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The effect of work-life balance and job satisfaction on employee performance at institutions receiving the BPDPKS scholarship in North Sumatra

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Abstract
This study examines how work-life balance and job satisfaction relate to employee performance at institutions receiving the BPDPKS Palm Oil Human Resources Scholarship in North Sumatra, a setting that remains largely unexplored in human resource management research. A cross-sectional explanatory survey was carried out at three vocational education providers: the Medan Agricultural Development Polytechnic, the Medan Industrial Chemical Technology Polytechnic, and the Indonesian Palm Oil Technology Institute of Deli Serdang. From a population of 165 employees, 117 respondents were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling, and the sample size was verified against power-based criteria (G*Power and the inverse square root method). Data were collected with a five-point Likert questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model met the reliability and validity criteria. Work-life balance (path coefficient = 0.437, t-statistic = 6.822, $p < 0.001$) and job satisfaction (path coefficient = 0.424, t-statistic = 6.993, $p < 0.001$) each had a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with comparable effect sizes ($f^2 = 0.315$ and 0.336), and together they explained 48.1% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.481$). The findings extend the Job Demands-Resources and Social Exchange perspectives to institutions that deliver a national affirmative-action program, and they show that welfare-oriented HR policies are relevant to performance in this setting. Because the data are cross-sectional, self-reported, and drawn from three institutions, the results should be read as statistical associations and not as proof of causality; the mediating role of job satisfaction is left for future research.
Keywords: Work-Life Balance; Job Satisfaction; Employee Performance; PLS-SEM; BPDPKS Scholarship.

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INTRODUCTION

Human resources (HR) are among the strategic determinants of an organization's success and long-term survival. As organizations grow more complex, their achievements depend not just on financial and technological capital but also on how well they manage, develop, and sustain the quality of their workforce. Employees who are competent, motivated, psychologically healthy, and satisfied with their jobs can make a stronger contribution toward organizational objectives. For this reason, HR management has moved beyond a purely administrative orientation and now adopts a strategic approach that treats employees as the organization's most valuable asset (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

Within higher education, workforce quality matters even more, since universities serve not only as teaching institutions but also as hubs for knowledge creation, innovation, research, and community engagement. Lecturers and academic support staff are the principal actors who shape the quality of academic services and the delivery of institutional programs. Because universities face heavy expectations, employees must perform several roles at once, from carrying out the tridharma of higher education and handling academic administration to building partnerships and participating in strategic government initiatives. As a result, balancing job demands against personal life has become a critical concern for human resource management in higher education (Saeed & Farooqi, 2014).

The palm oil industry is one strategic sector that needs stronger human resources. It makes a major contribution to Indonesia's economy through exports, job creation, and plantation-driven regional growth. North Sumatra is among the country's foremost palm oil producing provinces, hosting an industrial ecosystem that spans plantations, processing, downstream industries, and workforce development. To build workforce competencies in this sector, the government, via the Palm Oil Plantation Fund Management Agency (BPDPKS) and in cooperation with the Directorate General of Plantations of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Industry, runs the Palm Oil Human Resources Scholarship Program. The program seeks to prepare professional human resources who can sustain the national palm oil industry (Kementerian Perindustrian, 2023).

Operating since 2016, the BPDPKS Palm Oil Human Resources Scholarship Program is a national affirmative action initiative designed to build the competencies of young people in the palm oil plantation sector. By 2024, it had reached more than 9,000 scholarship recipients across 41 educational institutions (BPDPKS, 2025; Kementerian Perindustrian, 2023). In North Sumatra, three vocational institutions deliver the program: the Medan Agricultural Development Polytechnic (Polbangtan), the Medan Industrial Chemical Technology Polytechnic (PTKI), and the Indonesian Palm Oil Technology Institute (ITSI) Deli Serdang. By offering vocational education aligned with what the palm oil industry needs, these three institutions are central to the program's success.

Since they manage a national scholarship program, the three institutions confront fairly complex organizational demands. Both lecturers and administrative staff must complete their core academic and administrative work while also taking on extra duties that support the BPDPKS program. These include guiding scholarship recipients, running student dormitories, liaising with palm oil industry partners, compiling accountability reports for BPDPKS and the ministries concerned, and accompanying students during fieldwork placements at plantation companies. Such demanding responsibilities may enlarge employees' workload and could affect their psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and performance.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory of Bakker and Demerouti (2007; see also Demerouti et al., 2001) provides a useful lens for this phenomenon. It holds that any job comprises two sets of features, namely demands and resources. When demands run high, for instance through heavy workloads, tight deadlines, or conflicting roles, employees become prone to burnout and their well-being declines. Resources work in the opposite direction: support from the organization, room for flexibility, recognition, and a healthy workplace climate all strengthen motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Within this study, the extent to which

employees can reconcile work and private life is a key determinant of how they handle demanding job conditions.

Social Exchange Theory, proposed by Blau (1964), offers another way to interpret the tie between employees and their organization. The theory maintains that work relationships develop through reciprocity: employees who feel supported, appreciated, and cared for by their organization are inclined to respond with stronger loyalty, satisfaction, and performance. From this angle, an organization that pays attention to its employees' work-life balance is extending support that can nurture favorable work attitudes.

Work-life balance ranks among the core themes of modern HR management. Greenhaus et al. (2003) conceptualize it as the condition in which a person attains an even degree of involvement and satisfaction in both work and non-work roles. Its three dimensions are time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. People who maintain a good balance between the two spheres generally report lower stress, higher motivation to work, and a better ability to complete their duties.

The relevance of work-life balance is even greater in universities, where lecturers and academic staff often work beyond regular hours. Teaching, administrative tasks, student guidance, research, community service, and other institutional duties tend to absorb a great deal of time and energy. If work claims too much of a person's life, role conflict can arise, which in turn erodes both job satisfaction and effectiveness (Akanji et al., 2020; Delecta, 2011). Job satisfaction is a second factor that helps lift employee performance alongside work-life balance. Locke (1976) characterizes it as a favorable emotional state that stems from how individuals appraise their job or their experiences at work, showing the degree to which personal needs, expectations, and values are met by the job. According to Robbins and Judge (2019), the influencing aspects include the nature of the work, pay, opportunities for advancement, supervision, and coworker relations.

Employees who feel highly satisfied tend to behave more positively at work, remain more committed to the organization, and produce stronger results. Dissatisfaction, on the other hand, can weaken motivation, reduce productivity, and increase the temptation to leave the organization (Kristine, 2017). Knowing what shapes job satisfaction is therefore vital for any effort to improve employee performance. Performance is one of the main measures of how well an organization is doing. Mangkunegara (2017) sees it as the amount and quality of work that a person delivers when carrying out assigned tasks. For institutions that receive BPDPKS scholarships, performance covers more than completing routine assignments; it also involves supporting vocational education programs, providing good academic services, and remaining accountable in scholarship program management.

Several earlier studies connect work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Herlambang and Murniningsih (2019) concluded that work-life balance improves employee performance, with job satisfaction serving as an intervening variable. A similar pattern appeared in Wahyu et al. (2021), where work-life balance significantly affected job satisfaction and its impact on performance was reinforced through job satisfaction as a mediator. Ningsih and Hermiati (2023) also confirmed that job satisfaction mediates the association between work-life balance and employee performance.

Ardiansyah and Surjanti (2020) further reported that work-life balance enhances performance through higher organizational commitment, and Ajayaghosh and Thampi (2020) regarded it as a meaningful predictor of employee performance. As for job satisfaction, Ahakwa et al. (2021), Adhan et al. (2020), and Sembiring et al. (2021) all documented a positive and significant relationship with employee performance. Despite the abundance of research on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance, several gaps still call for further investigation. The first concerns how the two predictors are positioned relative to each other. Many earlier studies model the effect of work-life balance on performance as running through job satisfaction (Herlambang & Murniningsih, 2019; Ningsih & Hermiati, 2023; Wahyu et al., 2021), whereas others report a direct association (Ajayaghosh & Thampi, 2020; Turangan et al., 2022).

Little is known, however, about how large the direct contributions of work-life balance and job satisfaction are when both are placed in a single model, and which of the two is the stronger correlate of performance. The present study addresses this gap by estimating both direct effects simultaneously and comparing their effect sizes; the mediating role of job satisfaction is not tested here and is identified as a direction for future research. The second gap is that earlier work focused on corporate, government, and public university employees, leaving limited evidence from vocational institutions that run national affirmative action programs tied to the palm oil industry.

The third gap relates to the special nature of institutions receiving BPDPKS Scholarships. Their employees combine academic and administrative duties with student development and reporting to government bodies, a mix that may produce work-life balance and job satisfaction patterns unlike those in other organizations. A study of how work-life balance and job satisfaction shape employee performance at BPDPKS Scholarship recipient institutions in North Sumatra thus brings novelty in both organizational setting and research object.

In light of the discussion above, the present study has three objectives: (1) to analyze the effect of work-life balance on employee performance, (2) to analyze the effect of job satisfaction on employee performance, and (3) to compare the relative contribution of the two predictors, using effect sizes and the explanatory power of the model, at institutions receiving BPDPKS Scholarships in North Sumatra. The study contributes theoretically by applying the Job Demands-Resources and Social Exchange perspectives to a distinctive organizational setting, and practically by identifying which levers of employee welfare are most closely associated with performance in institutions that carry additional scholarship program duties. Note that BPDPKS is now referred to officially as the Plantation Fund Management Agency (BPDP); the earlier acronym is retained here because it is the one used by the institutions studied.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-Life Balance

Human resource management research pays close attention to work-life balance, since it deals with the way people reconcile the requirements of their jobs with their life outside work. The topic draws growing interest because jobs are getting more complicated, working patterns are changing, and employers expect more flexibility and output from their staff. In essence, work-life balance describes a person who can fulfill work duties while still attending to personal, family, and social needs, an arrangement that supports psychological well-being and makes work more effective (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Haar et al., 2019). Greenhaus et al. (2003) frame work-life balance as how evenly a person is involved in, and satisfied with, both work and non-work roles. Three dimensions make up this idea. Time balance is about dividing one's hours fairly between work and personal life. Involvement balance covers how psychologically engaged the person is in each role, while satisfaction balance captures the person's contentment with work and with life outside it.

From the standpoint of contemporary human resource management, achieving work-life balance does not rest on individuals alone, because organizational policies also play a part. Employees find it easier to balance job and personal demands when they receive organizational support, enjoy flexible work arrangements, work in a healthy culture, and have supportive leaders (Indradewa & Prasetio, 2023; Lockwood, 2003). Organizations that foster such an environment usually see higher satisfaction, engagement, and productivity among their employees. A lack of balance between work and personal life can bring about work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion, job stress, and a poorer quality of work life. In contrast, employees who handle both domains well tend to enjoy a healthier psychological state and to perform at a higher level (Akanji et al., 2020). Yantu and Tantawi (2024) found that work-life balance benefits employee performance, while an imbalance may hold productivity back. Work-life balance matters more and more in vocational higher education, where lecturers and academic staff take on a wide range of tasks: the Tri Dharma of Higher Education (Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi), academic services, mentoring students, administrative duties, and cooperation with industry. Saeed and Farooqi

(2014) showed a link between work-life balance and how satisfied lecturers are with their jobs, whereas Wahyu et al. (2021) reported that it affects both lecturers' satisfaction and their performance through specific pathways. For this reason, work-life balance is a strategic element in developing productive employees who are satisfied with their work.

Empirical studies also link work-life balance to attitudinal and well-being outcomes. Haar et al. (2014) documented associations between work-life balance and job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and mental health across seven cultures, and studies in Indonesian organizations have examined its relationship with job satisfaction in state-owned enterprises, government agencies, and telecommunication firms (Aliya & Saragih, 2020; Amanda Kurniawan et al., 2024; Ratnaningsih & Shabrina, 2019). From the opposite direction, meta-analytic evidence shows that work-family conflict is associated with lower job satisfaction (Soeharto, 2010). Together, these findings suggest that work-life balance and job satisfaction are related yet distinct constructs, which is why both are treated as separate predictors of performance in this study.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a major variable in organizational behavior because it reveals how people evaluate their work and the experiences that come with it. Locke (1976) defines it as a pleasant or positive emotional state arising from a person's assessment of their job and work experiences. From this definition, satisfaction extends beyond material considerations to include psychological ones, such as recognition, relationships with others, chances to grow, and the sense of meaning in one's work. For Robbins and Judge (2019), job satisfaction is a general attitude toward one's job that shows how well employee expectations align with the conditions they actually encounter. Relevant factors include the characteristics of the job, pay, prospects for promotion, the quality of supervision, and relations with coworkers. Employees become more satisfied once the organization meets their expectations in these respects.

Seen through Social Exchange Theory, job satisfaction is essentially how employees react to the treatment and support that the organization gives them. Employees who perceive that the organization cares about their welfare, backs their career growth, and appreciates their contributions are likely to answer with favorable attitudes, namely more satisfaction and commitment (Blau, 1964). Job satisfaction thus acts as a key link between HR management practices and how employees behave at work. A considerable body of empirical research associates job satisfaction with better employee performance. Adhan et al. (2020) established that job satisfaction substantially improves lecturer performance by strengthening organizational commitment. Sembiring et al. (2021) showed that it mediates the effect of individual factors on employee performance, and Ahakwa et al. (2021) concluded that it contributes to stronger organizational commitment as well as better performance. In higher education institutions, the satisfaction of lecturers and administrative staff carries particular weight, as it has a direct bearing on academic service quality. Employees who are satisfied usually show more motivation, offer better service, and feel more responsible for achieving the institution's goals.

The strength and direction of the satisfaction-performance link have been debated for decades. Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985) reported only a modest relationship in their meta-analysis, whereas Judge et al. (2001), using a broader and more refined quantitative review, found a considerably stronger mean relationship and noted that the association may run in both directions, that is, performance can also feed back into satisfaction. Studies in Indonesian organizations likewise treat job satisfaction as a predictor of productivity and performance (Prayudi, 2021; Sembiring et al., 2021). This mixed evidence implies that the size of the satisfaction-performance association depends on context and measurement, and it motivates a careful comparison of effect sizes in the present setting.

Employee Performance

Organizations depend chiefly on employee performance to determine whether tasks were completed successfully and goals achieved. Mangkunegara (2017) describes performance as the

amount and quality of work an employee completes in line with assigned responsibilities. As a result, performance is evaluated not merely by the volume of work finished but also by how good it is and by whether the employee can meet organizational standards. Robbins and Judge (2019) contend that individual performance rests on three main factors: ability, motivation, and opportunity. Ability means an employee's competencies, motivation means the internal and external forces that drive work effort, and opportunity means an organizational setting that allows employees to show what they are capable of.

In HR management research, performance is typically measured using several indicators: work quality, work quantity, timeliness, efficient use of resources, and self-reliance in carrying out tasks (Mangkunegara, 2017; Robbins & Judge, 2019). Taken together, these indicators reflect an employee's ability to produce results that satisfy organizational standards. Performance grows more complex at vocational institutions receiving the BPDPKS Palm Oil Human Resources Scholarship, where it spans the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, academic services, guidance of scholarship students, program administration, and coordination with multiple stakeholders. Boosting employee performance in such settings therefore calls for more than technical competence; psychological factors such as work-life balance and job satisfaction matter as well.

Previous studies confirm that psychological factors and the work environment are strongly connected with employee performance. Ardiansyah and Surjanti (2020) reported that work-life balance lifts employee performance through certain organizational mechanisms, while Turangan et al. (2022) showed that work-life balance and job satisfaction jointly exert a positive effect on it. These results support the view that improving employee performance requires an HR management approach that puts employee well-being and job satisfaction first.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Building on the theoretical review and prior research findings, this study develops a conceptual framework in which work-life balance and job satisfaction are the two predictors of employee performance. Work-life balance is seen as a personal and organizational resource that helps employees cope with the demands of their jobs, which, in the logic of the Job Demands-Resources model, preserves energy, motivation, and focus on work tasks. Job satisfaction is seen as an attitudinal response to the support, recognition, and rewards that the organization provides, which, in the logic of Social Exchange Theory, employees reciprocate with stronger work contributions. The two predictors are expected to be correlated, because employees who can balance work and private life tend to evaluate their jobs more favorably, but each is expected to make its own contribution to performance. The model therefore specifies two direct paths to employee performance and allows the predictors to covary. Mediation (work-life balance to job satisfaction to employee performance) is not part of the model tested in this study. Based on these interrelationships, the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

Guided by the conceptual framework, the underlying theory, and previous research results, this study puts forward the hypotheses below. H1 follows from the Job Demands-Resources perspective: employees who can reconcile work and private life have more resources to meet job demands, and are therefore expected to perform better. H2 follows from Social Exchange Theory: employees who are satisfied with their job, pay, advancement prospects, supervision, and coworkers are expected to reciprocate with better performance.

H1: Employee performance at institutions receiving BPDPKS Scholarships in North Sumatra is positively and significantly affected by work-life balance.

H2: Employee performance at institutions receiving BPDPKS Scholarships in North Sumatra is positively and significantly affected by job satisfaction.

The relative contribution of the two predictors is examined descriptively through effect sizes (f^2) and the explanatory power of the model (R^2); it is not treated as a separate statistical hypothesis, because PLS-SEM provides no separate significance test for a joint effect.

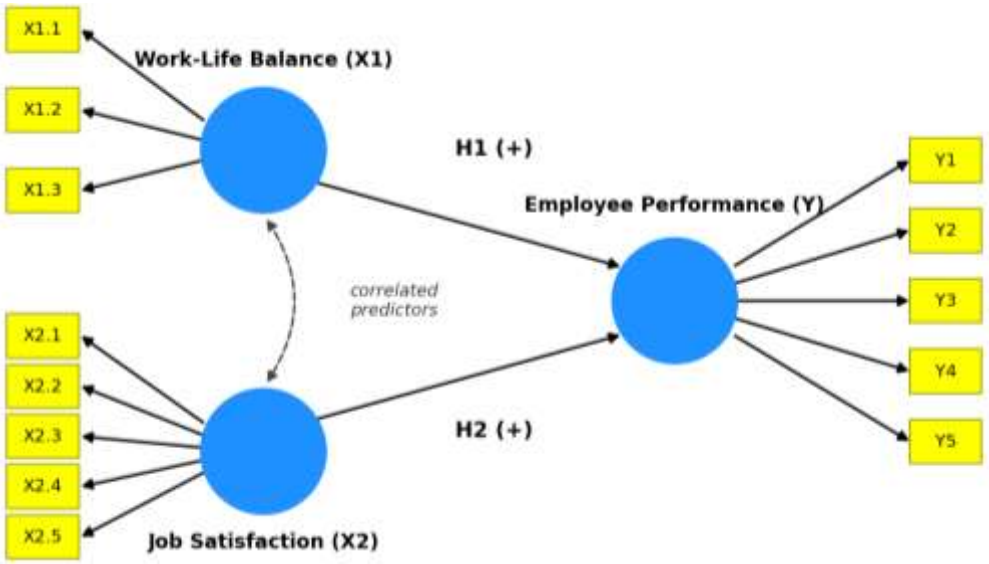


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional explanatory (associative) survey design to test the hypothesized relationships among work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The direction of the hypotheses is derived from theory; the design itself identifies statistical associations and does not establish causality, and the findings are interpreted accordingly. Data were collected at three recipient institutions of the BPDPKS Palm Oil Human Resource Scholarship in North Sumatra, namely the Medan Agricultural Development Polytechnic, the Medan Industrial Chemical Technology Polytechnic, and the Indonesian Palm Oil Technology Institute of Deli Serdang.

Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The population consisted of 165 employees, all of whom are involved in carrying out the BPDPKS Scholarship program at these institutions. Respondents were chosen using proportionate stratified random sampling, with each institution as a stratum, so that the number selected from each institution reflects its share of the total workforce (Table 1). An initial calculation with the Slovin formula at a 5% error tolerance, $n = 165 / (1 + 165 \times 0.05^2)$, gave 117 respondents. Because the Slovin formula was designed for estimating population proportions and ignores statistical power and model complexity, it is not recommended as the sole basis for PLS-SEM sample size (Hair et al., 2022). The adequacy of the sample was therefore verified with two power-based methods.

First, a G*Power 3.1 analysis (Faul et al., 2009) for a multiple regression of the endogenous construct on two predictors (F test, R^2 deviation from zero, $\alpha = 0.05$, medium effect size $f^2 = 0.15$; Cohen, 1988) requires a minimum of 68 respondents for power of 0.80 and 107 for power of 0.95. Second, the inverse square root method (Kock & Hadaya, 2018) shows that, at a 5% significance level and 80% power, a sample of 117 can detect path coefficients of about 0.23 or larger. The sample of 117 therefore exceeds both minimum requirements, and the smallest path coefficient observed in this study (0.424) is well above the detectable threshold.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the population and research sample across three institutions receiving the BPDPKS Scholarship in North Sumatra. The total population consisted of 165 employees, with 117 respondents selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Based on the illustrative allocation, Medan Agricultural Development Polytechnic had 55 employees, with 39 respondents selected; Medan Industrial Chemical Technology Polytechnic had 60 employees, with 43 respondents; and the Indonesian Palm Oil Technology Institute of Deli Serdang had 50 employees, with 35 respondents. This proportional allocation

was designed to ensure that each institution was represented according to its share of the total population, thereby supporting balanced representation in the analysis of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The institution-level figures remain provisional and require verification against actual population and sampling records.

Table 1. Distribution of the Population and Sample by Institution

Institution	Population (N)	Sample (n)
Medan Agricultural Development Polytechnic	55	39
Medan Industrial Chemical Technology Polytechnic	60	43
Indonesian Palm Oil Technology Institute of Deli Serdang	50	35
Total	165	117

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2026.

Instruments and Measurement

The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire comprised 13 measurement items representing three research variables. Work-life balance was measured using three indicators encompassing time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance, adapted from Greenhaus et al. (2003). Job satisfaction was assessed through five indicators covering the nature of work, compensation, promotion opportunities, supervision, and coworker relationships, based on Locke (1976) and Robbins and Judge (2019). Meanwhile, employee performance was measured using five indicators, namely work quality, work quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and independence, referring to Mangkunegara (2017). The operational definitions, measurement indicators, and corresponding item codes are presented in Table 2.

Employee performance was assessed through respondents' self-reported evaluations to obtain consistent measurements across the three participating institutions. This approach enabled the assessment of perceived individual performance using standardized indicators. Nevertheless, self-reported measurements may be susceptible to social desirability bias, response leniency, and common method bias, potentially influencing the estimated relationships among variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012). To assess potential common method bias, the study employed the full collinearity assessment proposed by Kock (2015). The resulting variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.444 to 1.927, remaining below the recommended threshold of 3.3. These findings suggest that severe common method bias was not indicated by the collinearity assessment, although its potential influence cannot be entirely excluded. Furthermore, measurement quality was evaluated using convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability within the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) framework, following Hair et al. (2022).

Data Analysis

The data were processed with Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) through the SmartPLS application Version 4, following the reporting guidelines of Hair et al. (2019, 2022). Analysis took place in two phases. The first evaluated the measurement model (outer model) through convergent validity (outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted, AVE), construct reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion, Fornell & Larcker, 1981; and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio, HTMT, Henseler et al., 2015). The second evaluated the structural model (inner model) through collinearity (inner VIF), the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2 and PLSpredict; Shmueli et al., 2019), and the significance of path coefficients, which was verified through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. Following Kock (2015), full collinearity VIF values below 3.3 were taken to indicate that common method bias is not a serious concern. Effect sizes were interpreted with the benchmarks of 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large) (Cohen, 1988).

Table 2. Operational Definitions of Research Variables

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicator (item code)	Scale
Work-Life Balance (X1)	The extent to which an employee manages to distribute time, involvement, and satisfaction evenly across the work role and the personal or family role.	Time balance (X1.1); involvement balance (X1.2); satisfaction balance (X1.3)	Likert 1–5
Job Satisfaction (X2)	The favorable emotional response employees have after assessing their job and what they experience at work.	The job itself (X2.1); salary/compensation (X2.2); promotions (X2.3); supervision (X2.4); coworkers (X2.5)	Likert 1–5
Employee Performance (Y)	The amount and quality of work results that employees deliver relative to the responsibilities assigned to them.	Quality of work (Y1); quantity of work (Y2); punctuality (Y3); effectiveness (Y4); independence (Y5)	Likert 1–5

Source: Adapted from Greenhaus et al. (2003); Locke (1976) and Robbins and Judge (2019); Mangkunegara (2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Before the structural analysis, the measurement model (outer model) was examined to make sure the indicators capture their constructs accurately and consistently. Three aspects were checked: convergent validity, through outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE); construct reliability, through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability; and discriminant validity, through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). All indicators of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee performance met the required validity and reliability standards, which means the instrument can be used for testing the structural model.

Table 3 shows that the loading factors of all indicators for Work-Life Balance, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance are acceptable for SEM-PLS analysis. The loadings fall between 0.755 and 0.875 for Work-Life Balance, 0.645 and 0.817 for Job Satisfaction, and 0.818 and 0.860 for Employee Performance. Within Job Satisfaction, indicators X2.1 (0.681) and X2.5 (0.645) lie under the ideal cutoff of 0.70, so their retention is examined in the sensitivity analysis reported below Table 4. On the whole, the indicators represent their respective constructs well and fulfill the convergent validity requirement, so the analysis can proceed to the remaining checks of the measurement model. Hair et al. (2022) explain that loadings of 0.70 or higher reflect good convergent validity, and loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 can still be accepted as long as AVE and construct reliability reach the required levels.

According to Table 4, every research variable meets the standards of construct reliability and validity in SEM-PLS analysis. Cronbach's Alpha reaches 0.890 for Employee Performance, 0.789 for Job Satisfaction, and 0.757 for Work-Life Balance, all above the 0.70 minimum, so internal consistency is good for each construct. Composite Reliability (rho_a and rho_c) also exceeds 0.70 for every variable, showing that the indicators within each construct are sufficiently reliable. The AVE values of 0.695 (Employee Performance), 0.543 (Job Satisfaction), and 0.674 (Work-Life Balance) all pass the 0.50 threshold. In other words, each construct captures more than half of the variance in its indicators, and the measurement model satisfies the criteria for convergent validity and construct reliability (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Results of Convergent Validity Test (Outer Loading)

	Employee Performance	Job Satisfaction	Work-Life Balance
X1.1			0.755
X1.2			0.875
X1.3			0.829
X2.1		0.681	
X2.2		0.778	
X2.3		0.750	
X2.4		0.817	
X2.5		0.645	
Y1	0.860		
Y2	0.818		
Y3	0.820		
Y4	0.839		
Y5	0.830		

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026.

Table 4. Results of the Validity and Reliability Test of the Constructs

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Employee Performance	0.890	0.891	0.919	0.695
Job Satisfaction	0.789	0.806	0.855	0.543
Work-Life Balance	0.757	0.769	0.861	0.674

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026.

Because two job satisfaction indicators have loadings below 0.70, a sensitivity analysis was conducted following Hair et al. (2022), who advise deleting an indicator with a loading between 0.40 and 0.70 only if its deletion raises AVE or composite reliability above the required threshold. Table 5 shows the approximate AVE and composite reliability of job satisfaction if X2.1, X2.5, or both were removed. Deleting either indicator would raise AVE only modestly (from 0.543 to between 0.563 and 0.612) and would lower composite reliability (from 0.855 to between 0.825 and 0.843), and both statistics already exceed their thresholds with all five indicators retained. In addition, X2.1 (the job itself) and X2.5 (coworkers) represent distinct facets of job satisfaction in the definition of Robbins and Judge (2019), so deleting them would narrow the content coverage of the construct. Both indicators were therefore retained.

Table 5. Sensitivity of AVE and Composite Reliability of Job Satisfaction to Item Deletion

Indicators retained	AVE	Composite reliability (rho_c)
All five indicators (current model)	0.543	0.855
Without X2.1	0.563	0.836
Without X2.5	0.575	0.843
Without X2.1 and X2.5	0.612	0.825

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Employee Performance	Job Satisfaction	Work-Life Balance
Employee Performance	0.834		
Job Satisfaction	0.554	0.737	
Work-Life Balance	0.563	0.298	0.821

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026. Diagonal values are the square root of AVE.

Discriminant validity was first assessed with the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 6), which requires the square root of each construct's AVE to be larger than its correlations with the other constructs. The square roots of AVE (0.834 for employee performance, 0.737 for job satisfaction, and 0.821 for work-life balance) are all larger than the inter-construct correlations (0.298 to 0.563), so the criterion is met. The correlation between work-life balance and job satisfaction (0.298) is moderate, which supports treating them as related but distinct constructs. Because the Fornell-Larcker criterion is not sensitive enough in some conditions, HTMT was also examined (Table 7).

Table 7. Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Employee Performance	Job Satisfaction	Work-Life Balance
Employee Performance			
Job Satisfaction	0.646		
Work-Life Balance	0.684	0.385	

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026.

Table 7 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. The results indicate that all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85, demonstrating satisfactory discriminant validity among the research constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). Specifically, the HTMT value between Employee Performance and Job Satisfaction is 0.646, while the value between Employee Performance and Work-Life Balance is 0.684. Furthermore, the HTMT value between Job Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance is 0.385, indicating that these two independent variables represent empirically distinct constructs. These findings suggest that each variable measures a conceptually distinct dimension and that the measurement model satisfies the HTMT criterion for discriminant validity. Therefore, all three constructs are considered sufficiently distinguishable and appropriate for further evaluation of the structural model using PLS-SEM.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model (inner model) was assessed to see how strongly the exogenous variables explain the endogenous variable and how the variables in the research model are related. The assessment relied on collinearity statistics (inner VIF), the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2 and PLSpredict), and path coefficients tested through bootstrapping in SmartPLS. Through these, the contribution of work-life balance and job satisfaction to variation in employee performance can be determined, along with whether the hypothesized relationships are positive and significant.

Table 8 shows that the inner VIF values of both predictors are about 1.10, far below the conservative threshold of 3, so collinearity does not distort the path estimates. The full collinearity VIF values of all constructs range from 1.44 to 1.93, below the threshold of 3.3 proposed by Kock (2015), which indicates that common method bias is unlikely to be a serious problem in this data set, although it cannot be ruled out entirely for self-reported data.

Table 8. Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

	Inner VIF (to Employee Performance)	Full collinearity VIF
Work-Life Balance	1.097	1.465
Job Satisfaction	1.097	1.444
Employee Performance		1.927

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026.

Table 9 reports an R-Square of 0.481 and an Adjusted R-Square of 0.472 for Employee Performance. This means that Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction jointly account for 48.1%

of the variation in Employee Performance, whereas the other 51.9% stems from variables not included in the model. Even after adjusting for the number of predictors, the Adjusted R-Square of 0.472 indicates that the independent variables still explain employee performance to a sufficient degree. Hair et al. (2022) categorize R-Square in SEM-PLS by predictive power, with about 0.25 as weak, 0.50 as moderate, and 0.75 as strong. On that basis, an R-Square of 0.481 places the model's ability to predict employee performance from work-life balance and job satisfaction near the moderate level.

Table 9. Coefficient of Determination (R-Square), Effect Size (f^2), and Predictive Relevance

Measure	Value
R-square (Employee Performance)	0.481
R-square adjusted (Employee Performance)	0.472
f^2 Work-Life Balance -> Employee Performance	0.315
f^2 Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.336

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026.

In terms of effect size, the f^2 of work-life balance (0.315) and that of job satisfaction (0.336) are both medium-to-large, close to the benchmark of 0.35 for a large effect (Cohen, 1988). The two values differ only slightly, so neither predictor dominates the other in explaining employee performance. Predictive relevance was assessed with blindfolding and PLSpredict (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Research Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was carried out to identify the effects among the research variables, drawing on the path coefficient, t-statistic, and p-value from SEM-PLS bootstrapping with [5,000] resamples. The results determine whether each hypothesis is supported: the effect of work-life balance on employee performance (H1) and the effect of job satisfaction on employee performance (H2). Support for a hypothesis requires a t-statistic above the critical value (1.96 at the 5% significance level, two-tailed) and a p-value below 0.05.

Table 10 indicates that both hypothesized relationships in the research model are positive and significant. Work-life balance influences employee performance, with an original sample value of 0.437, a t-statistic of 6.822, and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05), so H1 is supported. Job satisfaction also influences employee performance, with an original sample value of 0.424, a t-statistic of 6.993, and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05), so H2 is supported. It follows that higher work-life balance and greater job satisfaction are accompanied by better employee performance at BPDPKS Scholarship recipient institutions in North Sumatra. Taken together, the two predictors explain 48.1% of the variance in employee performance (Table 9); this describes the explanatory power of the model and is not a separate hypothesis test.

Table 10. Hypothesis Testing Results (Path Coefficient)

Hypothesis and path	O	M	STDEV	T statistics	P values	Decision
H1: Work-Life Balance -> Employee Performance	0.437	0.438	0.064	6.822	0.000	Supported
H2: Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.424	0.430	0.061	6.993	0.000	Supported

Source: Data Processing Results, 2026. O = original sample; M = sample mean; STDEV = standard deviation; T statistics = |O/STDEV|.

Discussion

The Influence of Work-Life Balance on Employee Performance

Results of the hypothesis test reveal that work-life balance drives employee performance upward at BPDPKS Scholarship recipient institutions in North Sumatra, supported by a path coefficient of 0.437, a t-statistic of 6.822, and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). The corresponding hypothesis can thus be accepted. Put simply, employees who are better at reconciling job demands with their private lives tend to achieve stronger performance.

Job Demands-Resources Theory offers a theoretical explanation for this outcome, since it argues that the fit between job demands and personal resources determines employees' psychological condition and how they behave at work. People who allocate their time, involvement, and satisfaction sensibly between work and private life usually experience less exhaustion, keep a higher level of motivation, and focus more easily on their tasks. At institutions receiving BPDPKS Scholarships, staff carry academic and administrative loads on top of duties like guiding scholarship recipients, running the program, and liaising with the parties involved. Work-life balance therefore helps employees sustain both their productivity and the quality of their output.

The present findings echo earlier research that links work-life balance to better employee performance. Ardiansyah and Surjanti (2020) reported that work-life balance enhances performance both directly and via particular organizational mechanisms, while Ajayaghosh and Thampi (2020) identified it as a significant predictor of employee performance. Turangan et al. (2022), Adhitarma and Adnyani (2023), and Yantu and Tantawi (2024) likewise documented a favorable effect of work-life balance on performance. Taken together, this evidence indicates that handling work-life balance well is an important strategy for lifting performance, particularly in vocational education organizations that face heavy and varied work demands.

The coefficient of 0.437 and the effect size ($f^2 = 0.315$, close to the large-effect benchmark of 0.35) show that work-life balance is a substantial correlate of performance in this setting, and it is worth asking why the association is this strong. In addition to their core academic and administrative work, employees at the institutions studied take on duties that exist only because of the scholarship program: guiding scholarship recipients, running student dormitories, liaising with palm oil industry partners, compiling accountability reports for BPDPKS and the ministries concerned, and accompanying students during fieldwork placements. From the Job Demands-Resources perspective, such duties add to job demands, often outside regular hours, so the resources that let employees protect personal time and recover, such as balanced schedules and supportive leaders, should matter more here than in organizations with lighter or more standardized workloads. This contextual reasoning is consistent with the results, but the study did not measure scholarship-related workload directly and therefore cannot test it.

The evidence in the literature is not entirely uniform, however. Several studies position job satisfaction as the channel through which work-life balance reaches performance (Herlambang & Murniningsih, 2019; Ningsih & Hermiati, 2023; Wahyu et al., 2021), which implies that part of the effect of work-life balance may be indirect and that a direct path can look smaller once a mediator is modeled. Work-life balance research has also documented its effects most clearly on attitudinal and well-being outcomes, such as job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and mental health (Haar et al., 2014), which are plausible stepping stones toward performance. Because job satisfaction enters this model as a parallel predictor and not as a mediator, the coefficient of 0.437 should be read as the association between work-life balance and performance with job satisfaction held constant, and not as the total effect of work-life balance. Finally, because performance and work-life balance were both self-reported by the same employees, part of the association may reflect shared method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2012), even though the full collinearity test did not signal a serious problem.

The Influence of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance

According to the hypothesis test, job satisfaction pushes employee performance up at institutions receiving BPDPKS Scholarships in North Sumatra. The SEM-PLS analysis yielded a path coefficient of 0.424, a t-statistic of 6.993, and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05), so the hypothesis on the positive and significant effect of job satisfaction is accepted. This suggests that employees perform better when they feel content with their job, their work setting, their relationships with superiors and colleagues, and the rewards they obtain.

Job satisfaction is a psychological factor that determines the way employees respond to their work. Satisfied employees typically display stronger motivation and a greater sense of duty, and they strive to give the organization their best. Social Exchange Theory explains why: when employees sense that the organization notices their needs and offers support and recognition, they return the favor with positive contributions. This matters a great deal at institutions receiving BPDPKS scholarships, because the success of the program hinges not only on systems and policies but also on the dedication with which employees handle academic, administrative, and service tasks for scholarship recipients.

These results are in line with previous studies that treat job satisfaction as a decisive factor in performance improvement. Ahakwa et al. (2021) reported that job satisfaction significantly improves employee performance by increasing organizational commitment, and Adhan et al. (2020) found that it lifts lecturer performance directly as well as through organizational commitment. Sembiring et al. (2021) and Kristine (2017) similarly concluded that job satisfaction adds to better employee performance. Consequently, raising job satisfaction can be seen as a strategic route to stronger performance in higher education.

The coefficient of 0.424 and the effect size (f^2 = 0.336) indicate a medium-to-large association between satisfaction and performance. This is stronger than the mean relationships reported in the two meta-analyses (corrected correlations of roughly 0.17 and 0.30; Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; Judge et al., 2001), although a standardized path coefficient is not strictly comparable to a bivariate correlation. Several explanations are plausible. First, same-source self-report data tend to produce larger associations than designs in which performance is rated by others (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Second, in institutions where employees carry duties beyond their core tasks, the perceived fairness of rewards, recognition, and supervision is likely to weigh heavily on how willingly they invest effort, as Social Exchange Theory would predict. Third, the satisfaction-performance link may run in both directions (Judge et al., 2001): employees who feel they perform well may in turn become more satisfied with their jobs. Because this study is cross-sectional, it cannot separate these directions, so the result is best interpreted as a strong association consistent with, but not proof of, a satisfaction-to-performance effect.

The Relative Contribution of Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

Comparing the two predictors shows that they contribute almost equally to employee performance. The path coefficients (0.437 and 0.424) and the effect sizes (0.315 and 0.336) differ only slightly, and no test of the difference was run, so the data do not support a claim that either predictor is more important than the other. This agrees with Turangan et al. (2022), Rochim (2019), and Adhitarma and Adnyani (2023), who examined both predictors in the same model and found positive relationships with performance. The two predictors are moderately correlated (r = 0.298, Table 6) and show low collinearity (inner VIF of about 1.10), which means each carries its own information about performance largely. Together, they explain 48.1% of the variance in performance, a moderate level, and the remaining 51.9% is attributable to factors outside the model, such as workload, leadership style, compensation, work motivation, and organizational commitment (Adhan et al., 2020; Ahakwa et al., 2021).

Earlier studies suggest that job satisfaction may transmit part of the effect of work-life balance on performance (Herlambang & Murniningsih, 2019; Ningsih & Hermiati, 2023). The moderate correlation between the two predictors here is compatible with such a pathway, but the present model cannot confirm it, because the path from work-life balance to job satisfaction

and the specific indirect effect were not estimated. Testing mediation, with the indirect effect assessed through bootstrapping (Hair et al., 2022), is a logical next step.

From a practical perspective, the similar size of the two effects suggests that institutions should work on both fronts at once. Because scholarship-related duties add to workload, managers could map and distribute these duties more evenly, protect personal time outside peak periods such as reporting deadlines and fieldwork placements, and offer flexible arrangements where academic schedules permit. On the satisfaction side, transparent recognition and rewards for scholarship-related work, clear career paths, and supportive supervision correspond to the facets of job satisfaction measured here. These implications remain tentative given the cross-sectional design.

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion on the effects of work-life balance and job satisfaction on employee performance at BPDPKS Scholarship recipient institutions in North Sumatra lead to the conclusion that each of the two independent variables is associated with stronger employee performance. Analysis with SEM-PLS confirms that both variables have positive and significant effects on employee performance. The study's conclusions can therefore be stated as follows:

1. Employee performance at BPDPKS Scholarship recipient institutions in North Sumatra is positively and significantly enhanced by work-life balance (path coefficient = 0.437). Employees who are more successful in reconciling work with personal life demands achieve higher performance. Those who divide their time, involvement, and satisfaction sensibly between both spheres generally enjoy stronger psychological well-being, so they can complete their tasks more effectively.
2. Job satisfaction likewise raises employee performance positively and significantly at these institutions (path coefficient = 0.424). Satisfaction with the job itself, pay, opportunities for growth, supervision, and relations with coworkers contributes substantially to better work quality and productivity. As employees become more satisfied with their jobs, their performance in supporting institutional goals becomes more optimal.
3. The two predictors make comparable contributions to employee performance (f^2 = 0.315 for work-life balance and 0.336 for job satisfaction) and together explain 48.1% of its variance, a moderate level of explanatory power. Stronger performance thus depends on more than work ability: employees' psychological well-being and their contentment with the work environment also count, while the remaining 51.9% of the variance is attributable to factors outside the model.
4. For human resource management at vocational institutions that implement the BPDPKS Palm Oil Human Resources Scholarship Program, the study suggests treating work-life balance and job satisfaction as part of the strategy for improving employee performance. Flexible work arrangements, a fair distribution of workload, appropriate rewards, and a positive work environment are policy measures that can make program implementation more effective in the long run.
5. The findings are limited by the cross-sectional design, the self-reported performance data, and the sample of three institutions in North Sumatra, so they should be read as associations and not as proof of causality. The mediating role of job satisfaction was not tested; future research should examine it using longitudinal designs, multi-source performance data, and broader samples.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design captures relationships at a single point in time and cannot establish causality or the direction of effects, particularly for the satisfaction-performance link. Second, all variables, including performance, were self-reported by the same respondents, which exposes the results to social desirability and common method bias; the full collinearity test did not signal a serious problem, but it is not a

conclusive test. Third, the sample comes from three institutions in one province and one program context, so generalization to other institutions, sectors, or regions should be cautious, and the pooled analysis does not examine differences between lecturers and administrative staff or among institutions. Fourth, the model explains 48.1% of the variance in performance, and the mediating role of job satisfaction was not tested.

Future research could (a) use longitudinal or multi-wave designs to clarify the direction of effects; (b) combine self-reports with supervisor ratings or official performance records (SKP); (c) test a mediation model (work-life balance to job satisfaction to employee performance) with specific indirect effects; (d) add variables such as scholarship-related workload, leadership, organizational commitment, and engagement; and (e) extend the sample to more institutions and provinces and compare groups, for example lecturers and administrative staff, through multigroup analysis.

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