

Work Motivation as a Strategic Driver of Employee Performance in Public Organizations

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Abstract: Employee performance is a major factor in determining the effectiveness of an organization, especially in the public sector where the quality of service is determined by human resources. This study examines the effect of work motivation on employee performance at the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. A quantitative approach was used, and a census of 54 employees was conducted. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and analyzed using descriptive statistics and path analysis. The results show that employees perceive both work motivation and performance at a good level. Work motivation had a positive and significant effect on employee performance with 89.4% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.894$). All motivational dimensions contributed positively indicating the importance of fulfilling physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization needs of employees. The study provides empirical evidence for the strategic role of work motivation in improving employee performance and offers practical implications for motivation based human resource management in local government organizations.

Keywords: Work motivation, Employee performance, public sector, Local government, Human resource management.

Introduction

Employee performance plays a pivotal role in organizational effectiveness, particularly in public institutions where achieving strategic goals depends not only on organizational resources but also on employees' ability to perform administrative and service responsibilities effectively (Băieșu & Boguș, 2023; Taşgıt et al., 2023). In an increasingly complex and dynamic governance environment, public organizations are expected to enhance service quality,

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operational efficiency, and accountability. Consequently, improving employee performance has become a strategic priority for public sector organizations seeking to strengthen organizational outcomes and increase public trust ([Lanin & Hermanto, 2019](#); [Parashakti et al., 2020](#)). Work motivation is widely recognized as one of the most important factors influencing employee performance and has received considerable attention in the human resource management literature. It represents the internal and external forces that encourage employees to exert effort, maintain commitment, and accomplish organizational goals. Employees with higher levels of motivation are generally more committed, proactive, and productive than those with lower motivation. Therefore, organizations that successfully foster employee motivation are more likely to achieve sustainable improvements in employee performance and overall organizational effectiveness ([Knack & Zak, 2003](#)). Recent empirical studies have consistently reported that work motivation positively influences employee performance across various organizational settings ([Ward, 2017](#)). Research conducted in both public and private sectors has shown that motivated employees demonstrate higher productivity, stronger organizational commitment, improved service quality, and better job performance. However, previous studies have also observed variations in the strength of this relationship across different institutional contexts, organizational cultures, and management practices. These findings indicate that the relationship between work motivation and employee performance is context-dependent and requires further empirical investigation in diverse public sector environments ([Tamam, 2022](#); [Vo et al., 2022](#)). Despite the growing body of literature on work motivation and employee performance, empirical evidence from Indonesian public organizations remains relatively limited. Furthermore, only a few studies have comprehensively examined work motivation based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs as an integrated construct influencing employee performance within local government institutions. This limitation restricts a comprehensive understanding of how motivational factors contribute to employee performance in the context of public administration, particularly in developing countries. The Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency plays a significant role in supporting regional educational administration and delivering public services. Improving employee performance within this institution is essential to ensure effective policy implementation and high-quality public service delivery ([De Araújo, 2001](#); [Pareek & Sole, 2022](#)). Therefore, understanding the role of work motivation in enhancing employee performance is important for organizational leaders in designing effective human resource management strategies and strengthening organizational performance. Based on the identified research gap, this study aims to examine the effect of work motivation on employee performance in a public organization ([Pretorius & Schurink, 2007](#); [Setiawan et al., 2022](#)). Specifically, it investigates whether work motivation serves as a strategic driver of employee performance among employees of the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu

Regency. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on human resource management and public administration by providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian public sector while offering practical recommendations for managers seeking to enhance employee performance through effective motivational strategies.

Research Method

This study used a quantitative approach to analyze the effect of work motivation on employee performance in a public organization. The survey method was used to collect primary data from employees of the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to assess the relationship between the research variables and to test the proposed hypothesis. The overall research procedure including the research design, study setting, sampling technique, variable measurement, data collection, and data analysis is described in the following sections.

Research Procedure

The research procedure adopted in this study is presented in Figure 1. The study was conducted in a systematic manner to improve the reliability and validity of the research process. First, the research problem was identified through the review of the issues related to employee performance in public organizations and the review of previous empirical studies on work motivation ([Masiya et al., 2019](#); [Ndevu & Muller, 2017](#)). This process helped in formulating the research objectives and identifying the research gap. Then the research framework is made by determining the independent variable, namely work motivation and the dependent variable, namely employee performance. Based on this framework, a structured questionnaire was prepared using the measurement indicators obtained from the established theoretical foundation. Before the data analysis, the questionnaire answers were tested for validity and reliability to ensure that the research instrument was able to measure what was intended. The first step, the author collected primary data from the employees of the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency through questionnaire survey (Madumo, 2014). The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of respondents and the condition of variables. The second step, the author employed path analysis to see the effects of work motivation on employee performance. The last step, the author interpreted the empirical findings to formulate conclusions, theoretical contributions, and practical recommendations to improve employee performance in public organizations ([Park & Choi, 2020](#)).

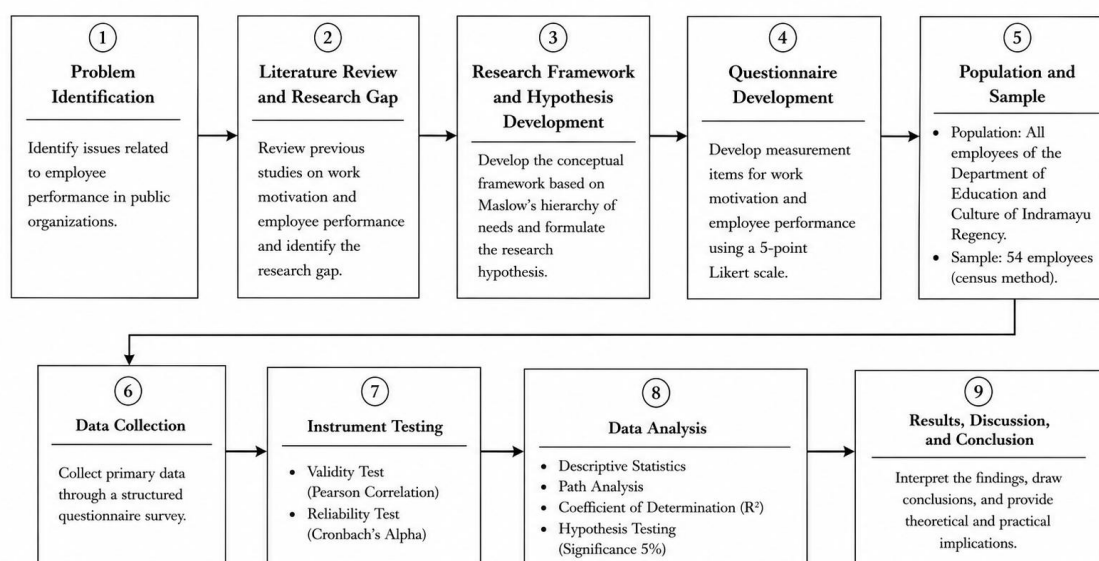


Figure 1 Research Procedure

As seen in Figure 1, the research procedure is carried out in several stages to obtain a systematic and rigorous research flow. The first stage is the identification of the problem, which is done by examining the issues of employee performance in public organizations. The second stage is the review of previous studies on employee performance in public organizations, which is conducted to identify the research gap and set the research objectives. Stage three is the development of the conceptual framework (Otieno-Odawa & Kaseje, 2014). The following step is to develop a structured questionnaire to measure work motivation and employee performance. The next stage is to determine the population and sample of the research then primary data collection by spreading a questionnaire survey to employees of the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. The data collected were tested validity and reliability so that the quality of the research instrument is guaranteed. Finally, the data analysis used descriptive statistics and path analysis for the effect of work motivation to employee performance, and the results were interpreted to draw conclusions and practical implications (Milton et al., 2011; Mohamad et al., 2015).

Research Setting

This research was conducted at the Department of Education and Culture, Indramayu Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The institution plans, coordinates, implements, and evaluates educational and cultural policies in the regency. One of the key public organizations at the regional level, the department plays an essential role in improving the quality of education and public services through effective administrative and manager practices. This research was conducted in the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. The research was carried out in the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency because

the performance of employees is a very crucial factor to reach organizational goals and the provision of good service to the community. The employees of this institution are directly involved in the administrative and managerial and service-oriented activities which require high levels of responsibility and commitment. Therefore, the organization is a good context to study the effect of work motivation on employee performance in the public sector. Figure 2 shows the geographical location of the research setting.



Note. The location is shown from the national level to the specific location of the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency.

Figure 2 Research location

The research was carried out at the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency, West Java, Indonesia as shown in Figure 2. The choice of this institution is due to its strategic role in managing regional education and cultural affairs, as well as public services. Being a public organization, its performance is primarily driven by the ability of its employees to perform the administrative and service responsibilities effectively. Thus, it is an appropriate context for examining the effects of work motivation on employee performance in the public sector.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was all of the employees of the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The department is a public sector institution whose employees perform a variety of administrative and managerial functions relevant to the implementation of educational policies and public service delivery. The study was designed to study the effect of work motivation on employee performance holistically in

the organization. Therefore, all employees were eligible to participate in the research. Census (total enumeration) technique was used because the total number of employees was relatively small and manageable. The sampling method was such that all the members of the population could be respondents, thus eliminating sampling bias and giving the collected data the ability to accurately reflect the characteristics and perceptions of the entire population. The Census approach offers more representative empirical evidence than probability sampling techniques since it collects data from all the employees of the organization. In this study, 54 employees completed the questionnaire. The respondents were all employees of the Indramayu Regency Department of Education and Culture, so that they could provide comprehensive information regarding work motivation and employee performance. Thus, the utilization of total sampling improves the reliability of the research findings and enhances the accuracy of the statistical analysis performed to examine the relationship between the research variables.

Research Variables and Measurement

In this study there were two research variables, work motivation as independent variable and employee performance as dependent variable. Both variables were measured from the already established theoretical framework to make the research instrument valid and reliable. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger agreements on the items. Work motivation was defined as the internal and external driving forces that motivate employees to perform their duties effectively and achieve organizational objectives. The work motivation was measured by five dimensions: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization need which are in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. These dimensions affect employees' behaviors and attitudes at the workplace. The dimensions are the basic and advanced motivational needs of employees. Employee performance was defined as the degree to which employees successfully perform their assigned tasks in accordance with organizational standards and objectives. The variable was measured with indicators of the quality of work, responsibility, ability and efficiency of employees in the performance of their duties. The higher the score, the better the employee's performance, the operational definitions of the research variables and their corresponding measurement indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Research Variables and Measurement

Variable	Dimensions	Measurement Scale
Work Motivation	Physiological Needs	Likert Scale (1–5)
	Safety Needs	Likert Scale (1–5)
	Social Needs	Likert Scale (1–5)
	Esteem Needs	Likert Scale (1–5)
	Self-Actualization Needs	Likert Scale (1–5)
Employee Performance	Work Quality	Likert Scale (1–5)
	Responsibility	Likert Scale (1–5)
	Capability	Likert Scale (1–5)
	Work Effectiveness	Likert Scale (1–5)

Table 1 presents the research variables, dimensions, and measurement scale employed in this study. Work motivation was operationalized into five dimensions, based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, while employee performance was operationalized into four dimensions, based on employee work outcomes and responsibilities. All questionnaire items were measured using the five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Collection

The data for the study were collected from the primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire distributed to all employees in the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. The questionnaire was developed based on the operational definitions of the research variables. The questionnaire consisted of statements to measure work motivation and employee performance. The respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement on the five-point Likert scale starting from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each statement. Secondary data were sourced from organizational documents, institutional reports and relevant records pertaining to the organizational profile and employee information in addition to the primary data. Furthermore, direct observation was carried out in order to gain a better understanding of the organizational environment and the work activities of the employees. Documentation and observation, together with the questionnaire, improved the completeness of the data collected and contextualised the interpretation of the research findings. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the research instrument was subjected to review to determine the relevance of each measurement item to the objectives of the study. The next

step was to compile the collected responses and prepare them for statistical analysis, validity and reliability testing before the hypothesis testing.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to address the research objectives. Descriptive statistics were applied to describe the characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of responses for each of the research variables. Then the inferential statistical analysis was conducted to see the relationship between work motivation and employee performance. Prior to hypothesis testing, the research instrument quality was tested for validity and reliability. A validity test was conducted to find out whether each item of the questionnaire measured the intended construct correctly, and a reliability test was conducted to measure the internal consistency of the measurement items. In the subsequent analysis, only valid and reliable instruments were used to ensure the credibility of the research findings. To test the hypothesis, the direct effect of work motivation to employee performance was determined using path analysis. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was determined to find the percentage of employee performance variance explained by work motivation. The statistical significance was checked at 5% level ($\alpha = 0.05$). All statistical analysis were done using SPSS to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the analysis.

Result and Discussion

In this section, the empirical findings of the study are presented based on the analysis of the data obtained from the employees of the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. The results include the characteristics of the respondents, the assessment of the measurement instruments and hypothesis testing to test the effect of work motivation on employee performance. The findings offer empirical evidence to meet the research objectives and serve as the basis for the subsequent discussion.

Respondent Profile

This study used 54 employees of the Indramayu Regency Department of Education and Culture who were taken as respondents using the census (total sampling) approach. Since the survey covered all members of the target population, the data gathered offer a valid and comprehensive account of the perceptions of employees with regards to work motivation and employee performance in the organization. The use of a census approach, which included all eligible respondents in the analysis, reduces sampling bias and increases the reliability of the empirical findings. The respondents were from different demographic backgrounds regarding gender, age, educational level and length of service. Such a diversity provides a broad

representation of the organizational workforce and reflects the heterogeneity of employees performing administrative and public service functions. These demographic characteristics provide contextual information to the interpretation of the empirical findings, while ensuring that the analysis captures perceptions from employees with different professional experiences and educational backgrounds. Figure 3 presents the distribution of respondents by demographic characteristics. The figure gives an overview of the composition of the study population and shows that the survey included employees from different demographic groups, which strengthens the representativeness of the research data used in the subsequent statistical analysis.

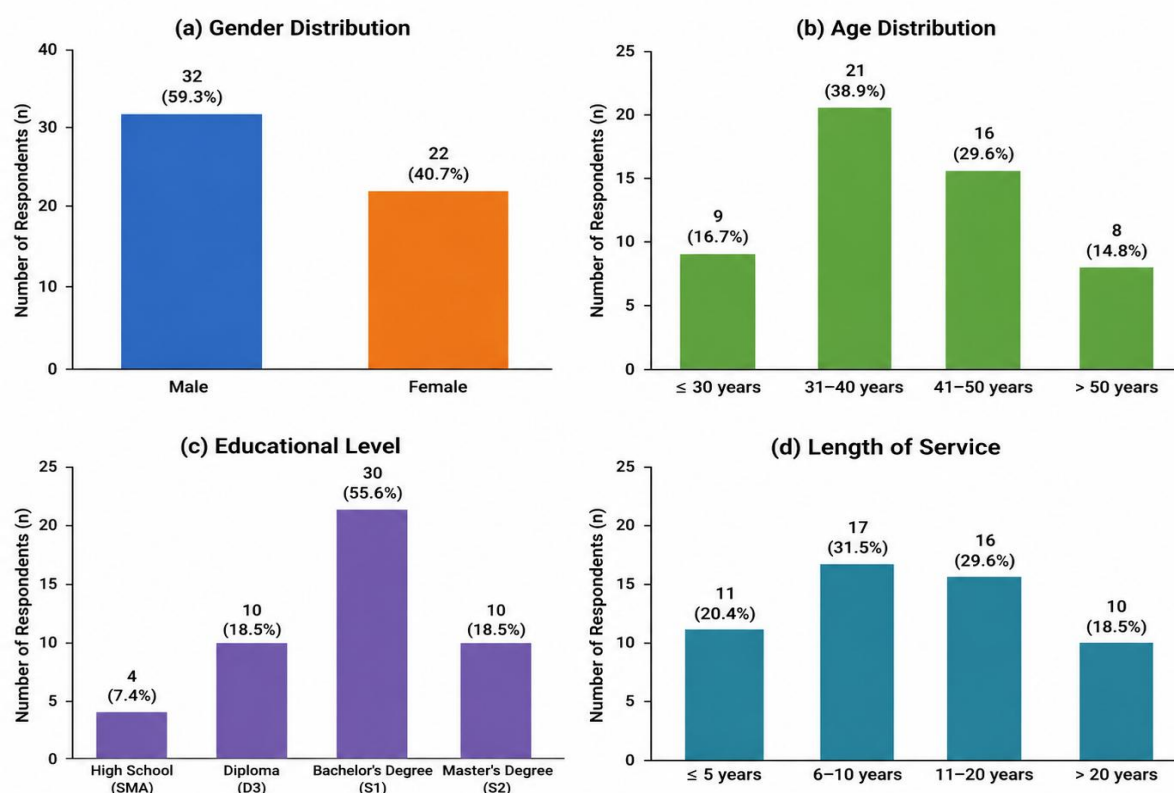


Figure 3 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Respondents were distributed in different demographic categories such as gender, age, educational level and length of service as indicated in Figure 3. The diversity of these characteristics indicates that the study involved employees with different educational backgrounds and professional experiences, thus presenting a comprehensive representation of the workforce in the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. This heterogeneity in demographics further enhances the robustness of the empirical analysis, by making sure that the responses collected represent a broad spectrum of views about work motivation and employee performance.

Measurement Model Assessment

The quality of the research instrument was evaluated before the proposed relationship between work motivation and employee performance was discussed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. The empirical results depend on the measurement instrument and therefore a proper evaluation of the measurement instrument is paramount. The instrument employed in this study was subjected to validity and reliability tests to ensure that the questionnaire conformed to the statistical requirements for testing the hypotheses. The validity test was done by using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The results indicated that all questionnaire items for work motivation and employee performance had statistically significant correlation coefficients, thus each item was a good measure of its respective construct. None of the questionnaire items were eliminated, which indicates that the instrument has sufficient construct validity for measuring employees' perceptions about work motivation and performance. The Spearman–Brown split-half reliability test was performed subsequently to test the internal consistency of the measurement instrument. The results showed that both constructs met the required reliability criteria, indicating that the questionnaire was consistently measuring what it was supposed to measure. Therefore, the research instrument was deemed reliable enough to proceed with further statistical analysis. Table 3 summarizes the results of the assessment of the measurement instrument.

Table 3 Summary of Measurement Instrument Assessment

Construct	Number of Items	Validity Result	Reliability Result	Decision
Work Motivation	20	All items valid	Reliable	Accepted
Employee Performance	4	All items valid	Reliable	Accepted

As can be seen in Table 3, all the measurement items met the required validity and reliability criteria. The results showed that the questionnaire used was an appropriate and reliable measure of work motivation and employee performance, thus providing a sound basis for testing the proposed research hypothesis.

Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

The hypothesis on the effect of work motivation on employee performance was tested by conducting a path analysis. The analysis assessed the overall explanatory power of the model and the statistical significance of the relationship between the research variables. The results show empirical evidence of the contribution of work motivation to improve employee performance in the Office of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. F-value of 80.880 and significance level of less than 0.05 showed that the overall model was statistically significant which confirmed that work motivation has a significant effect on employee

performance. Moreover, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.894$) suggests that work motivation accounts for 89.4% of the variance in employee performance, with the other 10.6% attributed to other factors not discussed in this study. The findings of the study show that work motivation is a significant factor affecting employee performance in the public organization under investigation. Individual hypothesis tests also supported the positive effect of each dimension of work motivation on employee performance. All the physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs had statistically significant positive relationships with employee performance which means that enhancements in these motivational factors are related to better employee outcomes. Of these dimensions, among which esteem needs had the highest statistical contribution, which indicated that recognition and appreciation are important in improving employee performance in the context of the organization, Table 4 Results of the hypothesis testing summary.

Table 4 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Parameter	Value	Interpretation
F-statistic	80.880	Model is statistically significant
Significance (p-value)	< 0.001	Hypothesis accepted
Multiple Correlation (R)	0.945	Very strong relationship
Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	0.894	89.4% of employee performance explained by work motivation
Unexplained Variance	10.6%	Attributable to other variables

The hypothesis testing shows that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance as shown in table 4. The high coefficient of determination shows that motivation at work is a dominant factor that affects employee performance in the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency so that the proposed research hypothesis is supported.

Discussion

The results of this study prove that work motivation has a significant and significant impact on employee performance in the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. The coefficient of determination shows that work motivation explains a significant part of the variation of employee performance, which shows the strategic importance of motivating factors in increasing the effectiveness of organizations in the public sector. These results support the argument that employees who are motivated are more likely to show higher levels of commitment, productivity and responsibility in the performance of their organizational duties. The positive relationship between work motivation and employee performance is consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which states that when employees' physiological,

safety, social, esteem and self-actualization needs are satisfied, they tend to be more productive. Findings of the current study showed positive perceptions of respondents across all the motivational dimensions inferring organizational support in the management of employees' needs has positive work outcomes. The relatively higher scores for esteem and self-actualization needs further support that recognition, appreciation and opportunities for personal development are important drivers of employee performance beyond fulfillment of basic needs. The results are also consistent with past research that has demonstrated that motivated workers are typically more effective in their work, more committed to the organization, and perform better individually. Some of these motivational practices are recognition, career development opportunities, supportive leadership and positive working environment. These motivational practices can go a long way in improving employees' willingness to accomplish organizational objectives in public organizations where the quality of services depends largely on human resources. Hence, strengthening work motivation should be viewed as a strategic human resource management intervention for enhancing public service performance. The findings suggest that practically, managers of public organizations should not depend solely on financial incentives to improve employee performance. Instead, management should focus more on developing a conducive organizational climate that caters to employees' higher-order psychological needs such as recognition of achievement, participation in decision-making, opportunities for professional development and continuous competency development. Such initiatives are expected to improve the intrinsic motivation of the employees, which in return leads to sustainable improvements in the performance of the organization. Finally, although a large proportion of employee performance was explained by work motivation, approximately 10.6% of the variation remained unexplained. The result indicates that the other organizational and individual factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, job satisfaction, work environment, compensation and organizational commitment, which were not covered in this study, also affect employee performance. Therefore, these variables should be included in the future studies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of employee's performance in public sector organizations.

Conclusions

This study aims to analyze the effect of work motivation on employee performance in the Department of Education and Culture of Indramayu Regency. The findings of the study indicate that work motivation has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. The high coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.894$) indicates that work motivation explains a significant portion of the variance in employee performance, confirming its importance as a key organizational factor in the public sector. Generally, employees indicated positive

perceptions in physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization needs among the motivational dimensions, which signifies the role played by comprehensive motivational practices in improving the performance at the workplace. This article contributes to the literature of organizational behavior and public administration by providing empirical evidence that work motivation remains an important predictor of employee performance in local government institutions. The findings also provide practical implications for public sector managers that employee performance can be enhanced through motivational strategies that go beyond financial incentives to include recognition, career development opportunities, supportive leadership and opportunities for self-development. However, despite these contributions, the study has limitations. The analysis was performed in a single public organization and with a relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other organizational settings. In addition, work motivation was the main explanation of the employee performance, and some other potentially important determinants were not included in the research model. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to explore other variables such as leadership style, organizational culture, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work environment with larger and more diverse samples to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee performance in public organizations.

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