

SELF-EFFICACY, WORK-LIFE BALANCE, AND PERFORMANCE IN BUREAUCRACY: UNPACKING DIRECT AND MEDIATED PATHWAYS

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ABSTRACT: This study explores how work-life balance and self-efficacy affect employee performance at the Cooperative and SMEs Office of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable. The research offers a clearer view of how these factors influence performance through different channels. Using a saturated sample of 188 civil servants and path analysis, the study finds that self-efficacy improves both job satisfaction and performance. Work-life balance improves performance but does not affect job satisfaction. Job satisfaction helps explain the effect of self-efficacy on performance, but not the effect of work-life balance. These results show that confidence and personal agency play a stronger role than work-life arrangements in driving public employee performance. For managers, this means focusing on self-efficacy development may offer more impact than relying on structural policy changes alone.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance; Self-Efficacy; Job Satisfaction; Employee Performance

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INTRODUCTION

Human capital, as ever, remains the *sine qua non* of institutional vitality—no less true for the Cooperatives and SMEs Office of South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. As globalization gallops and digital disruption rattles old bureaucratic bones, public institutions find themselves pressed to reconcile tradition with transformation (Hodge & Greve, 2017). Amid shifting work modalities, relentless demands for efficiency, and the often-unforgiving pace of civic obligation, the quiet machinery of human resource management must evolve—or risk bureaucratic entropy (Destiana, 2023). Within this crucible, two psychological lodestars—work-life balance and self-efficacy—have come into sharper relief as determinants of performance and satisfaction (Abendroth & den Dulk, 2011).

Yet one must ask: do such constructs retain their potency within the ironclad corridors of public administration? Self-efficacy presupposes a degree of autonomy—an illusion, some might say, within the hierarchies of government service. Similarly, “balance” may ring hollow where workloads swell and institutional rigidity resists accommodation (Yang et al., 2020). Indeed, can one speak of psychological agency in an environment where appraisal systems remain tethered to tenure rather than talent? It is precisely this friction—between the language of modern organizational psychology and the reality of civil service—that demands empirical inquiry (Leka & De Alwis, 2016; White et al., 2003). To transpose theories born in the boardrooms of Silicon Valley onto the offices of local word values without scrutiny would be, at best, naive; at worst, academically negligent.

Still, the psychological underpinnings of performance refuse to be ignored. Work-life balance enables individuals to maintain personal stability while meeting institutional demands—a rare but noble equilibrium (Jang & Zippay, 2011). Self-efficacy, meanwhile, fuels a sense of competence in the face of complexity (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Together, these constructs have been linked to elevated morale, discretionary effort, and that elusive elixir in the public sector: meaningful productivity. In such environments, where service is not only operational but moral, employee well-being takes on an almost civic character.

Consider the South Sulawesi office’s recent triumphs: the facilitation of halal certification for over 800 micro-businesses, a commendable 94.75% performance indicator score, and a largely well-rated civil servant. These figures, while flattering, mask deeper tensions. Retirement, employee transfers, and institutional churn pose continual threats to consistency (Muslim et al., 2019). More subtly, the unmeasured toll of stress, disengagement, or quiet dissatisfaction may one day surface in metrics less forgiving (Colligan & Higgins, 2006). Thus, there is merit in shifting our analytical gaze from the visible to the vital—from spreadsheets to the soul.

This study, then, enters not merely to affirm familiar truths, but to probe the peculiar dynamics at play in a government body both praised and pressured. By examining how work-life balance and self-efficacy relate to job satisfaction and performance within this bureaucratic context, the research extends prevailing theories into less-charted terrain. It offers an academic contribution not through novelty alone, but through relevance: situating psychological inquiry in the often-overlooked realm of local civil administration, and offering insights both for scholars of organizational behavior and for practitioners charged with stewarding institutional performance under the weight of public trust.

THEORETICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Work-life balance, a term often romanticized but rarely understood in its institutional complexity, refers to the individual’s ability to distribute time, energy, and attention across the competing domains of work and personal life (White et al., 2003). Johari et al. (2018) describe it as a deliberate act of balancing professional obligations with personal pursuits such as family, rest, and self-development. Perreault and Power (2023) expand this by emphasizing not only the internal calibration of effort but also the social coordination required to align work demands with external rhythms—households, caregiving roles, and community obligations. When this balance fails, the symptoms do not always appear immediately, but manifest gradually in stress, diminished morale, and erosion of work quality. In public-sector environments, where institutional rigidity and citizen-facing duties often collide with private responsibilities, such imbalance can have systemic consequences (Vasumathi, 2018).

Yet achieving balance is not merely a matter of external conditions; it also depends on how individuals perceive their capacity to manage those conditions. Self-efficacy, in this sense, acts as a psychological fulcrum (Ajzen, 2002). Singh et al. (2019) define it as one's belief in their ability to organize and execute the actions required to meet specific goals. It is not raw confidence, but a calibrated sense of competence shaped by experience and contextual awareness. Individuals with high self-efficacy are not only more resilient to pressure but also more likely to approach complex tasks with sustained effort (Siregar & Syahrizal, 2024). In bureaucratic institutions—where motivation is not always fueled by market incentives—this internal resource becomes critical. It enables public servants to maintain performance under constraints, and to perceive demands not as burdens, but as manageable challenges (Cole, 2011).

Job satisfaction, then, emerges as the emotional and evaluative bridge between internal beliefs and external performance (Yeves et al., 2019). Judge and Robbins (2017) characterize it as a general attitude toward work, formed through the comparison between expected and received rewards. Inegbedion et al. (2020) refine this further by suggesting that job satisfaction is a response to how well one's job aligns with personally valued outcomes—autonomy, recognition, fairness, and purpose. Satisfaction is not a static mood; it is a composite state shaped by work conditions, supervisory relationships, and, crucially, the perceived fit between effort and outcome (Davidescu et al., 2020). In the context of self-efficacy and work-life balance, satisfaction acts both as a consequence and a contributor—formed by personal resources and, in turn, reinforcing the motivation to perform.

Performance, the organizational endpoint, becomes the terrain where these variables materialize into measurable outcomes. Kotlar et al. (2018) define performance as the degree to which individual behaviors align with strategic goals and institutional expectations. Uzkurt et al. (2025) emphasize the procedural element, seeing performance as the execution of duties within predefined constraints of time and standard. In public organizations, however, performance is not merely about efficiency; it is a reflection of trust, accountability, and service quality (Kim, 2012). For institutions such as the Cooperatives and SMEs Office, high employee performance is not just desirable—it is a moral imperative, as it determines the reliability and legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its citizens.

Thus, these four constructs—work-life balance, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and performance—form a conceptual sequence. Balance and belief operate as foundational inputs, shaping the emotional landscape of satisfaction, which then conditions behavioral outcomes in performance. This theoretical model not only clarifies how individual well-being contributes to institutional strength but also invites a deeper inquiry into how public organizations can sustain productivity through psychological investment, rather than procedural control alone.

Hypothesis Development

The interplay between work-life balance, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and performance has long occupied a meaningful place in organizational scholarship. Work-life balance, in particular, is understood not merely as a logistical arrangement but as a structural condition that enables individuals to manage their energy across personal and professional demands. When well-managed, it contributes to psychological stability and higher work engagement. Johari et al. (2018) and Perreault and Power (2023) underscore that balance fosters concentration and resilience, while imbalance breeds fatigue and dissatisfaction. In this light, previous studies (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Waworuntu et al., 2022) have consistently observed a positive link between work-life balance and job satisfaction, especially in public-sector contexts where time autonomy is limited.

Hypothesis 1: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction.

In parallel, self-efficacy operates as a motivational mechanism that shapes how individuals engage with their work. Defined as belief in one's capacity to carry out tasks and overcome obstacles (Singh et al., 2019), self-efficacy influences the emotional tone of work experiences. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to interpret difficulties as surmountable, thus increasing both their satisfaction with work and their persistence in goal achievement. Prior research (Demir, 2020; Setiawan & Frendika, 2023; Mubyl et al., 2023) affirms this association,

noting that self-efficacy fosters positive affective responses toward work and strengthens psychological attachment.

Hypothesis 2: Self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction.

Satisfaction alone is not the final point in this model. It serves as a fulcrum between antecedents and outcomes—most notably, performance. Work-life balance, when achieved, allows employees to bring their full capacities to work without the distraction of unresolved personal strain. This, in turn, supports clearer focus and sustainable effort. Several studies (Wiradendi Wolor, 2020; Roopavathi & Kishore, 2021; Aisyah et al., 2023) support the argument that balance enhances performance. However, empirical inconsistencies remain, as evidenced by Erwina et al. (2024), which reported a null relationship in certain bureaucratic contexts. Such findings warrant further testing within sector-specific environments.

Hypothesis 3: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

Self-efficacy, on the other hand, has repeatedly been shown to correlate with performance outcomes across various organizational forms. Rooted in social cognitive theory (Manjarres-Posada et al., 2020), self-efficacy equips individuals with the mental framework to confront complexity, sustain effort, and recover from failure. The literature (Abun et al., 2021; Eka & Sugiarto, 2022; Erwina et al., 2024) positions it as a predictor of both persistence and precision in task completion—two qualities indispensable for performance in public institutions.

Hypothesis 4: Self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

Job satisfaction, as the emotional consequence of one's professional experience, carries its own direct influence on performance. Satisfied employees demonstrate greater task involvement, higher organizational commitment, and lower withdrawal behavior. Prior findings (Steven & Prasetyo, 2020; Nurrohmah & Lestari, 2021; Augustine et al., 2022) confirm this trajectory, suggesting that satisfaction not only promotes effort but also enhances its quality through emotional investment.

Hypothesis 5: Job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

As the theoretical structure deepens, it becomes necessary to explore mediation effects. In the case of work-life balance, satisfaction may act as a psychological bridge, explaining why balance leads to improved performance in some but not all contexts. While some research (Pratiwi & Fatoni, 2023; Fransiska & Maksum, 2023) confirms this mediating role, others note that balance may impact performance through alternate pathways, such as well-being or stress reduction. Still, the satisfaction-performance path remains one of the most plausible and tested.

Hypothesis 6: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction.

Finally, the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between self-efficacy and performance also deserves attention. Though self-efficacy may independently motivate performance, job satisfaction can amplify this relationship by converting belief into sustained, affectively charged action. Prior research (Wahyuningtyas & Kirana, 2022; Mansur et al., 2023) has identified this chain of influence, particularly in service-oriented sectors where motivation must be sustained over time (also see Figure 2 for model display).

Hypothesis 7: Self-efficacy has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among work-life balance, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and employee performance (see measurement in Table 1). The population comprised all active civil servants (ASN) at the Cooperative and SME Service of South Sulawesi Province, totaling 188 individuals. Given the manageable population size, a saturated sampling technique was used, incorporating the entire population into the analysis.

Data collection relied primarily on structured questionnaires distributed directly to the respondents. These instruments served as the source of primary data, while secondary data were drawn from official documentation provided by the Cooperative and SME Service. To test the proposed structural relationships, the study applied path analysis, allowing for the examination of both direct and mediated effects among the variables under investigation. This methodological approach aligns with the study's objective: to capture not only statistical associations but also the underlying causal logic within the organizational context.

Table 1. Item Measurement

Variable	Code	Items / Constructs	Cite
Work-Life Balance	• WLB1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balance of time • balance of engagement • balance of satisfaction 	(Rizqiyah, 2024)
	• WLB2		
	• WLB3		
	• WLB4		
	• WLB5		
	• WLB6		
	• WLB7		
	• WLB8		
Self-Efficacy	• SE1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty (Level) • Various (general) behaviors • Strength 	(Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017)
	• SE2		
	• SE3		
	• SE4		
	• SE5		
	• SE7		
	• SE8		
Job Satisfaction	• JS1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with the job itself • Satisfaction with salary • Satisfaction with promotion • Satisfaction with supervision • Satisfaction with coworkers 	(Arianti et al., 2020)
	• JS2		
	• JS3		
	• JS4		
	• JS5		
	• JS6		
	• JS7		
	• JS8		
Employee Performance	• EP1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity of Work • Quality of Work • Working time • Cooperation 	(Fajri et al., 2021)
	• EP2		
	• EP3		
	• EP4		
	• EP5		
	• EP6		
	• EP7		
	• EP8		

Table 2 presents the demographic distribution of the 88 civil servants (ASN) participating in the study at the Cooperative and SME Service of South Sulawesi Province. The sample comprised a higher proportion of male respondents (60.22%) compared to female respondents (39.77%), reflecting a gender composition common in certain public-sector institutions. The majority of participants fell within the 31–40 age bracket (44.31%), followed by those aged 41–50 (38.63%), suggesting a workforce concentrated in mid-career stages. Respondents aged 21–30 accounted for 13.63%, while those above 51 years represented the smallest proportion (3.40%).

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Measurement	N	%
Gender	Man	113	60.11
	Woman	75	39.89
Age	21-30 Years	26	13.83
	31-40 Years	83	44.15
	41-50 Years	61	32.45
	> 51 Years	18	9.57
	Diploma	30	15.96
Education Level	Bachelor degree (S1)	130	69.15
	Master (S2)	28	14.89

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

In terms of educational attainment, most employees held a bachelor's degree (76.13%), with smaller proportions reporting a diploma (15.90%) or a master's degree (7.95%). These demographic characteristics are not merely descriptive; they may influence how individuals experience and respond to workplace dynamics. Age, tenure, and educational background have been shown to affect constructs such as work-life balance, perceived efficacy, and satisfaction—particularly within hierarchical and administratively rigid public organizations. As such, these attributes offer a relevant context for interpreting the variance observed in the study's core variables.

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the structural relationships among latent constructs using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The choice of PLS-SEM was theoretically and statistically justified given the model's predictive orientation, the complexity of the proposed structural model, and the reflective nature of the constructs. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was distributed to a purposively selected sample of employees from the Cooperatives and SMEs Service of South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. A total of 188 complete responses were obtained and deemed suitable for analysis.

Measurement items were adapted from established scales in prior literature and operationalized using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to hypothesis testing, reliability and validity assessments were conducted, including internal consistency, convergent validity via average variance extracted (AVE). The structural model was evaluated using SmartPLS 3 software to estimate path coefficients, assess explanatory power (R^2), and test hypotheses through bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 subsamples. This approach enabled a robust assessment of both direct and indirect effects among variables within the proposed theoretical framework.

RESULT

To ensure the robustness of the measurement model, this study conducted a series of validity and reliability tests for each latent construct. As shown in Table 3, all indicator loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, suggesting satisfactory indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2014). Convergent validity was established through average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50 for all constructs, while composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values surpassed the minimum benchmark of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. These results affirm that the constructs—Work-Life Balance, Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance—demonstrate adequate psychometric properties and are suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Notably, the construct of Work-Life Balance demonstrated particularly high internal consistency, reflecting the reliability of its multiple dimensions within the context of employee well-being. Likewise, the indicators for Employee Performance consistently recorded high loadings, supporting the unidimensionality and empirical coherence of the construct. With these measurements validated, the study proceeded to examine the structural relationships among the variables using PLS-SEM techniques.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test

Constructs	Code	Loading	AVE	CR	Alpha
Work-Life Balance	X1.1	0.868	0.775	0.965	0.957
	X1.2	0.813			
	X1.3	0.904			
	X1.4	0.915			
	X1.5	0.934			
	X1.6	0.865			
	X1.7	0.862			
	X1.8	0.753			
Self-efficacy	X2.1	0.715	0.747	0.872	0.830
	X2.2	0.774			
	X2.3	0.801			
	X2.4	0.846			
	X2.5	0.850			
	X2.6	0.888			
	X2.7	0.866			
	X2.8	0.743			
Job Satisfaction	Z1.1	0.738	0.779	0.842	0.771
	Z1.2	0.753			
	Z1.3	0.840			
	Z1.4	0.820			
	Z1.5	0.765			
	Z1.6	0.737			
	Z1.7	0.731			
	Z1.8	0.751			
Employee Performance	Y1.1	0.899	0.751	0.960	0.952
	Y1.2	0.877			
	Y1.3	0.911			
	Y1.4	0.862			
	Y1.5	0.895			
	Y1.6	0.927			
	Y1.7	0.933			
	Y1.8	0.716			

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that all outer loading values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50, demonstrating acceptable levels of item reliability across the constructs. This suggests that the indicators used to measure Work-Life Balance, Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance exhibit strong correlations with their respective latent variables. Consequently, all measurement items are deemed valid and appropriate for inclusion in the subsequent structural model analysis in the hypothesis formulation and the R^2 , as in Table 4.

Table 4. R Square Test

Hypothesis	Effect size	t-value	p-value	Decision
Work Life Balance→job satisfaction	0.151	0.513	0.608	Rejected
Self-efficacy→job satisfaction	0.522	1,984	0.048	Accepted
Work Life Balance→emp. performance	0.409	3,068	0.002	Accepted
Self-efficacy→employee performance	0.451	3,024	0.003	Accepted
Job satisfaction→employee perf.	0.200	3,580	0,000	Accepted
Work Life Balance→job sat.→emp.perf.	0.105	1,833	0.067	Rejected
Self-efficacy→job sat.→empl. perf.	0.540	2,587	0.032	Accepted
Job satisfaction			0.429	
Employee Performance			0.542	

The R-squared value for Job Satisfaction is 0.429, indicating that 42.9% of its variance is explained by Work-Life Balance and Self-Efficacy. Meanwhile, Employee Performance yields an

R-squared value of 0.542, suggesting that 54.2% of its variance is accounted for by Work-Life Balance, Self-Efficacy, and Job Satisfaction. The remaining unexplained variance in both constructs reflects the influence of other potential factors beyond the scope of this model. The results of data processing using PLS can be seen in the Figure 2.

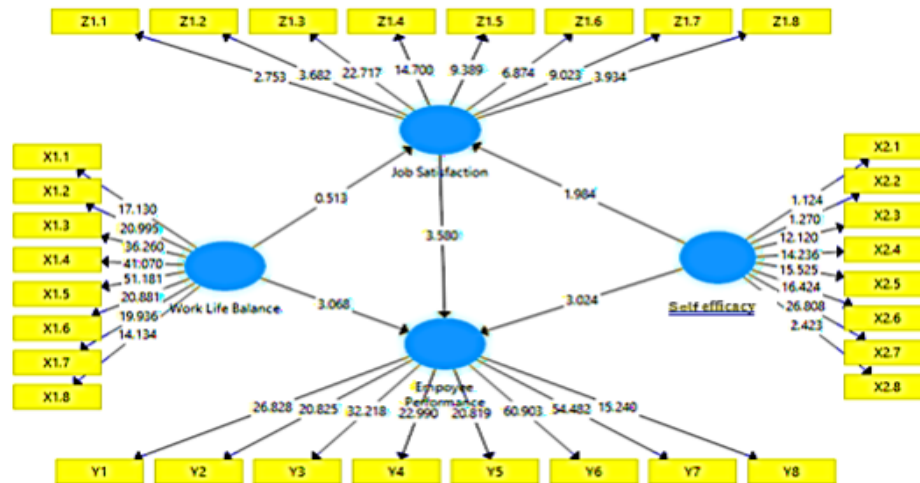


Figure 2. The Bootstrap Presentation

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that work-life balance holds a direct and significant influence on employee performance within the Cooperatives and UMKM Office of South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The hypothesis 1 is therefore accepted. This outcome reinforces the premise that employees who are afforded adequate room to navigate personal obligations—whether familial, recreational, or developmental—tend to approach their professional responsibilities with greater focus and vigor. A well-maintained balance enables individuals to restore cognitive resources, reducing the spillover of personal stress into the professional domain. In such a context, work-life balance does not function merely as a benefit but as a latent force behind sustained performance.

Furthermore, when organizations demonstrate structural support for balance—through leave policies, flexible arrangements, or managerial empathy—employees are more likely to reciprocate with heightened commitment and task ownership (Currie & Eveline, 2011). These findings are consistent with prior studies by Wiradendi Wolor (2020), Roopavathi and Kishore (2021), and Marenden et al. (2021), who observed that when employees have space to fulfill both professional and personal roles, their contributions to organizational objectives become more effective. Aisyah et al. (2023) likewise noted that a well-balanced employee is more likely to demonstrate initiative and innovation, both of which are hallmarks of meaningful performance in service-based bureaucracies.

In parallel, the hypothesis 2 asserting the effect of self-efficacy on employee performance is also accepted. The findings indicate that employees with strong beliefs in their capabilities are more effective in task execution, less deterred by setbacks, and more motivated by intrinsic goals. This aligns with the perspective of Eka and Sugiarto (2022), as well as Ramadhan and Budiono (2023), who suggest that self-efficacy fosters determination, perseverance, and a proactive mindset—all of which translate into enhanced job performance. Self-efficacy, as rooted in Bandura (1969) social cognitive theory, enables employees to exert self-direction, especially when institutional structures are less responsive.

High self-efficacy, in this context, not only contributes to individual output but also enhances the broader work climate. These employees tend to frame workplace obstacles as manageable rather than defeating, creating ripple effects of optimism and resilience among teams (Meterko et al., 2004). Their disposition often promotes knowledge sharing, initiative-taking, and adaptive problem-solving. In line with the findings of Abun et al. (2021), such individuals typically outpace

their peers in performance because they believe they are capable of overcoming complexity and uncertainty—common realities in the public sector.

Conversely, the hypothesis 3 proposing a relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction is rejected. This outcome implies that balance alone does not reliably predict satisfaction among employees at the Cooperatives and UMKM Office. Although work-life balance may mitigate stress, it does not, in this case, generate sufficient affective returns to impact overall job satisfaction. This divergence suggests the presence of more dominant satisfaction drivers—such as career advancement, perceived fairness, and interpersonal dynamics—which may overshadow the emotional benefits of balance. The finding stands in contrast to earlier work by Kasbuntoro et al. (2020), Arief et al. (2021), and Waworuntu et al. (2022), each of whom found balance to be a determinant of satisfaction in various organizational settings.

One plausible interpretation is that in this particular public-sector environment, employees may derive satisfaction more from role clarity, job security, or organizational justice than from flexible working arrangements (Cole, 2011; Crewson, 1997; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Moreover, in bureaucratic institutions, where job enrichment is often constrained by hierarchy, balance may be viewed as a peripheral rather than central component of one's occupational contentment (Abdullah et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the hypothesis 4 stating that self-efficacy influences job satisfaction is accepted. This aligns with the logic that individuals who believe in their capabilities tend to report more positive emotional evaluations of their work. High self-efficacy enables employees to interpret their job roles as opportunities rather than burdens, which strengthens their sense of competence and purpose. These conclusions support previous findings by Setiawan and Frendika (2023), Mubyl et al. (2023), and Suhery et al. (2020), all of whom observed that individuals with strong self-belief tend to report lower stress levels and greater satisfaction due to enhanced control over their tasks and outcomes.

Moreover, self-efficacy appears to enhance adaptive responses to organizational change, which is increasingly relevant in government institutions undergoing digital transformation or regulatory reform. Employees with strong efficacy beliefs are more likely to engage in continuous learning and proactively adjust to new demands, both of which bolster their experience of job satisfaction (Tran et al., 2018). Their capacity to manage complexity, navigate uncertainty, and maintain emotional composure contributes directly to a more fulfilling professional life.

The hypothesis 5 linking job satisfaction to employee performance is also supported by the findings. Employees who feel satisfied with their roles exhibit greater work engagement, organizational loyalty, and a willingness to exceed role expectations. This outcome corroborates prior studies by Steven and Prasetyo (2020), Nurrohmat and Lestari (2021), and Augustine et al. (2022), each of whom emphasized the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes of satisfaction—including improved discipline, initiative, and discretionary effort. Within the public service context, job satisfaction emerges not only as a psychological state but also as a driver of institutional legitimacy and continuity.

Satisfied employees are more likely to act as organizational stewards, showing commitment to long-term goals even amidst operational constraints (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Gendron et al., 2006). When emotional fulfillment aligns with task clarity and recognition, the result is a more cohesive, resilient, and high-performing workforce—one that is crucial in service delivery sectors where citizen expectations are continually rising.

However, the hypothesis 6 positing that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance is rejected. Although balance influences performance directly, it does not do so through the affective mechanism of satisfaction. This finding echoes the argument that balance, in this context, functions more as a structural enabler of efficiency rather than an emotional source of fulfillment. It diverges from prior research by Pratiwi and Fatoni (2023) and Fransiska and Maksam (2023), who had proposed that job satisfaction acts as a bridge between balance and performance outcomes.

In the setting of the Cooperatives and UMKM Office, it appears that even if employees are afforded time to manage life outside work, this does not necessarily translate into greater job contentment. Other factors—such as recognition, fairness, or advancement opportunities—may weigh more heavily on satisfaction (Daniel & Sonnentag, 2016). Hence, while balance remains operationally beneficial, its emotional influence appears to be conditional and context-dependent.

Similarly, the hypothesis 7 suggesting that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and employee performance is also rejected. The findings suggest that self-efficacy influences performance directly, bypassing satisfaction as an intermediary. This distinction implies that employees who are confident in their abilities perform well not because they are satisfied, but because they are intrinsically motivated to succeed. Such individuals are driven by internal standards of excellence rather than contingent emotional states. These findings resonate with Wahyuningtyas and Kirana (2022) and Mansur et al. (2023), who argue that self-efficacy functions as an autonomous motivational system—an internal force that guides behavior irrespective of affective climate. In other words, self-efficacy sustains performance even in the absence of emotional reinforcement. For managers, this insight underscores the need to develop competence-building programs that tap into employees' intrinsic motivation, rather than relying solely on satisfaction-inducing measures.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

This study affirms that work-life balance and self-efficacy play distinct yet consequential roles in shaping employee performance within the Cooperatives and UMKM Office of South Sulawesi Province. While balance between professional and personal life enhances performance directly, it does not appear to influence job satisfaction—suggesting that, in this context, satisfaction is more closely tied to structural or relational factors such as work environment, leadership quality, or organizational culture. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, proves to be a more robust psychological resource, exerting a positive influence on both satisfaction and performance. Moreover, satisfaction is shown to mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and performance, underscoring the importance of internal motivation as a source of both emotional engagement and behavioral output. Notably, the same mediating effect is not observed in the relationship between work-life balance and performance.

As with any empirical inquiry, this study is subject to limitations. The analysis is restricted to a single public agency, and the reliance on cross-sectional, self-reported data calls for caution in drawing causal inferences. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs, broader institutional sampling, and multi-source evaluations to validate these findings. Further exploration into other mediating or moderating variables—such as organizational commitment or perceived fairness—may also provide a richer understanding of how psychological and structural factors interact. Ultimately, the results suggest that in bureaucratic environments, inner conviction—more than outer equilibrium—remains the more reliable engine of sustained performance.

ETHICAL DISCLOSURE

All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation. They were informed about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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