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Research Article

The Effect of Big Five Personality, Happiness at Work, and Self-Efficacy on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable: Evidence from Indonesian Local Government Agencies

Nur Hasyim Utomo[1]*, Santi Suciningtyas[2], Noor Rosyadi[3], Muh Mahbub Djunaidi[4]

[1-4] Master of Management Study Program, Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis ADIAS Pemalang, Indonesia
* Corresponding email : nurhasyim@itbadias.ac.id

Abstract: Employee performance in local government agencies remains a central concern of public sector human resource management, yet evidence on its psychological antecedents in Indonesian district-level bureaucracies is still limited and inconsistent. This study examines the effect of the Big Five Personality, Happiness at Work, and Self-Efficacy on Employee Performance, both directly and indirectly through Work Motivation, at the Manpower Office and the Office of Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Trade of Pemalang Regency. A quantitative approach was applied to 100 civil servants drawn by purposive sampling from a population of 388 employees, using a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire. The data were analysed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4, and the hypotheses were tested using 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The measurement model satisfied all convergent validity, internal consistency, and discriminant validity criteria. The structural model explained 67.5% of the variance in Work Motivation and 72.0% of the variance in Employee Performance, with Q-square values of 0.597 and 0.617 indicating strong predictive relevance. All ten hypotheses were supported: the three exogenous constructs significantly affected both Work Motivation and Employee Performance, Work Motivation significantly affected Employee Performance, and Work Motivation significantly mediated all three indirect paths. Work Motivation emerged as the dominant predictor and the principal transmission mechanism, suggesting that performance programmes in local government should combine person-job fit, workplace well-being, and confidence building with explicit motivational reinforcement.

Keywords: Big Five Personality; Employee Performance; Happiness at Work; Partial Least Squares; Public Sector.

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1. Introduction

Human resource management is a decisive element in building an effective and productive organisation. In public organisations, where outputs take the form of services rather than products, the quality of the workforce translates almost directly into the quality of service received by citizens. Employee performance is commonly understood as the work result achieved by an employee, in both quality and quantity, in carrying out the duties assigned to that employee (Robbins, S. P., & Judge, 2013). At the district level in Indonesia, the performance of civil servants is formally assessed through the Employee Performance Target (*Sasaran Kinerja Pegawai*) mechanism regulated by Ministerial Regulation of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 6 of 2022, which weights work achievement at 60% and work behaviour, expressed through the ASN core values, at 40%.

Measuring performance, however, is only the visible end of a longer causal chain. Performance is not a static entity but a process that can be observed at the level of inputs, throughputs, and outputs (Brudan, 2010), and it is shaped by individual characteristics that

formal appraisal systems do not capture. Three such characteristics have received sustained attention in the organisational literature: personality structure, affective experience at work, and self-belief about task capability.

The Big Five Personality model, comprising openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, is the most widely adopted personality framework in human resource research (McCrae, R. R., & Costa, 2013). Personality is an internal attribute that shapes how a person thinks, behaves, and interacts at work. A mismatch between an employee's personality and the assigned job imposes costs on both the institution and the individual, in the form of low productivity, absenteeism, and retraining expenditure caused by turnover. Happiness at Work refers to the positive psychological state experienced while working and covers job satisfaction, work engagement, and affective commitment (Fisher, 2010). Employees who are happy at work are more productive, more creative, absent less often, and deliver better service. Self-efficacy, drawn from social cognitive theory, is the belief an individual holds about their capacity to execute the actions required to attain a given goal (A. Bandura, 1997). Employees with high self-efficacy are more confident, more persistent in the face of difficulty, and more result-oriented, which is directly relevant in a bureaucracy where policy requirements change frequently and public demands are heterogeneous.

Preliminary observation at the Manpower Office and at the Office of Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Trade of Pemalang Regency revealed a marked dispersion of performance among employees. Some employees showed high work morale, took the initiative in serving the public, and completed work in line with the targets set, while others appeared poorly motivated, passive, and unable to cope with changes in the working environment. This dispersion coexists with an aggregate appraisal record that is uniformly positive: throughout 2025, both agencies recorded work result ratings and work behaviour ratings in the category *meets expectations* for all four quarters, with an annual performance predicate of *good*. The contrast between uniform formal ratings and visibly uneven day-to-day performance is itself a practical problem. It suggests that the appraisal instrument does not discriminate well between employees, and it makes the psychological antecedents of performance a more informative object of study than the appraisal score itself.

A second motivation for this study is empirical rather than practical. Prior research on the three antecedents reports conflicting findings. Positive and significant effects on employee performance have been reported for the Big Five Personality by Eshete, Debela, and Kebede (2025), for Happiness at Work by Tias and Ekowati (2025), and for self-efficacy by Putri and Maimun (2024). Non-significant effects have been reported for the same three relationships by Yusuf (2021), Algarni and Alemeri (2023), and Menno and Timuneno (2026) respectively. The persistence of this disagreement across broadly comparable designs suggests that a direct-effect specification may be incompletely specified, and that an intervening mechanism is being omitted. Work Motivation is the candidate mechanism examined here: personality, workplace happiness, and self-belief plausibly operate first on the willingness to exert effort, and only then on realised performance.

This study therefore makes four contributions. First, it tests an integrated model in which the Big Five Personality, Happiness at Work, and Self-Efficacy affect Employee Performance both directly and indirectly through Work Motivation, rather than testing the three antecedents in isolation as most prior work does. Second, it addresses the contradictory findings identified above by quantifying the indirect paths, which allows a significant total effect to be distinguished from a significant direct effect. Third, it locates the model in Indonesian district-level public administration, a setting that is under-represented relative to private sector samples. Fourth, it draws on two agencies simultaneously rather than one, which broadens the description of relationships within local bureaucracy. The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the theoretical foundations and develops the hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research method. Section 4 reports the measurement and structural model results and discusses them. Section 5 compares the findings with prior studies, and Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Theoretical Foundation

The model is anchored in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which holds that behaviour is preceded by behavioural intention, and that intention is formed by attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Applied here, the stable dispositions captured by the Big Five shape the attitudes and control perceptions that precede productive work behaviour, while Work Motivation is the proximate expression of intention. Three supporting theories account for the individual constructs. Social cognitive theory (Albert Bandura, 2012) explains self-efficacy as a cognitive determinant of activity choice, effort level, and persistence. Positive psychology theory (Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) frames Happiness at Work as a psychological resource that enables optimal functioning rather than merely the absence of dissatisfaction. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) explains Work Motivation as a product of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, and thereby supplies the reason why favourable dispositions and affective states should translate into effort.

Big Five Personality, Work Motivation, and Employee Performance

Personality is among the internal factors most consistently associated with individual performance. The five dimensions reflect patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotional style that bear directly on how a task is executed. Conscientious employees display greater dedication and responsibility, while employees low in neuroticism are more emotionally stable and better able to work under pressure. Eshete et al. (2025) confirm the Big Five as a strong predictor of organisational performance, with conscientiousness and emotional stability contributing most. The same dispositions also plausibly precede motivation: stable, open, and responsible employees are better able to set goals and to persist when the work becomes difficult, which is the behavioural content of motivation rather than of performance as such.

H1: The Big Five Personality has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.

H2: The Big Five Personality has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation.

Happiness at Work, Work Motivation, and Employee Performance

Happiness at Work denotes the positive psychological condition experienced during work, marked by comfort, pride, recognition, and harmonious working relationships (Pryce-Jones, 2010). Engaged employees work hard and think positively, completing tasks faster and taking on more of the surrounding work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Mechanistically, happiness at work generates positive affect, which makes employees more open to challenge, more creative in problem solving, and more committed to organisational goals; each of these is a manifestation of motivation, and motivation in turn yields measurable output in terms of work quality, quantity, timeliness, and autonomy. In public service delivery, a high level of workplace happiness is expected to produce more efficient and higher-quality service.

H3: Happiness at Work has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.

H4: Happiness at Work has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation.

Self-Efficacy, Work Motivation, and Employee Performance

Self-efficacy is the belief an individual holds about their own capability to complete a task and reach a goal. It is a robust predictor of behaviour across domains (Albert Bandura, 2012), (Peterson, 2020) and has been shown to raise work performance through intrinsic work motivation (Çetin, F., & Aşkun, 2018). Employees low in self-efficacy give up easily, hesitate in decision making, and avoid novel or complex situations. In the bureaucratic environment of the two agencies studied here, where policy dynamics shift and public demands vary, self-efficacy is expected to bear on the successful execution of duties both directly and by raising outcome expectancy, goal level, and effort persistence, which are core components of work motivation.

H5: Self-Efficacy has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.

H6: Self-Efficacy has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation.

Work Motivation as Predictor and Mediator

Work motivation is the set of internal and external drives that direct an employee's effort toward organisational goals (Rivai, 2015). The higher the motivation, the more likely it is that optimal performance will be reached. Positioning motivation as a mediator follows from the three preceding arguments: dispositions, affective states, and self-belief are relatively distal to output, whereas the willingness to exert effort is proximate to it. Agustien et al. (2020) tested this mediation directly and found that work motivation mediates the relationship between happiness at work and employee performance in a government agency, a setting closely comparable to the present one. (Dewi, I Made Wahyu Chandra Satriana, 2021) reported the equivalent result for self-efficacy using PLS-SEM in a provincial government office. Frohlich et al. (2025) support the same mechanism by showing that happiness at work acts as a resource that activates engagement and thereby raises adaptive performance.

H7: Work Motivation has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.
H8: Work Motivation mediates the effect of the Big Five Personality on Employee Performance.
H9: Work Motivation mediates the effect of Happiness at Work on Employee Performance.
H10: Work Motivation mediates the effect of Self-Efficacy on Employee Performance.

3. Research Method

Research Design, Population, and Sample

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional design. Primary data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire capturing respondent perceptions of Employee Performance, the Big Five Personality, Happiness at Work, Self-Efficacy, and Work Motivation. The research was conducted between May and June 2026 at the Manpower Office of Pemalang Regency and the Office of Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Trade of Pemalang Regency. The population comprised 388 employees holding civil servant (PNS) and government contract (PPPK) status across the two agencies.

The minimum sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a tolerated margin of error of 0.1:

$$n = N / (1 + N e^2) = 388 / (1 + 388 \times 0.1^2) = 79.44$$

The calculation yields 79.44 respondents, which was rounded up to 100 to improve estimation stability. Respondents were selected by purposive sampling against three criteria: the respondent is not a head of agency, holds at least a senior secondary education qualification, and has more than one year of service. All 100 distributed questionnaires were returned and usable, giving a response rate of 100%.

Formatting of Mathematical Components

All constructs were measured reflectively on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree or very dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly agree or very satisfied). The indicators for each construct and their sources are set out in Table 1. Questionnaires were distributed through an online form, and the instrument was preceded by subject determination and instrument validation, with direct interviews used to clarify the working context.

Table 1. Constructs, indicators, and measurement sources.

Construct	Code	Indicators	Source
Big Five Personality (X1)	X1_1–X1_5	Openness; conscientiousness; extraversion; agreeableness; neuroticism	McCrae & Costa (2013)
Happiness at Work (X2)	X2_1–X2_7	Pride; trust; recognition; support; achievement; personal growth; positive relationship	Pryce-Jones (2010)
Self-Efficacy (X3)	X3_1–X3_5	Confidence; command; adaptability; effectiveness; positive attitude	Rigotti et al. (2008)
Work Motivation (Z)	Z_1–Z_4	Promotion; achievement; reward; recognition	Rivai (2015)
Employee Performance (Y)	Y_1–Y_5	Quality; quantity; timeliness; cost-effectiveness; interpersonal impact	Renyut et al. (2017)

Source: primary data processed (2026).

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling in SmartPLS 4. PLS-SEM was chosen because the model is complex, contains a mediating construct, and rests on a modest sample, conditions under which a variance-based estimator is preferable to a covariance-based one. Analysis proceeded in two stages. The measurement model was assessed for convergent validity, requiring outer loadings of at least 0.70 and average variance extracted (AVE) of at least 0.50 (Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, 2022) for internal consistency, requiring Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability of at least 0.70 (Ghozali & Latan, 2015); and for discriminant validity using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio, with values below 0.85 indicating that two constructs are empirically distinct (Henseler et al., 2015). Collinearity was screened using the variance inflation factor (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

The structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination R-square, classified as substantial at 0.67, moderate at 0.33, and weak at 0.19 (Lai et al., 2020) predictive relevance Q-square obtained by blindfolding, where values above zero indicate predictive relevance (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974); effect size f-square, classified as large at 0.35, medium at 0.15, and small at 0.02 (Cohen, 1988); and model fit assessed through SRMR, for which values below 0.08 indicate very good fit, and NFI, for which values approaching 0.90 indicate good fit. Hypotheses were tested by bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. A hypothesis was accepted where the absolute t-statistic reached 1.96 or above and the p-value fell below 0.05 on a two-tailed test, with mediation additionally requiring a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval that excludes zero.

4. Results and Discussion

Figures and Tables

The demographic composition of the 100 respondents is presented in Table 2. Women make up 62% of the sample. The educational profile is dominated by bachelor's degree holders at 64%, and the age distribution is concentrated in the 41–50 band at 49%, followed by the 51–60 band at 33%. The sample therefore consists largely of mid-to-late career employees with substantial service experience, which is characteristic of district civil service in Indonesia and should be borne in mind when generalising the findings to younger workforces.

Table 2. Respondent profile (n = 100).

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	62	62%
	Male	38	38%
Education	Diploma 3 and 4	14	14%
	Bachelor's degree	64	64%
	Master's degree	17	17%
	Doctoral degree	5	5%
Age	20–30 years	7	7%
	31–40 years	11	11%
	41–50 years	49	49%
	51–60 years	33	33%

Source: primary data processed (2026).

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 3 reports the outer loadings of all 26 indicators. Every loading exceeds the 0.70 threshold, and in fact all loadings fall above 0.90, indicating that each indicator reflects its latent construct strongly. No indicator required deletion.

Table 3. Outer loadings of the research indicators.

Construct	Indicator	Outer loading	Construct	Indicator	Outer loading
X1	X1_1	0.920	X2	X2_6	0.911
	X1_2	0.916		X2_7	0.918
	X1_3	0.902	Y	Y_1	0.940
	X1_4	0.917		Y_2	0.940
	X1_5	0.935		Y_3	0.920
X2	X2_1	0.924		Y_4	0.924
	X2_2	0.926		Y_5	0.928
	X2_3	0.932	Z	Z_1	0.942
	X2_4	0.908		Z_2	0.958
	X2_5	0.914		Z_3	0.962
X3	X3_1	0.917		Z_4	0.935
	X3_2	0.906			
	X3_3	0.925			
	X3_4	0.919			
	X3_5	0.902			

All loadings satisfy the criterion of ≥ 0.70. Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Table 4 reports internal consistency and convergent validity at construct level. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.951 to 0.969 and composite reliability from 0.962 to 0.974, both far above the 0.70 minimum. AVE ranges from 0.835 to 0.902, meaning every construct explains more than 83% of the variance of its own indicators. Work Motivation records the highest AVE at 0.902.

Table 4. Construct reliability and average variance extracted.

Code	Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
X1	Big Five Personality	0.953	0.964	0.843
X2	Happiness at Work	0.969	0.974	0.845
X3	Self-Efficacy	0.951	0.962	0.835
Y	Employee Performance	0.961	0.970	0.865
Z	Work Motivation	0.964	0.973	0.902
Criterion	—	≥ 0.70	≥ 0.70	≥ 0.50

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio in Table 5. Correlations among the three exogenous constructs are low, from 0.111 for X1 with X3 to 0.409 for X1 with X2, confirming that personality, workplace happiness, and self-efficacy are conceptually and empirically distinct. Ratios involving the endogenous constructs range from 0.488 to 0.847. The highest value, between Work Motivation and Employee Performance, remains below the 0.85 threshold, although the narrow margin indicates that the two constructs are strongly related and should be interpreted as closely coupled but separable.

Table 5. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) matrix.

Construct	X1	X2	X3	Y	Z
X1	—				
X2	0.409	—			
X3	0.111	0.340	—		
Y	0.589	0.704	0.493	—	
Z	0.648	0.690	0.488	0.847	—

Criterion: HTMT < 0.85. Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Structural Model Assessment

Figure 1 presents the estimated model produced by SmartPLS 4, showing the constructs, their indicators, and the structural paths obtained through bootstrapping.

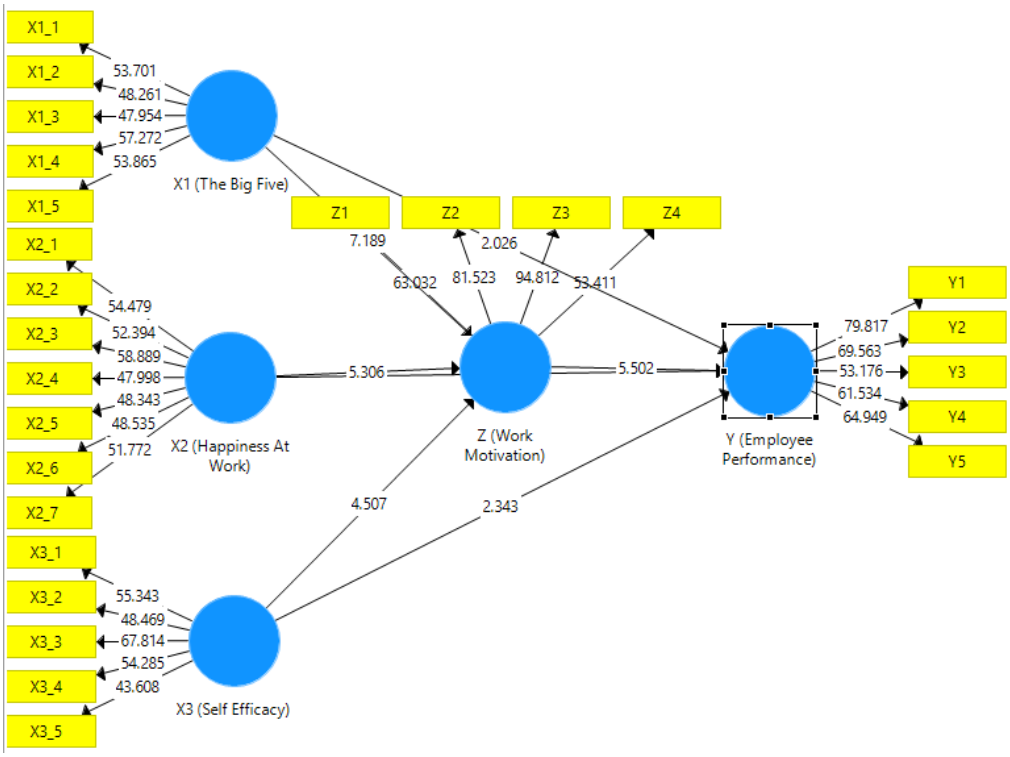


Figure 1. Bootstrapping results of the structural model (SmartPLS 4 output).

Table 6 combines the coefficient of determination and predictive relevance. The three exogenous constructs explain 67.5% of the variance in Work Motivation; adding Work Motivation raises the explained variance in Employee Performance to 72.0%. Both values fall in the substantial category under the Chin (1998) classification. Q-square values of 0.597 for Work Motivation and 0.617 for Employee Performance are well above zero, so the model has strong predictive relevance for both endogenous constructs and is suitable as a basis for hypothesis testing.

Table 6. Coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Endogenous construct	Predictors	R^2	Category	Q^2	Relevance
Work Motivation (Z)	X1, X2, X3	0.675	Substantial	0.597	High
Employee Performance (Y)	X1, X2, X3, Z	0.720	Substantial	0.617	High

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Effect sizes in Table 7 clarify where the explanatory work is being done. On the path to Employee Performance, the three exogenous constructs contribute only small individual effects, from 0.044 for the Big Five Personality to 0.121 for Happiness at Work, while Work

Motivation contributes a medium effect of 0.275, the largest of the four. On the path to Work Motivation the pattern reverses: the Big Five Personality contributes a large effect of 0.483, Happiness at Work a large effect of 0.375, and Self-Efficacy a medium effect of 0.235. The three antecedents therefore do most of their work on motivation rather than on performance directly, which is the pattern a mediated specification predicts.

Table 7. Effect size (f^2).

Predictor	Endogenous construct	f^2	Category
X1	Y	0.044	Small
X2	Y	0.121	Small
X3	Y	0.056	Small
Z	Y	0.275	Medium
X1	Z	0.483	Large
X2	Z	0.375	Large
X3	Z	0.235	Medium

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Model fit indices are reported in Table 8. SRMR of 0.045 for both the saturated and the estimated model is below the 0.08 threshold and therefore indicates very good fit. The d_ULS and d_G discrepancies are 0.700 and 0.690 respectively. NFI of 0.894 approaches but does not quite reach the conventional 0.90 benchmark, and the chi-square value of 365.619 should be read with caution given its sensitivity to sample size. Taken together, and with SRMR carrying the most weight, the model fit is acceptable.

Table 8. Model fit indices.

Index	Saturated model	Estimated model	Criterion
SRMR	0.045	0.045	< 0.10 good; < 0.08 very good
d_ULS	0.700	0.700	Smaller is better
d_G	0.690	0.690	Smaller is better
Chi-square	365.619	365.619	Smaller is better; sample-sensitive
NFI	0.894	0.894	Approaching 1; ≥ 0.90 good fit

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Hypothesis Testing

Direct effects are reported in Table 9. All seven direct paths are positive and significant at the 5% level, so H1 through H7 are supported. The strongest direct path is Work Motivation to Employee Performance at $\beta = 0.487$, followed by the Big Five Personality to Work Motivation at 0.435 and Happiness at Work to Work Motivation at 0.402. The three direct paths to Employee Performance are comparatively modest, ranging from 0.148 to 0.248.

Table 9. Direct effects.

Hyp.	Path	β	SE	t-statistic	p-value	95% CI	Decision
H1	X1 → Y	0.149	0.071	2.095	0.037	[0.013; 0.288]	Supported
H2	X1 → Z	0.435	0.059	7.367	0.000	[0.312; 0.542]	Supported
H3	X2 → Y	0.248	0.069	3.587	0.000	[0.119; 0.378]	Supported
H4	X2 → Z	0.402	0.073	5.513	0.000	[0.242; 0.534]	Supported
H5	X3 → Y	0.148	0.064	2.305	0.022	[0.024; 0.272]	Supported
H6	X3 → Z	0.295	0.063	4.678	0.000	[0.175; 0.416]	Supported
H7	Z → Y	0.487	0.082	5.943	0.000	[0.311; 0.638]	Supported

X1 = Big Five Personality; X2 = Happiness at Work; X3 = Self-Efficacy; Z = Work Motivation; Y = Employee Performance. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Indirect effects are reported in Table 10. Mediation type was judged using the variance accounted for criterion, with full mediation above 80%, partial mediation between 20% and 80%, and no mediation below 20% (Hair et al., 2014). All three indirect paths are significant, with confidence intervals that exclude zero, so H8, H9, and H10 are supported. Because the corresponding direct paths in Table 9 are also significant, the pattern is one of complementary partial mediation rather than full mediation: each antecedent reaches performance both on its own and through motivation.

Table 10. Indirect effects.

Hyp.	Mediation path	β indirect	SE	t-statistic	p-value	95% CI	Decision
H8	X1 → Z → Y	0.209	0.046	4.533	0.000	[0.123; 0.300]	Supported
H9	X2 → Z → Y	0.196	0.046	4.252	0.000	[0.103; 0.284]	Supported
H10	X3 → Z → Y	0.142	0.041	3.462	0.001	[0.068; 0.225]	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 output (2026).

Discussion

The finding that the Big Five Personality raises Employee Performance indicates that the better an employee's personality profile, expressed in emotional stability, openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion, the better the performance observed. A favourable personality profile helps employees adapt to job demands, cooperate with colleagues, and handle pressure with greater maturity. The practical implication is that agencies able to place employees in line with their dispositional characteristics will find performance improvement easier to achieve. The parallel effect on Work Motivation shows that personality also shapes how strongly an employee is driven to work, because stable, open, and responsible employees are better equipped to set goals and to persist against obstacles.

Happiness at Work shows the largest direct effect on performance among the three antecedents. Employees who feel happy at work display greater enthusiasm, emotional involvement, and positive attitude in completing their tasks. Its effect on motivation is similarly strong: when employees feel valued, hold positive working relationships, and enjoy the work itself, their drive increases. Self-Efficacy produces significant but comparatively smaller coefficients on both endogenous constructs. Employees confident in their own capability are more persistent and less easily discouraged by demanding tasks, and they tend to set more challenging targets and work harder to reach them. The smaller magnitude suggests that in this bureaucratic setting, where task structures and procedures are largely prescribed, individual confidence has less room to alter output than affective and dispositional factors do.

Work Motivation is the strongest single predictor of Employee Performance and carries the largest effect size on that path. Strongly motivated employees work with greater focus, discipline, and target orientation. The mediation results complete the picture. Work Motivation significantly transmits the effect of all three antecedents, which means the influence of personality, workplace happiness, and self-belief on performance is not exclusively direct. Read together with the effect sizes in Table 7, where the three antecedents exert large or medium effects on motivation but only small effects on performance, the evidence indicates that motivation is the principal route through which these psychological factors reach output. Efforts to raise employee performance at the two agencies will therefore be more effective if strategies for strengthening motivation accompany attention to personality fit, workplace happiness, and self-efficacy.

One descriptive result deserves comment alongside the structural findings. Mean scores on all five constructs cluster near the midpoint of the scale, with Employee Performance averaging 3.014 across its five indicators and the lowest item being the ability to complete work against set targets. This sits uneasily with the uniformly positive formal appraisal record described in Section 1, and reinforces the interpretation that the appraisal instrument compresses genuine variation. Perceptual data of the kind collected here appear to discriminate more finely than the administrative rating does.

5. Comparison with Prior Studies

The results can be positioned against the divergent prior findings that motivated this study. Table 11 summarises that comparison. For all three antecedents, this study reproduces the positive and significant direct effect reported by one group of prior studies and does not reproduce the null effect reported by the other.

Table 11. Comparison with prior findings on the three direct effects.

Relationship	Positive finding in prior work	Null finding in prior work	This study
Big Five Personality → Employee Performance	Eshete et al. (2025)	Yusuf (2021)	Positive and significant (β = 0.149; p = 0.037)
Happiness at Work → Employee Performance	Tias & Ekowati (2025)	Algarni & Alemeri (2023)	Positive and significant (β = 0.248; p = 0.000)
Self-Efficacy → Employee Performance	Putri & Maimun (2024)	Menno & Timuneno (2026)	Positive and significant (β = 0.148; p = 0.022)

Source: primary data processed (2026).

Two observations follow. First, the direct coefficients obtained here are small, between 0.148 and 0.248, even though they are statistically significant. Studies that omit a motivational mediator and work with smaller samples or less homogeneous respondents may plausibly fail to detect effects of this magnitude, which offers one explanation for the null results in the literature without requiring that those studies be considered erroneous. Second, the indirect coefficients in Table 10 are of comparable size to the direct ones, and in the case of the Big Five Personality the indirect effect of 0.209 exceeds the direct effect of 0.149. A specification that tests only the direct path therefore discards roughly half of the total effect. This is the substantive contribution of the present model relative to the comparison studies: it does not merely add a third variable, it relocates most of the explanatory weight to a path the earlier designs could not observe.

Relative to the mediation studies that do exist, the findings are consistent with Agustien et al. (2020) for happiness at work and with Satria (2022) for self-efficacy, both conducted in Indonesian government agencies. The present study extends that evidence by testing the three antecedents simultaneously within one model and across two agencies, which permits the relative contribution of each to be compared rather than inferred across separate studies.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the effect of the Big Five Personality, Happiness at Work, and Self-Efficacy on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as a mediating variable among 100 employees of the Manpower Office and the Office of Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Trade of Pemalang Regency. All ten hypotheses were supported. The three antecedents significantly raise both Work Motivation and Employee Performance; Work Motivation significantly raises Employee Performance and is the dominant predictor of it; and Work Motivation significantly mediates all three indirect paths, producing complementary partial mediation. The model explains 67.5% of the variance in Work Motivation and 72.0% of the variance in Employee Performance, with strong predictive relevance on both.

Theoretically, the results support the Theory of Planned Behaviour as an account of how dispositional characteristics form the intentions that precede productive work behaviour, and they support positive psychology theory, social cognitive theory, and expectancy theory as explanations of the individual constructs. The distinctive theoretical contribution is the demonstration that the three antecedents act on performance mainly through motivation rather than independently of it, which offers a parsimonious explanation for the contradictory direct-effect findings in the prior literature.

Practically, the findings suggest an integrated rather than a piecemeal approach. Agencies should attend to person-job fit in recruitment, placement, and development, since stable, open, and orderly employees work more effectively. They should raise happiness at work by extending trust, rewarding achievement appropriately, supporting self-development, and cultivating positive working relationships. They should build self-efficacy by exposing employees to graduated challenge, giving constructive feedback, and supporting competence development, with particular attention to persistence in completing tasks. Above all, because work motivation is both the dominant predictor and the mediating mechanism, agencies should

sustain it deliberately through transparent promotion systems, recognition of achievement and contribution, and career development opportunities.

Five limitations bound these conclusions. The study covers two agencies, so the findings are not directly generalisable to all government organisations. The data are perceptual and self-reported, which admits subjectivity and common method variance. Other plausible determinants of performance were not modelled, including leadership style, compensation, work environment, workload, organisational culture, work discipline, and career development. The cross-sectional design captures a single point in time and cannot describe how perceptions change. Finally, Work Motivation is the only mediator tested, so other transmission mechanisms remain possible. Future research should therefore extend the model to additional agencies and sectors, add organisational and leadership-level variables, adopt longitudinal or multi-source designs that separate the measurement of antecedents from that of performance, and test alternative mediators such as work engagement or affective commitment alongside work motivation.

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