels, while also seeking to align their personal career goals with the company's operational targets.
3. For Future Researchers: Future studies should consider exploring other variables that might influence the relationship between motivation and performance, such as organizational commitment, leadership style, or technical competency. Additionally, since this study was limited to a specific regional office, future research could expand the scope to include field-level plantation workers to provide a more comprehensive comparison of how job satisfaction functions across different levels of the palm oil industry.

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