



Compensation, Intrinsic Motivation, and Performance: The Mediating Role of Work Discipline among Vocational High School Administrative Staff

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how compensation and intrinsic work motivation influence the performance of educational support staff in private vocational high schools, while also testing whether work discipline serves as a mediating mechanism. The study stems from the critical role of human resource management in sustaining the effectiveness of educational services, particularly through the contributions of non-teaching staff. Using a quantitative survey design with total sampling, questionnaires were distributed to all 160 staff members, and 115 usable responses were obtained. Data were processed using descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings show that compensation does not significantly predict work discipline, whereas intrinsic motivation positively and significantly predicts work discipline. In addition, compensation and intrinsic motivation each have a positive and significant effect on staff performance. Conversely, work discipline does not significantly affect performance. Mediation analysis further confirms that work discipline does not transmit the effects of compensation or intrinsic motivation to performance. Overall, the results imply that performance enhancement efforts should prioritize an equitable compensation system and the strengthening of intrinsic motivation, as work discipline is not supported as the mediating pathway in this context.

Keywords: Compensation; Intrinsic Work Motivation; Employee Performance; Work Discipline; Educational Staff; Vocational High Schools (SMK); Human Resource Management



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INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is widely recognized as a core driver of organizational effectiveness because it reflects how well employees translate resources and roles into measurable outputs and service quality (Aguinis, 2019; Campbell, 1990). In educational service settings, where administrative continuity and stakeholder trust depend on reliable operational support, the performance of educational support staff becomes particularly consequential for day-to-day service delivery (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). In private vocational high schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMKs), performance issues among support staff can directly affect operational efficiency and the perceived quality of educational services, which in turn influences competitiveness in student enrollment. In the study context, performance appraisal results indicate a decline in educational support staff performance from 2023 to 2024, and pre-survey findings show inconsistencies in adherence to standard operating procedures, achievement of work targets, teamwork, and punctuality. These indicators suggest that sustaining performance remains a practical challenge and warrants systematic investigation to inform targeted improvement strategies.

From an HRM perspective, performance is shaped by the interaction of organizational practices and employees' psychological and behavioral responses to those practices (Boxall & Purcell, 2016; Guest, 2017). Compensation, as a central HR practice, can influence work behavior and performance when it is perceived as fair and commensurate with contributions (Dessler, 2020; Efawati, 2020). This argument is consistent with Equity Theory, which posits that perceived fairness in exchange relationships affects attitudes and work behavior (Adams, 1965), and Expectancy Theory, which emphasizes that employees exert effort when they believe it will lead to valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964). At the same time, Self-Determination Theory suggests that intrinsic motivation is fostered when employees' needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are supported; such motivation helps sustain effort and responsible work behavior beyond external rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Work discipline can be positioned as the behavioral mechanism that channels incentives and motivation into consistent work routines (e.g., punctuality, compliance with procedures, task completion), thereby plausibly linking compensation and intrinsic motivation to performance outcomes (Chaniago *et al.*, 2025). Together, these perspectives support the argument that compensation and intrinsic motivation may influence performance directly and indirectly through work discipline.

This study focuses on educational support staff in private SMKs in Pancoran Mas District, Depok City, because this employee group plays a strategic enabling role in educational service delivery yet is often underexamined compared to teachers. Moreover, private SMKs in this district face persistent external pressures such as fluctuations in student enrollment and unfavorable public perceptions toward private vocational schools along with internal demands to improve service quality. These conditions make performance sustainability among educational support staff particularly consequential, as operational consistency and service responsiveness are essential for maintaining institutional credibility and competitiveness in the local education market.

Despite the practical relevance, several gaps remain. First, empirical evidence on performance improvement mechanisms among educational support staff in private vocational schools is still limited, as many HRM studies focus on corporate settings or teaching personnel rather than support staff in vocational education. Second, prior findings on the role of work discipline as an intervening mechanism are not consistently established across settings, and the extent to which discipline transmits the effects of compensation and intrinsic motivation to performance requires further testing in

education-service contexts. Third, studies that jointly examine compensation and intrinsic motivation within a single explanatory model while explicitly positioning work discipline as a mediator remain relatively scarce in the context of Indonesian private SMKs. Fourth, context-specific evidence is needed because compensation perceptions, intrinsic motivation conditions, and disciplinary norms may operate differently in private school environments characterized by resource constraints and strong competition.

In summary, the observed decline in support-staff performance and the limited, inconsistent evidence regarding how compensation and intrinsic motivation translate into performance through work discipline indicate a clear need for context-specific empirical testing in private SMKs. The novelty in this study lies in developing and testing an integrated performance-improvement model for educational support staff in private vocational schools, examining the direct effects of compensation and intrinsic motivation and the indirect effects through work discipline within a single framework. Theoretically, the study is expected to enrich HRM and motivation literature by clarifying the behavioral mechanism involving discipline in vocational education services; practically, it offers evidence-based input for school management to design HR strategies that strengthen support-staff performance and improve service quality sustainably. Accordingly, this study aims to examine (1) the effects of compensation and intrinsic work motivation on educational support staff performance, (2) the effect of work discipline on performance, and (3) the mediating role of work discipline in the relationships between compensation and performance and between intrinsic motivation and performance in private SMKs in Pancoran Mas District, Depok City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The performance of educational support staff, compensation, intrinsic work motivation, and work discipline are key constructs in human resource management research, particularly in the education sector. These four variables are interrelated and play an important role in determining the effectiveness of educational service delivery. Optimal performance is shaped not only by individuals' technical capabilities, but also by the extent to which organizations provide a fair compensation system, foster intrinsic motivation, and enforce work discipline consistently. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among these variables is essential to explain the dynamics of educational support staff performance in a holistic manner.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET) proposed by (Blau, 1964) explains that employee–organization relationships are built on reciprocal exchange: when an organization provides valued benefits, employees are motivated to reciprocate through attitudes and work behaviors that benefit the organization. In this study, compensation is conceptualized as a material benefit that signals organizational appreciation for employees' contributions; compensation perceived as fair and adequate is expected to encourage employees to respond with more orderly and responsible work behavior. In addition, intrinsic motivation represents a psychological benefit, namely the drive to work because the work is perceived as meaningful, challenging, and personally rewarding. A work environment that supports autonomy, self-development, and recognition can strengthen this drive, encouraging employees to commit more strongly to organizational rules and performance standards. Accordingly, work discipline can be positioned as a mediating mechanism within the SET framework, reflecting employees' reciprocation through compliance with rules, punctuality, and consistent adherence to procedures,

which in turn is expected to contribute to higher performance. This framework suggests that the effects of compensation and intrinsic motivation on performance may occur not only directly, but also indirectly through changes in disciplinary behavior as an expression of balanced social exchange.

Performance

Performance refers to the level of individual achievement in carrying out assigned duties and responsibilities, typically reflected in work quality, work quantity, timeliness, and compliance with organizational standards. Performance also captures the tangible contribution of educational support staff in achieving school objectives and therefore serves as a key basis for evaluation, development, and managerial decision-making. (Sutrisno, 2016a) defines performance as employees' work outcomes assessed in terms of quality, quantity, working time, and cooperation to achieve organizational goals. Similarly, (Mangkunegara, 2017) emphasizes performance as the qualitative and quantitative results of work in accordance with assigned responsibilities, while (Fahmi, 2017) highlights performance as the outcome of a work process measured over a specific period based on predetermined provisions. In organizational settings, (Torang, 2014) adds that performance is guided by norms, standard operating procedures (SOPs), criteria, and applicable measures. Based on this synthesis, the performance of educational support staff in this study is defined as the achievement of work outcomes and task accomplishment in supporting school goals within a given period, measured through: (1) work quality, (2) work quantity, (3) time efficiency, (4) work effectiveness, and (5) work initiative.

Compensation

Compensation refers to all forms of rewards provided by an organization to employees in return for their contributions and performance, including both financial and non-financial rewards. Compensation plays an important role in attracting, motivating, and retaining employees, and it influences job satisfaction and performance. (Dessler, 2020) defines compensation as all forms of rewards given to employees, encompassing salaries/wages, incentives, benefits, and non-financial compensation. In line with this, (Wibowo, 2016) emphasizes that compensation is remuneration provided fairly and appropriately in accordance with roles and responsibilities, including wages/salaries, incentives, bonuses/benefits, work facilities, and perceptions of fairness and adequacy. (Jatana *et al.*, 2017) frames compensation as a reward system designed to motivate and retain the workforce, covering direct financial compensation, indirect financial compensation, and non-financial compensation, as well as its linkage to performance and perceived fairness. From a psychological perspective, (Ryan & Deci, 2000) notes that compensation can have different effects: if it is controlling, it may undermine intrinsic motivation; however, if it is informative and supports autonomy and recognition, it can enhance satisfaction and motivation. Based on this synthesis, compensation in this study is defined as rewards for the contribution of educational support staff, comprising: (1) direct financial compensation, (2) indirect financial compensation, and (3) non-financial compensation.

Work Discipline

Work discipline refers to employees' attitudes and behaviors reflecting awareness, compliance, and responsibility in adhering to organizational rules, codes of conduct, and work norms, whether written or unwritten, including readiness to accept sanctions in the event of violations. (Sastrohadiwiryono, 2003) defines discipline as an attitude of respect

and compliance with applicable provisions, reflected in attendance, adherence to rules and supervisors' instructions, responsibility, and punctual task completion. (Rivai, 2011) views discipline as a managerial tool to direct behavioral change while increasing awareness and willingness to comply with organizational rules. (Hasibuan, 2019) emphasizes discipline as the awareness and willingness to comply with regulations and social norms, whereas (Sutrisno, 2016) describes discipline as behavior aligned with procedures, time regulations, and standards of work conduct. (Robbins & Judge, 2022) summarize discipline in three main forms: time discipline, compliance with rules, and responsibility discipline. Based on this synthesis, work discipline in this study is defined as educational support staff compliance with work rules and behavioral standards, measured through: (1) time discipline (attendance and punctuality), (2) rule discipline (adherence to regulations and supervisors' instructions), and (3) responsibility discipline (task implementation and proper use/maintenance of work facilities).

Intrinsic Work Motivation

Intrinsic work motivation is an internal drive that leads individuals to work because the work itself is perceived as interesting, meaningful, challenging, and satisfying, rather than because of external rewards. (Ryan & Deci, 2000), through Self-Determination Theory (SDT), explain that intrinsic motivation emerges when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled: autonomy (freedom to regulate how work is done and to make decisions), competence (a sense of capability and growth in completing tasks), and relatedness (positive social relationships and supportive environments). (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959) also argues that intrinsic motivation stems from "motivator" factors inherent in the job, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for growth. (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) strengthen this view through four psychological conditions: meaningfulness, competence, choice, and impact, which make individuals feel that their work is valuable and consequential. (Luthans *et al.*, 2021) conceptualizes intrinsic motivation as a drive to achieve, enjoy challenges, develop oneself, and take responsibility. (Pink, 2011) further summarizes intrinsic motivation into three core elements: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Based on this theoretical synthesis, intrinsic work motivation in this study is defined as the internal drive of educational support staff to work voluntarily and optimally due to the value and satisfaction derived from the work itself, measured through: (1) enthusiasm, (2) autonomy, (3) competence, (4) social relationships, and (5) goal-directed behavior.

Relationships Among Variables

The relationships among compensation, intrinsic work motivation, work discipline, and performance have been widely examined, although empirical findings are not always consistent. Several studies report that compensation and work discipline simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Shofwani & Hariyadi, 2019). Other research finds a direct, positive, and significant effect of work motivation on employee work discipline (Rahmadin & Wulandari, 2025). Compensation has also been reported to have a significant influence on performance (Arifudin, 2019). Further evidence suggests that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly affect performance, and that work discipline has a positive and significant effect on performance (Utari & Rasto, 2019). In educational settings, work discipline has likewise been found to positively and significantly influence teacher performance, indicating that performance is shaped by compliance with work rules and standards of conduct.

To explain these dynamics, this study adopts Social Exchange Theory (SET) as its conceptual framework. SET views employee–organization relations as reciprocal exchanges: when employees receive benefits from the organization, whether in the form of material rewards or psychological support, they are encouraged to reciprocate through positive contributions (Blau, 1964). Within this framework, compensation is positioned as a material benefit signaling organizational appreciation for educational support staff contributions. When compensation is perceived as fair and adequate, staff are more likely to demonstrate responsible behavior and compliance with rules as an expression of reciprocity, thereby potentially enhancing performance. At the same time, intrinsic motivation reflects internal energy that arises when work is perceived as meaningful and satisfying; this condition encourages individuals to work more seriously and consistently and to comply more readily with work standards and procedures, ultimately supporting stronger performance outcomes.

Moreover, SET helps justify the role of work discipline as a mediating mechanism linking compensation and intrinsic motivation to performance. Work discipline can be understood as a form of reciprocation manifested in compliance with working time, rules, and responsibilities, functioning as a behavioral channel through which received benefits (compensation and intrinsic drive) are translated into performance outcomes. Accordingly, the proposed model positions work discipline as a pathway that bridges the effects of compensation and intrinsic motivation on the performance of educational support staff. However, given that prior findings remain mixed and educational organizations have distinctive characteristics, this study is necessary to provide more robust evidence on both direct and indirect effects (through work discipline) among vocational school support staff.

Research Model and Hypotheses

Effect of Compensation on Work Discipline

Compensation, according to (Dessler, 2020), refers to all forms of rewards employees receive as remuneration for work performed, including financial and non-financial forms. In human resource management practice, compensation is viewed as an important instrument for shaping work attitudes and behaviors because it not only fulfills employees' economic needs but also reflects organizational appreciation for employees' contributions. Therefore, compensation designed in a fair and proportional manner may enhance employees' acceptance of the organization and encourage work behaviors aligned with organizational expectations.

Work discipline, as explained by (Hasibuan, 2019), refers to employees' attitudes and behaviors in complying with organizational rules, procedures, and established work standards. Work discipline is reflected in punctuality, attendance, compliance with regulations, and responsibility in performing tasks, whether under direct supervision or not. From the perspective of Reinforcement Theory, behavior is shaped by the consequences it receives; thus, adequate compensation can function as positive reinforcement that encourages employees to maintain disciplined behavior. In addition, Equity Theory emphasizes that perceptions of compensation fairness shape positive attitudes toward the organization, which are subsequently reflected in adherence to work norms and rules; conversely, perceived unfairness may reduce commitment and trigger undisciplined behavior. Accordingly, compensation perceived as fair and adequate is expected to contribute to improved employee work discipline. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Compensation has an effect on work discipline.

Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on Work Discipline

Intrinsic work motivation is an internal drive that leads individuals to work because the work is perceived as meaningful, challenging, and personally satisfying, rather than primarily for external rewards. (Parashakti & Setiawan, 2019) explain that intrinsic motivation develops when individuals are driven by internal needs such as self-actualization, competence, and attachment to their work. Within Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, intrinsic motivation belongs to the motivator factors related to job content, such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility, which encourage individuals to work with strong commitment and awareness.

Work discipline, as described by (Hasibuan, 2019), refers to individuals' attitudes and behaviors in complying with organizational rules, procedures, and prevailing work norms. Individuals with high intrinsic motivation tend to demonstrate stronger self-control and responsibility, and therefore are more likely to comply with rules, perform tasks consistently, and maintain punctuality and attendance. In other words, internally driven motivation may foster discipline without relying on external supervision. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Intrinsic work motivation has an effect on work discipline.

Effect of Compensation on Performance

Compensation is a key factor in human resource management, serving as an expression of organizational appreciation for employees' contributions. According to (Dessler, 2020), compensation encompasses all forms of rewards employees receive, both financial and non-financial, as remuneration for work performed. Compensation that is fair and adequate is expected to enhance work enthusiasm and satisfaction and encourage employees to deliver better performance. Performance, according to (Robbins & Judge, 2022), refers to work outcomes achieved by employees in terms of both quality and quantity in accordance with assigned responsibilities. Performance is influenced not only by ability and skills, but also by the rewards employees receive from the organization. In Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, compensation is categorized as a hygiene factor that helps prevent dissatisfaction; inadequate compensation may reduce work enthusiasm and negatively affect performance, whereas well-managed compensation supports a conducive work environment that enables employees to perform more optimally. Moreover, Equity Theory explains that employees evaluate the balance between inputs (time, effort, competence) and outputs (compensation). When compensation is perceived as fair and commensurate, employees tend to develop positive attitudes toward the organization, reflected in greater commitment, responsibility, and seriousness at work, thereby improving performance. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed: H3: Compensation has an effect on performance.

Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on Performance

Intrinsic work motivation is an internal drive that leads individuals to work because the work is experienced as meaningful, challenging, and personally satisfying. This motivation does not depend on external rewards; rather, it grows from awareness, responsibility, and a desire to achieve. (Parashakti & Setiawan, 2019) state that intrinsic motivation emerges when individuals are driven by psychological needs such as self-actualization, competence, and attachment to their work. In Herzberg's Motivation Theory, intrinsic motivation belongs to motivator factors inherent in job content, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and self-development, which encourage individuals to work optimally because the work itself provides satisfaction.

Performance, according to (Robbins & Judge, 2022), refers to work outcomes achieved by individuals in terms of both quality and quantity in accordance with assigned responsibilities. Performance is influenced not only by ability and skills, but also by internal drives that shape how individuals perform their work. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), intrinsically motivated individuals tend to work with higher autonomy and engagement, enjoy the work process, and strive to produce the best outcomes. This condition encourages individuals to work more consistently, responsibly, and results-oriented, thereby improving performance, particularly in service roles such as educational support staff. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H4: Intrinsic work motivation has an effect on performance.

Effect of Work Discipline on Performance

Work discipline refers to individuals' attitudes and behaviors that reflect compliance with organizational rules, procedures, and work norms. Discipline is not limited to punctual attendance, but also includes adherence to task implementation standards, responsibility for work, and consistency in maintaining output quality. Individuals with high work discipline tend to work in a more orderly, structured, and dependable manner, supporting the achievement of organizational goals. According to (Hasibuan, 2019), work discipline is an individual's awareness and willingness to comply with all organizational rules and norms. This awareness reflects internal commitment, indicating that discipline is shaped not merely by supervision or sanctions, but also by moral and professional responsibility. Performance, according to (Robbins & Judge, 2022), refers to work outcomes achieved in terms of both quality and quantity in line with assigned responsibilities. Performance is influenced by how consistently individuals perform tasks in accordance with applicable requirements. High work discipline encourages employees to work on time, minimize errors, and complete tasks effectively and efficiently, thereby potentially improving performance. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H5: Work discipline has an effect on performance.

Effect of Compensation on Performance Through Work Discipline

Compensation is an important instrument in human resource management as an expression of organizational appreciation for employees' contributions. According to (Dessler, 2020), compensation includes all forms of rewards, both financial and non-financial, provided to employees in return for work performed. Fair and adequate compensation not only meets economic needs but also shapes positive work attitudes and behaviors. From the perspective of Reinforcement Theory, compensation can be understood as positive reinforcement that encourages employees to maintain work behaviors expected by the organization. Employees who receive compensation commensurate with their contributions tend to demonstrate compliance with rules, punctuality, and responsibility in performing tasks behaviors that reflect work discipline. Work discipline itself is defined as employees' attitudes and behaviors in complying with organizational rules, procedures, and prevailing work norms (Hasibuan, 2019). A high level of discipline reflects individual awareness and commitment to tasks and functions as a control mechanism to ensure that work is carried out according to organizational standards.

Performance, according to (Robbins & Judge, 2022), refers to work outcomes achieved by employees in terms of quality and quantity in line with assigned responsibilities. Performance is influenced not only by capability but also by consistent and disciplined work behavior. Disciplined employees tend to work more systematically, efficiently, and responsibly, thereby potentially producing better performance. Thus,

work discipline can be positioned as a mediating variable explaining how compensation is translated into work behavior that ultimately promotes improved performance. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Compensation has an effect on performance through work discipline.

Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on Performance Through Work Discipline

Intrinsic work motivation is an internal drive that leads individuals to work because the work is perceived as meaningful, challenging, and personally satisfying, rather than because of external rewards. This motivation is closely related to psychological needs such as achievement, responsibility, and self-actualization; therefore, individuals with high intrinsic motivation tend to show strong commitment and responsibility in performing tasks. In Herzberg's Motivation Theory, intrinsic motivation belongs to motivator factors inherent in job content, such as achievement and responsibility, which encourage individuals to work with high self-awareness. This awareness may be reflected in orderly and rule-compliant work behavior, namely work discipline.

Work discipline refers to individuals' attitudes and behaviors in complying with organizational rules, procedures, and prevailing work norms (Hasibuan, 2019). Discipline is influenced not only by supervision or sanctions but also by individual awareness and responsibility toward one's work. Within the Self-Determination Theory framework, intrinsic motivation develops when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which fosters work engagement and positive behaviors, including disciplined behavior. High work discipline subsequently contributes to improved performance because individuals work more systematically, consistently, and efficiently. Performance itself refers to work outcomes achieved in terms of quality and quantity in line with assigned responsibilities (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Therefore, work discipline can be positioned as a mediating variable explaining how intrinsic work motivation is translated into work behaviors that ultimately enhance performance. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Intrinsic work motivation has an effect on performance through work discipline.

Based on the theoretical review and prior studies, this research model is designed to test both direct and indirect effects of compensation and intrinsic work motivation on performance through work discipline as a mediating variable.

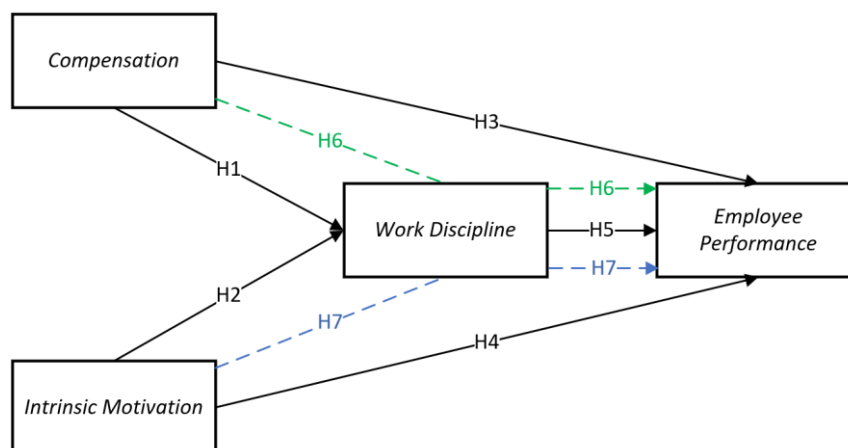


Figure 1. Research Constellation
Source: Own Compilation (2025)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in vocational high schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMKs) across the Pancoran Mas District, Depok, Indonesia. A quantitative survey design was employed, as it is suitable for examining relationships among variables through statistical analysis. The study population comprised all educational support staff (tenaga kependidikan), totaling 165 individuals. The sample was selected using simple random sampling. Of the distributed questionnaires, 115 were returned with complete responses and were eligible for further analysis.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed from established theories and prior empirical studies, then adapted to the context of educational support staff. All indicators were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree/never”) to 5 (“strongly agree/always”). Performance was measured using five indicators: (1) work quality, (2) work quantity, (3) time efficiency, (4) work effectiveness, and (5) work initiative. Compensation was measured using three indicators: (1) direct compensation, (2) indirect compensation, and (3) non-financial compensation. Work discipline was measured using four indicators: (1) punctual attendance, (2) compliance with rules, (3) responsibility discipline, and (4) work ethics and vigilance. Intrinsic work motivation was measured using five indicators: (1) enthusiasm, (2) autonomy, (3) competence, (4) social relatedness, and (5) goal-directed behavior.

Before proceeding to the main analysis, the questionnaire items were subjected to validity and reliability checks. Construct validity was examined through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), ensuring that all indicators met the minimum factor loading requirement of > 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha, and all constructs exceeded the recommended cut-off of 0.70 (Ghozali, 2016). This evidence aligns with (Hair *et al.*, 2017), who note that loadings in the range of 0.50–0.60 can be considered acceptable, particularly for measurement models that are still being refined.

The analytical procedure comprised two phases. First, descriptive analysis was employed to summarize respondents’ demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, educational attainment, employment status, and tenure) and to report descriptive statistics for each research variable, providing an overview of response patterns. Second, hypothesis testing was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares technique (PLS-SEM), which is well-suited for estimating models that include mediating relationships. Within PLS-SEM, the measurement (outer) model was evaluated to confirm construct adequacy, covering convergent validity (AVE > 0.50), discriminant validity, and construct reliability (Composite Reliability > 0.70) (Hair *et al.*, 2017). The structural (inner) model was subsequently assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2), interpreted as weak (0.25), moderate (0.50), or substantial (0.75) (Hair *et al.*, 2017), as well as predictive relevance (Q^2), where values above zero indicate predictive capability (Chin, as cited in Hair *et al.*, 2017). Model fit was further reviewed using SRMR, with values ≤ 0.08 indicating an acceptable fit (Henseler *et al.*, 2014), and NFI, where values approaching 1 suggest better fit (van Laar *et al.*, 2022). Finally, the hypotheses were evaluated by inspecting the path estimates and bootstrapped t-statistics at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$) (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondents' Demographic Profile (Descriptive Statistics)

This study is based on 115 valid responses from educational support staff (*tenaga kependidikan*) at vocational high schools (SMKs) in the Pancoran Mas District, Depok. The respondents were predominantly male, with 62 individuals (54%), while 53 respondents were female (46%). In terms of age, most respondents were in the 30–39 age group (28.6%), followed by those aged 50–59 (24.3%). Meanwhile, the <30 and 40–49 age groups each accounted for 23.5% of the sample.

Regarding educational attainment, the majority of respondents held a Diploma IV/Bachelor/Professional degree (D-IV/S-1/Professional) (73%), while 27% held a Master's degree (S-2). By job category, the largest proportion of respondents worked in administrative services (*tata usaha*) (35%), followed by finance (34%) and librarianship (31%). With respect to tenure, most respondents had worked for 6–10 years (34%) and 11–15 years (29.5%), while 23.5% had 1–5 years of service and 13% had 16–20 years. Overall, this profile indicates that respondents generally fall within the productive age range and possess sufficient educational background and work experience to support the quality of the research data.

Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

To provide an overview of respondents' perceptions of the study variables, descriptive analysis was conducted for each construct: compensation, intrinsic motivation, work discipline, and performance. The results are presented in the following table, which reports the mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values. Table 1 summarizes respondents' responses for each research variable:

Table 1. Respondents' Responses on the Research Variables

	Compensation	Intrinsic Motivation	Work Discipline	Employee Performance
N	115	115	115	115
Mean	4.24	4.25	4.37	4.27
Standard Deviation	0.57	0.57	0.59	0.58
Minimum	2.28	2.40	2.55	2.25
Maximum	4.61	4.60	4.70	4.65

Source: Own Compilation (2025)

Based on Table 1, the compensation variable has a mean score of 4.24 on a 1–5 scale, with a standard deviation of 0.57. The minimum value of 2.28 and the maximum value of 4.61 indicate that, overall, respondents perceived the compensation they received as high, although a small proportion of respondents rated their compensation relatively lower than others. Furthermore, intrinsic work motivation shows a mean score of 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.57. The minimum value of 2.40 and the maximum value of 4.60 suggest that most administrative staff possess a strong internal drive to work, although some variability remains, with a minority of respondents reporting lower levels of intrinsic motivation than the dominant group.

Work discipline records the highest mean among all variables, at 4.37, with a standard deviation of 0.59. The minimum value of 2.55 and the maximum value of 4.70 indicate that, overall, respondents perceived work discipline to be very good, reflecting compliance with rules, punctuality, and responsibility in task execution, despite a small number of respondents obtaining lower scores. Meanwhile, the performance variable has

a mean score of 4.27 with a standard deviation of 0.58. The minimum value of 2.25 and the maximum value of 4.65 imply that, in general, respondents rated their performance as high, while slight variability persists among a small subset of respondents. Overall, these findings show that all four research variables fall within the high category, with work discipline demonstrating the highest mean among them.

Outer Model Evaluation

Prior to examining the causal links among constructs in the structural (inner) model, the measurement (outer) model was assessed. This procedure was conducted to verify that the observed indicators adequately capture the intended latent variables and meet the required standards of validity and reliability. The assessment covered convergent validity (indicator loadings and AVE), internal consistency reliability (Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha), and discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The summary of the results is provided below.

Table 2. Measurement Model Results for Each Variable

Variable	Indicator	Type	Outer Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability
Compensation	Direct compensation	Reflective	0.961	0.872	0.953
	Indirect compensation	Reflective	0.959		
	Non-financial compensation	Reflective	0.880		
Intrinsic Motivation	Enthusiasm and work spirit	Reflective	0.960	0.828	0.960
	Autonomy and decision-making	Reflective	0.933		
	Social relations and harmony	Reflective	0.924		
	Competence and problem-solving ability	Reflective	0.875		
	Goal-directed behavior	Reflective	0.854		
Work Discipline	Punctuality	Reflective	0.947	0.858	0.960
	Compliance with rules	Reflective	0.934		
	Responsibility	Reflective	0.924		
	Attitude and behavior	Reflective	0.895		
Employee Performance	Work effectiveness	Reflective	0.940	0.824	0.959
	Work initiative	Reflective	0.932		
	Work quality	Reflective	0.920		
	Work quantity	Reflective	0.879		
	Time efficiency	Reflective	0.865		

Source: Own Compilation (2025)

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

	Work Discipline	Employee Performance	Compensation	Intrinsic Motivation
Work Discipline	(0.926)	0.937	0.910	0.940
Employee Performance	0.937	(0.908)	0.950	0.975
Compensation	0.910	0.950	(0.934)	0.938
Intrinsic Motivation	0.940	0.975	0.938	(0.910)

Source: Own Compilation (2025)

The outer model evaluation was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research constructs. The results in Table 2 indicate that all indicators for the constructs of compensation, intrinsic motivation, work discipline, and performance exhibit high outer loading values (ranging from 0.854 to 0.961), thus meeting the criteria for

convergent validity. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, namely 0.872 for compensation, 0.828 for intrinsic motivation, 0.858 for work discipline, and 0.824 for performance. The composite reliability values for all constructs also surpass the minimum criterion of 0.70, ranging from 0.953 to 0.960, indicating excellent internal consistency reliability.

Discriminant validity was subsequently assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as presented in Table 3. According to this criterion, the square root of the AVE (the values in parentheses on the diagonal) should be greater than the correlations between constructs. However, Table 3 shows that several inter-construct correlations exceed the square roots of AVE. For example, the correlation between work discipline and performance is 0.937, which is higher than the square root of the AVE for work discipline (0.926) and performance (0.908). Likewise, the correlation between performance and intrinsic motivation is 0.975, exceeding the square root of the AVE for performance (0.908) and intrinsic motivation (0.910). Similar patterns are also observed for the correlation between performance and compensation (0.950), which is higher than the square root of the AVE for performance (0.908) and compensation (0.934), as well as the correlation between work discipline and intrinsic motivation (0.940), which exceeds the square root of the AVE for work discipline (0.926) and intrinsic motivation (0.910). Therefore, although the research instrument demonstrates strong convergent validity and reliability, the Fornell–Larcker criterion suggests that discriminant validity has not been fully established, and the empirical distinctiveness among constructs should be interpreted with caution.

Despite this limitation in discriminant validity based on the Fornell–Larcker assessment, the analysis can still proceed to the structural (inner) model testing to examine the direction and significance of the relationships among variables, with the caveat that findings and implications should not be overstated. In this context, the high correlations among constructs are interpreted as indicating conceptual and/or empirical overlap among the variables studied. Accordingly, the discussion focuses on the strength of the relationships and the consistency of the findings with theoretical foundations and prior studies, while explicitly acknowledging this limitation as part of transparent research reporting.

Inner Model Evaluation

Once the measurement model satisfied validity and reliability requirements, the structural (inner) model was assessed to examine the hypothesized relationships among constructs. The evaluation focused on the coefficients of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and overall model fit indices (SRMR and NFI) to determine how well the exogenous variables explain the endogenous constructs. The findings indicate an R^2 of 0.890 for work discipline and 0.962 for performance, implying that compensation and intrinsic motivation account for 89.0% of the variance in work discipline, whereas compensation, intrinsic motivation, and work discipline jointly account for 96.2% of the variance in performance. The Q^2 value of 0.996 demonstrates very strong predictive capability. In addition, SRMR = 0.046 and NFI = 0.822 suggest that the estimated structural model exhibits an acceptable, good fit. Thus, the model is appropriate for testing the proposed relationships in this study.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. The estimated path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values are presented in the following table:

Table 4. Results of Path Coefficient and t-Statistic Testing

Effect	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Status
Compensation → Work Discipline	0.230	1.202	0.229	Positive, not significant
Intrinsic Motivation → Work Discipline	0.725	3.812	0.000	Positive, significant
Compensation → Performance	0.273	2.801	0.005	Positive, significant
Intrinsic Motivation → Performance	0.616	5.353	0.000	Positive, significant
Work Discipline → Performance	0.110	1.218	0.224	Positive, not significant
Compensation → Work Discipline → Performance	0.025	0.932	0.351	Positive, not significant
Intrinsic Motivation → Work Discipline → Performance	0.079	1.089	0.276	Positive, not significant

Source: Own Compilation (2025)

Based on Table 4, the relationship between compensation and work discipline yields a path coefficient of 0.230, with a t-statistic of 1.202 and a p-value of 0.229. This indicates a positive association, but the effect is not statistically significant. In contrast, intrinsic motivation demonstrates a stronger contribution to work discipline, with a path coefficient of 0.725, a t-statistic of 3.812, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming a positive and significant effect. For performance, compensation shows a path coefficient of 0.273, a t-statistic of 2.801, and a p-value of 0.005, indicating a positive and significant influence on educational staff performance. Intrinsic motivation also exhibits a positive and significant effect on performance, as reflected by a path coefficient of 0.616, a t-statistic of 5.353, and a p-value of 0.000. However, the effect of work discipline on performance is positive but not significant, with a path coefficient of 0.110, a t-statistic of 1.218, and a p-value of 0.224.

Regarding the indirect effects, the mediated relationship between compensation and performance through work discipline produces a mediation coefficient of 0.025, with a t-statistic of 0.932 and a p-value of 0.351, indicating no significant mediation. Similarly, the indirect effect of intrinsic motivation on performance via work discipline results in a mediation coefficient of 0.079, a t-statistic of 1.089, and a p-value of 0.276, which is also not significant. Overall, the findings support three significant direct relationships: intrinsic motivation significantly affects work discipline, compensation significantly affects performance, and intrinsic motivation significantly affects performance. The remaining relationships, including the mediated effects through work discipline, are not supported at the applied significance level.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to address a practical problem in private vocational high schools (SMKs) in Pancoran Mas District, Depok City, namely the decline and inconsistency of educational support staff performance as reflected in performance appraisal and pre-survey indicators (e.g., SOP compliance, punctuality, and teamwork). To respond to this problem, the study tested whether compensation and intrinsic motivation contribute to performance improvement and whether work discipline functions as a behavioral mechanism that links these drivers to performance. The findings indicate that (1) compensation does not significantly influence work discipline, (2) intrinsic motivation significantly strengthens work discipline, (3) compensation significantly improves performance, (4) intrinsic motivation significantly improves performance, (5) work discipline does not significantly predict performance, and 6) work

discipline does not mediate the effects of compensation or intrinsic motivation on performance. The following discussion elaborates each result theoretically and contextually to clarify why these relationships emerge in the setting studied.

Compensation and Work Discipline: Why The Relationship May Be Weak In This Context

The non-significant relationship between compensation and work discipline suggests that disciplinary behavior among educational support staff is not primarily regulated through financial exchange. From a Social Exchange Theory (SET) perspective (Blau, 1964), employees' reciprocation to organizational inputs is not limited to monetary rewards; it also depends on perceived organizational support, trust, procedural justice, and relational exchange. In school organizations, discipline (e.g., punctuality, adherence to working hours, SOP compliance) is often embedded as a normative requirement and monitored through administrative controls (e.g., attendance systems, supervision routines). As a result, variations in discipline may be driven more by the strength of institutional norms and the consistency of enforcement than by compensation differences. This reasoning also aligns with the view that discipline can reflect internal awareness to comply with rules rather than an externally "purchased" behavior (Chewe & Taylor, 2021). Therefore, even when compensation is perceived as generally adequate, it may not directly translate into stronger discipline if disciplinary behavior is shaped by non-material mechanisms such as norm internalization, role expectations, and rule enforcement practices. This interpretation is consistent with findings that other organizational factors (e.g., leadership, commitment) may explain discipline more strongly than compensation (Romadhon *et al.*, 2022).

Intrinsic Motivation and Work Discipline: Discipline As Self-Regulated Behavior

In contrast, intrinsic motivation shows a positive and significant effect on work discipline. This finding is theoretically coherent with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which explains that when competence, autonomy, and relatedness are supported, individuals develop more self-determined regulation and are more likely to enact responsible and orderly work behavior. In practice, educational support staff who experience meaningfulness in their work and perceive themselves as competent tend to comply with rules because they value the work and identify with institutional goals, not merely because they fear sanctions. Thus, discipline becomes internalized behavior an expression of professional responsibility and self-regulation—rather than purely administrative compliance. This logic also explains why strategies to strengthen discipline may be more effective when schools build a supportive climate, provide recognition, and develop staff competencies, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation as the psychological foundation for consistent discipline. This interpretation supports prior work showing that motivation can be a strong predictor of discipline (Rahmadin & Wulandari, 2025).

Compensation and Performance: Performance As A Reciprocation To Perceived Fairness of Rewards

The positive effect of compensation on performance indicates that compensation remains an important performance driver, even if it does not shape discipline. Equity Theory provides a strong explanation: when employees perceive that rewards are fair relative to their contributions, they tend to maintain positive attitudes and sustain effort, which increases performance outputs. Compensation can also operate through expectancy-based

reasoning: employees exert greater effort when they believe effort leads to valued outcomes and that reward systems are credible and attainable. In private SMKs, educational support staff often face operational demands that require reliability and service responsiveness; therefore, compensation perceived as fair can reinforce their willingness to maintain work intensity and output quality. This reasoning is consistent with empirical findings that compensation can strengthen performance outcomes (Arifudin, 2019; Lucky *et al.*, 2022) and supports arguments that compensation systems can become a strategic HR instrument for performance strengthening (Handoko *et al.*, 2021).

Intrinsic Motivation and Performance: Sustained Effort and Quality Of Contribution

Intrinsic motivation also has a positive and significant effect on performance, which is strongly consistent with SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT posits that intrinsically motivated employees tend to show higher engagement, persistence, and quality of effort because they experience work as meaningful and self-endorsed. In educational service settings, where many tasks require careful follow-through and service orientation, intrinsic motivation can directly enhance performance by improving attentiveness, initiative, and the willingness to go beyond minimum requirements. Thus, performance is not formed solely by external incentives but also by internal drive such as enjoyment of tasks, pride in service quality, and commitment to delivering reliable outcomes. This interpretation aligns with evidence that intrinsic motivation predicts performance (Maulana, 2015; Potu *et al.*, 2021; Sidik *et al.*, 2022) and implies that performance improvement strategies should include job design that supports autonomy, meaningfulness, and continuous competency development.

Work Discipline and Performance: When Discipline Becomes A Baseline Rather Than A Differentiator

A key finding of this study is that work discipline does not significantly affect performance. This result contrasts with studies reporting discipline as a significant predictor of performance (Arifin & Sasana, 2022; Prasetyo & Marlina, 2019; Utari & Rasto, 2019). A plausible theoretical and contextual explanation is that, in this setting, discipline may function as a baseline requirement for organizational order but does not differentiate performance outcomes when other factors are more dominant. In other words, discipline may ensure “minimum compliance” (attendance, punctuality, rule adherence), but higher performance may depend more on capability, motivation, resource availability, workload distribution, and task system design elements that influence output quality and service effectiveness beyond basic compliance. Additionally, performance appraisal in school operations may capture dimensions (service responsiveness, output quality, coordination effectiveness) that are not sufficiently explained by discipline alone. Therefore, discipline remains important for governance, but it may not be the main driver of performance variation in this context.

Why Work Discipline Does Not Mediate: Direct Pathways May Be Stronger Than Behavioral Routing

The mediation tests show that work discipline does not mediate the relationship between compensation and performance nor between intrinsic motivation and performance. This result suggests that compensation and intrinsic motivation may influence performance through more direct mechanisms than changes in formal disciplinary behavior. From a

SET viewpoint, employees may reciprocate perceived fairness in compensation directly through improved work outputs (e.g., greater effort, faster completion, better service responsiveness) without necessarily altering discipline indicators. From an SDT viewpoint, intrinsic motivation increases performance primarily by elevating engagement quality, initiative, and persistence mechanisms that directly improve performance outcomes and do not require discipline as an intermediate pathway. These findings differ from studies where discipline acted as a mediator (Ariyadi *et al.*, 2025; Sucipto & Rauf, 2021), reinforcing that mediation is context-dependent and may vary with rule enforcement patterns, job characteristics, measurement operationalization, and organizational norms. In private SMK settings, discipline may already be relatively standardized (or controlled administratively), leaving limited variance for discipline to carry mediation effects.

Implications of The Integrated Findings

Overall, the results indicate that improving educational support staff performance is more effectively pursued through a balanced strategy combining fair and transparent compensation systems with efforts to strengthen intrinsic motivation via a supportive work climate, recognition of contributions, and competency development. Work discipline should still be maintained as a foundation of organizational order; however, in this model, discipline is not the key pathway explaining performance improvement and does not function as a mediator between the primary drivers and performance. These findings also suggest opportunities for future research to examine other mediators or moderators that may better capture the mechanism of performance improvement in school contexts, such as leadership, organizational culture, administrative workload, facility support, job design, and organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effects of compensation and intrinsic work motivation on the performance of educational staff, with work discipline as an intervening variable, among vocational high school (SMK) educational staff in Pancoran Mas District, Depok. The hypothesis testing results show that compensation does not significantly affect work discipline, whereas intrinsic work motivation has a positive and significant effect on work discipline. This finding suggests that the formation of disciplined behavior among educational staff is more strongly influenced by internal drive than by material rewards alone. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that compensation has a positive and significant effect on performance, and intrinsic work motivation also has a positive and significant effect on performance. This indicates that educational staff performance can be enhanced through two main pathways: (1) managing compensation in a manner perceived as fair and adequate as recognition of contributions, and (2) strengthening intrinsic motivation so that work is experienced as meaningful, challenging, and personally satisfying. However, work discipline is not found to significantly affect performance, implying that compliance with formal rules may not operate as a direct determinant of performance in this educational staff context. Performance may instead be shaped by other factors such as competence, organizational support, or work governance arrangements.

Moreover, the mediation tests show that work discipline does not mediate the effect of compensation on performance, nor the effect of intrinsic motivation on performance. Thus, the relationships among variables in this study tend to be direct, meaning that compensation directly influences performance and intrinsic motivation

directly influences performance, while the indirect pathways through work discipline are not supported. This result also implies that social exchange processes in the educational staff context do not necessarily manifest as improved formal discipline, but may appear more directly as enhanced work contributions and performance outcomes, particularly when individuals perceive their work as meaningful and the organization provides appropriate rewards. Overall, this study highlights the importance of prioritizing intrinsic motivation strengthening and the management of fair, transparent, and proportional compensation systems to improve educational staff performance. At the same time, because work discipline does not function as a direct determinant of performance nor as a mediator, schools should complement interventions with policies addressing other factors, such as simplifying administrative burdens, strengthening process digitalization, enhancing organizational support, and developing competencies. Future research is recommended to include variables such as leadership style, organizational climate, organizational support, competence, and work culture, and to consider mixed-method approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of educational staff performance.

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