

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF WORK–LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT ON WORK MOTIVATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN INDONESIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY

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Abstract

This study investigates the direct and indirect influence of Work–Life Balance (WLB) and Career Development (CD) on Work Motivation (WM) among employees in the Indonesian public sector, specifically at the Regional Revenue Agency (BAPENDA) of Malang Regency. The research aims to clarify the mixed empirical findings regarding the determinants of public-sector motivation and to provide practical implications for Human Resource Management (HRM) policies. A quantitative explanatory research design was employed, using a survey-based approach with a saturated sample of 192 BAPENDA Malang Regency employees (54% female, 74% with undergraduate degrees). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and the hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM). Descriptive analysis revealed a highly positive organizational climate, with all three variables (WLB, CD, and WM) rated as "High" to "Very High." Career Development recorded the highest mean score (4.4611). The structural modeling results showed that WLB is the most powerful determinant of Work Motivation, explaining the psychological stability and emotional energy needed for sustained enthusiasm. Career Development also significantly influences WM but plays a more modest, supplementary role. Crucially, the analysis confirmed a partial mediation effect, indicating that the positive impact of Career Development on motivation is partially channeled through employees' perceptions of Work–Life Balance. This study provides robust empirical evidence from a scarce context—Indonesian regional government institutions—where motivational patterns often differ due to bureaucratic rigidity and formalized structures. It underscores that for strategic HRM improvements in the public sector, the most effective approach is a dual emphasis on protecting daily well-being (WLB) and cultivating meaningful opportunities for growth (CD). The findings highlight that WLB should be

prioritized as a prerequisite for maximizing the motivational benefits of career development initiatives

Keywords: Work Motivation; Work–Life Balance (WLB); Career Development (CD); Public Sector Employees; Partial Mediation

1. INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations in developing countries are increasingly confronted with the challenge of enhancing employee motivation while maintaining high levels of service performance. As government agencies expand their administrative responsibilities, employees are required to manage heavier workloads, more complex tasks, and rapid organizational changes. These pressures often affect employees' work–life balance (WLB), which has been widely recognized as a determinant of psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and work motivation. Previous studies have shown that balanced work arrangements can reduce stress, improve employee engagement, and support sustainable performance outcomes, particularly in highly regulated environments such as government institutions.

Career development is another key factor influencing employee motivation in public sector organizations. Structured promotion systems, competency-based training, and transparent career pathways have been identified as essential components that shape employees' perceptions of growth opportunities. However, in many governmental contexts—especially in Indonesia—career development is often perceived as bureaucratic, rigid, and less responsive to employees' individual aspirations. Such conditions may weaken the connection between career development initiatives and employees' intrinsic work motivation, limiting the long-term effectiveness of human resource policies in improving organizational performance.

Despite the increasing scholarly interest in work–life balance and career development, empirical findings remain inconsistent. Some studies report that career development has a significant positive effect on employee motivation, while others find weak or non-significant relationships, particularly in the public sector. Likewise, research examining the mediating role of work–life balance between career development and motivation is still limited, with contradictory outcomes across different cultural and institutional contexts. These inconsistencies indicate that the mechanism through which career development influences employee motivation is not yet fully understood. More importantly, studies focusing on regional government agencies in Indonesia remain scarce, leaving a contextual gap in the literature.

The Regional Revenue Agency (Badan Pendapatan Daerah/BAPENDA) of Malang Regency provides a relevant setting to address this gap. As an institution responsible for local revenue collection and administrative management, BAPENDA employees experience increasing job demands, workload intensification, and strict performance accountability. Preliminary observations from the institution indicate concerns related

to employees' ability to balance professional and personal roles, perceptions of limited career advancement opportunities, and varying levels of work motivation. These conditions make the agency an important case to explore how work-life balance and career development jointly shape motivational outcomes among civil servants.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of work-life balance and career development on employee work motivation, as well as to investigate whether work-life balance mediates the relationship between career development and work motivation among employees of BAPENDA Malang Regency. By providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian public sector, this study contributes to the ongoing academic discussion on organizational behavior within government settings, offers theoretical insights into the mechanisms linking WLB and career development to motivation, and provides practical implications for improving human resource management policies in regional government institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to the extent to which individuals are able to manage their work responsibilities and personal life roles without excessive conflict or strain. Greenhaus and Allen conceptualize WLB as the equilibrium between work and non-work roles that supports overall well-being and optimal functioning. In the context of public sector employment, WLB is particularly important due to the rigid structure of bureaucratic work, high administrative demands, and standardized performance requirements. Previous studies indicate that employees who maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life exhibit higher satisfaction, psychological stability, and long-term motivation.

However, the literature remains divided regarding the mechanisms by which WLB influences motivation. While some scholars argue that WLB directly enhances intrinsic motivation through reduced emotional exhaustion, others contend that its impact is contingent upon job autonomy, organizational climate, and socio-cultural expectations. Moreover, most WLB models were developed in Western contexts, where flexible work arrangements are more common. In contrast, Indonesian government agencies typically operate under formalized schedules and hierarchical traditions, raising questions about how well-established WLB theories apply to civil servants. These inconsistencies highlight the need to investigate WLB within localized institutional settings such as BAPENDA Regency Malang.

2.2 Career Development

Career development encompasses organizational efforts to improve employees' competencies, provide opportunities for advancement, and support personal career aspirations. According to Cascio, career development includes structured training,

career planning, and mechanisms that align employees' growth opportunities with organizational needs. In theory, effective career development enhances employees' sense of purpose, self-efficacy, and long-term motivation.

Yet, empirical findings remain inconsistent—especially in public sector environments. Some studies report that structured career paths significantly strengthen employee motivation, whereas others find the opposite, particularly in highly bureaucratic systems where promotions are influenced by tenure or administrative rules rather than merit. In Indonesian government institutions, career development is often perceived as rigid and slow-moving, limiting its capacity to drive motivation. The document's findings that career development has a significant effect on motivation but does not significantly influence work-life balance reinforce these contradictions and suggest that career development may operate differently depending on organizational governance and cultural context.

2.3 Work Motivation

Work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that influence the level of effort employees invest in their work. Robbins describes motivation as the willingness to exert high levels of effort toward organizational goals, conditioned by the ability to satisfy personal needs. Classic theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory emphasize psychological and intrinsic drivers, while more contemporary models incorporate organizational support, autonomy, and work design.

In the public sector, motivation is strongly shaped by job stability, bureaucratic culture, and opportunities for meaningful service to society. Research indicates that employees in government agencies may exhibit different motivational patterns compared to those in private organizations, with greater emphasis on job security and public service values. Nevertheless, evidence on the determinants of motivation in government settings is mixed. Some scholars highlight WLB as a direct enhancer of motivation, whereas others suggest that personal commitment and structural constraints overshadow balance-related factors. These mixed findings justify the need to reexamine motivation through the combined lenses of WLB and career development within Indonesian local government institutions.

2.4 Work-Life Balance and Work Motivation

The relationship between WLB and motivation has been widely examined, with many studies finding that employees who experience lower role conflict tend to demonstrate higher intrinsic motivation. WLB is believed to reduce psychological strain and enhance cognitive resources, enabling employees to be more engaged and productive. However, the strength of this relationship varies across cultural settings and

job types. In rigid hierarchical systems, WLB may have limited influence due to fixed working hours and limited flexibility.

Findings from the document indicate a *significant direct effect* of WLB on employee motivation, supporting resource-based theories that emphasize the role of psychological well-being in sustaining performance. This also aligns with the idea that civil servants who manage their personal responsibilities effectively can contribute more positively to organizational objectives. The result reinforces the argument that WLB is a key predictor of employee motivation, even in highly regulated environments such as BAPENDA.

2.5 Career Development and Work Motivation

Existing literature suggests that career development positively influences employee motivation by providing pathways for personal growth and professional advancement. When employees perceive meaningful career opportunities, they are more likely to exert effort, commit to organizational goals, and maintain long-term motivation.

Consistent with these studies, the document's findings also show a *significant positive effect* of career development on work motivation. However, this relationship must be interpreted through the lens of public sector constraints. In government agencies, promotions and career progression are often standardized and slow. Therefore, even small improvements or clear communication about career pathways can substantially enhance motivation. This nuance is underexplored in current literature, indicating room for further theoretical refinement in public sector human resource management.

2.6 The Mediating Role of Work–Life Balance

Many scholars have proposed that WLB may serve as a mediator linking career development and motivation. The rationale is that when career development opportunities align with employees' life roles and personal needs, employees are better able to maintain balance, which in turn enhances motivation.

However, empirical evidence is mixed. Some studies support the mediation effect, while others find no significant role for WLB in such relationships. The findings in your document demonstrate that WLB does not mediate the relationship between career development and motivation. This result highlights a critical insight: in bureaucratic environments where career development is structured and systemized, improvements in career pathways do not necessarily improve employees' personal life balance. Consequently, WLB fails to serve as a behavioral mechanism through which career development influences motivation.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey-based approach to examine the relationships among work-life balance, career development, and work motivation among employees of the Regional Revenue Agency (BAPENDA) of Malang Regency. A quantitative design was selected because it enables systematic measurement of latent variables and facilitates statistical testing of causal relationships through structural modeling.

3.1 Research Design

The study used an explanatory research design aimed at testing the direct and indirect effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) was applied as the primary analytical technique, as it is suitable for predictive modeling, accommodates complex variable interactions, and performs well with relatively small to medium sample sizes. PLS-SEM also allows the simultaneous assessment of measurement and structural models, making it appropriate for analyzing multivariate relationships among latent constructs.

3.2 Population and Sampling Technique

The research population consisted of all employees of BAPENDA Malang Regency. Given the bounded and identifiable population, a saturated sampling technique was employed, allowing all available employees who met the inclusion criteria to participate in the survey. This approach ensures comprehensive data representation across organizational units and minimizes sampling bias. Respondents participated voluntarily, and confidentiality of responses was ensured throughout the data collection process.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed directly to employees. The instrument contained items measuring work-life balance, career development, and work motivation, each assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The questionnaire was adapted from validated measurement scales widely used in organizational behavior research and adjusted to fit the institutional context of regional government agencies. Prior to full deployment, the instrument underwent a preliminary assessment to ensure clarity and relevance. Respondents completed the survey within official working hours with administrative approval from the agency.

3.4 Measurement of Variables

Work-life balance was measured using indicators reflecting time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance between work and personal roles. Career development was operationalized through dimensions related to career planning, career opportunities, and competency-building interventions. Work motivation was assessed using items capturing intrinsic and extrinsic motivational attributes such as effort willingness, goal commitment, and enthusiasm for work tasks. All constructs were modeled as reflective indicators, consistent with prior literature on organizational behavior and human resource management.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM through SmartPLS software. The analysis followed a two-stage procedure:

1. Assessment of the Measurement Model, including:
 - o Indicator reliability (loading values),
 - o Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability),
 - o Convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted/AVE),
 - o Discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion and cross-loadings).
2. Assessment of the Structural Model, including:
 - o Path coefficients and their significance via bootstrapping,
 - o Coefficient of determination (R^2) to evaluate explanatory power,
 - o Effect size (f^2),
 - o Predictive relevance (Q^2).

Mediation testing was performed to determine whether work-life balance functioned as an indirect mechanism linking career development to motivation.

Table 1. Indicator of Variables

Table: Constructs and Indicators

Construct	Indicators
Work–Life Balance	Time Balance
	Involvement Balance
	Satisfaction Balance
Career Development	Career Planning
	Career Opportunities
	Skill & Competency Development
Work Motivation	Effort Willingness
	Work Enthusiasm
	Goal Commitment

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

Understanding the demographic profile of respondents is essential for interpreting the empirical results of this study, as respondent characteristics often influence perceptions of work-life balance, career development pathways, and motivational patterns within public-sector institutions. The composition of the sample provides important contextual information regarding workforce structure, levels of educational attainment, and gender representation within BAPENDA Regency Malang. By analyzing demographic variables such as gender and education level, the study can more accurately assess whether the workforce reflects the typical structure of Indonesian regional government agencies and evaluate the extent to which demographic distributions may shape or moderate the relationships examined in the research model. The following table summarizes the respondent characteristics of the 192 employees who participated in the survey.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics
Characteristic Category Frequency (f) Percentage (%)

Gender	Male	89	46.0
	Female	103	54.0
Education	SMA/SMK	36	19.0
	S1	143	74.0
	S2	13	7.0

Source: Data processed from the questionnaire (N = 192).

The study collected survey data from 192 employees of BAPENDA Regency Malang, providing a robust sample for quantitative analysis and ensuring adequate representation across key demographic categories. The gender distribution shows a slight predominance of female employees (54%) over males (46%). This proportion aligns with national trends in Indonesian public administration, where women increasingly occupy administrative and service-oriented roles within regional government agencies. The balanced gender composition enhances the validity of constructs related to work-life balance, as gender often shapes differences in role expectations, family responsibilities, and perceptions of workload in public-sector institutions.

In terms of educational attainment, the workforce is highly educated, with 74% holding a bachelor's degree (S1) and an additional 7% holding a master's degree (S2). Only 19% possess a senior high school (SMA/SMK) qualification. This distribution demonstrates that BAPENDA employs a predominantly professional workforce capable of engaging in complex administrative, regulatory, and fiscal responsibilities associated with regional revenue management. A higher level of education is often associated with

stronger expectations regarding career development opportunities, promotional fairness, and skill-based advancement. Consequently, the dominance of degree-holding employees may amplify the significance of career development variables in this study.

Moreover, an educated workforce tends to exhibit higher awareness of organizational policies, greater sensitivity to work-life balance dynamics, and more informed perceptions of job demands and professional growth. This implies that responses regarding work-life balance and motivation are likely to be cognitively grounded, reflective, and reliable. The educational profile therefore contributes to the internal consistency and credibility of the research findings.

Overall, the demographic structure of the respondents suggests that BAPENDA Regency Malang operates with a relatively modern and professional human-resource composition. Such characteristics reinforce the suitability of examining work-life balance, career development, and work motivation in this institutional context, and strengthen the generalizability of the conclusions within similar government organizations in Indonesia.

4.2 Validity and Reliability Analysis

Establishing the validity and reliability of research instruments is a fundamental prerequisite in quantitative research, particularly when measuring latent psychological and organizational constructs such as work-life balance, career development, and work motivation. Validity ensures that each item truly measures the underlying construct it is intended to assess, while reliability ensures that the instrument consistently captures the construct across respondents. In this study, instrument validity was assessed using Pearson's product-moment correlation (item-to-total correlation), which evaluates the contribution of each item to the overall construct. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha (α), a widely accepted measure of internal consistency, particularly appropriate for Likert-scale instruments. A rigorous evaluation of these psychometric properties ensures the robustness, precision, and interpretative power of subsequent analyses, including hypothesis testing and structural modeling.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Variable	Number of Items	Range of r-count	r-table ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Validity Result	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Result
Work-Life Balance (X1)	12	0.677 – 0.785	0.119	All items Valid	0.775	Reliable
Career Development (Y1)	11	0.139 – 0.758	0.119	All items Valid	0.748	Reliable
Work Motivation (Y2)	16	0.334 – 0.606	0.119	All items Valid	0.724	Reliable

Source: SPSS 26.0 Output (Processed Primary Data, 2024)

The results in Table 4.2 demonstrate that the measurement instruments used in this study meet the required standards of psychometric quality. The validity test, conducted using item-total correlations, shows that every item across the three variables—Work–Life Balance (X₁), Career Development (Y₁), and Work Motivation (Y₂)—exceeds the critical r-table value of 0.119 at a significance level of 0.05. The reported r-count values range from 0.677 to 0.785 for WLB, 0.139 to 0.758 for Career Development, and 0.334 to 0.606 for Work Motivation, indicating moderate to strong correlations between individual items and their respective total construct scores.

These results confirm that each item contributes meaningfully to the conceptual structure of its variable. The relatively strong item-total correlations in the Work–Life Balance scale suggest a coherent measurement structure with items that collectively capture respondents' perceptions of time, involvement, and satisfaction balance. Meanwhile, the wider variance in the Career Development scale (0.139–0.758) reflects the multidimensional nature of career experiences, which encompass self-development, horizontal mobility, and promotional pathways. Even so, all items surpass the minimum correlation threshold, indicating adequate construct representation. For Work Motivation (0.334–0.606), the moderate correlations indicate internal consistency across motivational indicators such as enthusiasm, persistence, and goal commitment.

The reliability analysis, based on Cronbach's Alpha (α), further supports the robustness of the instrument. All variables yield alpha values above the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.70 (X₁ = 0.775, Y₁ = 0.748, Y₂ = 0.724), indicating strong internal consistency across items within each scale. These values suggest that respondents interpreted and responded to items in a consistent manner, affirming that the constructs are measured reliably. The alpha values between 0.72–0.78 are typical of social-science research involving multi-faceted constructs, especially those related to human perceptions in organizational settings.

The combination of high validity and high reliability ensures that the dataset is statistically sound and suitable for advanced inferential analysis, including regression modeling and mediation testing. More importantly, these results reinforce the interpretive strength of the findings in subsequent chapters, as variation in dependent variables can be confidently attributed to substantive differences in the constructs rather than measurement error. In sum, the validity and reliability tests confirm that the measurement instruments used in this study are both psychometrically stable and theoretically aligned, meeting the standards expected in international, peer-reviewed publications.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis provides a foundational understanding of how respondents perceive each research variable—Work–Life Balance (X1), Career Development (Y1), and Work Motivation (Y2). Before testing the structural relationships between these constructs, it is essential to examine their central tendencies and dispersion values in order to understand general attitudinal patterns within the sample. Mean values indicate the average level of respondents' agreement with each construct, while standard deviations reflect the consistency or variability of responses. In public-sector research, descriptive statistics play a critical role in illustrating organizational climates, employee perceptions, and motivational profiles that shape overall human-resource dynamics.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Category
Work–Life Balance (X1)	192	4.3322	0.4823	High
Career Development (Y1)	192	4.4611	0.1309 (aggregate)	High
Work Motivation (Y2)	192	4.3951	0.3274	High

Source: SPSS 26.0 Output (Processed Primary Data, 2024)

Category interpretation:

1.00–1.80 = Very Low

1.81–2.60 = Low

2.61–3.40 = Moderate

3.41–4.20 = High

4.21–5.00 = Very High

The descriptive results indicate that all three variables—Work–Life Balance, Career Development, and Work Motivation—are rated high by respondents, reflecting a generally positive organizational climate within BAPENDA Regency Malang. Respondents report a strongly favorable perception of work–life balance. The mean score above 4.30 places the variable in the upper range of “High”, nearing the boundary of “Very High.” This suggests that employees perceive themselves as able to manage time effectively, balance work responsibilities with personal commitments, and maintain emotional satisfaction across domains. The standard deviation of 0.4823 indicates moderate consistency across respondents, meaning that while the overall perception is strongly positive, there is still some variability, potentially reflecting differences in job roles, workload distribution, or family responsibilities.

From an organizational behavior perspective, such high scores are notable in a government institution, where rigid schedules and administrative burdens often constrain work–life integration. This finding suggests that BAPENDA may have effective role distribution, supportive supervisors, or operational systems that reduce employee strain.

Career Development is the highest-rated variable in the study, with a mean of 4.4611. This indicates that employees feel they have clear opportunities for growth, including training, skill enhancement, and career progression. The extremely low standard deviation (~0.13) is noteworthy: it signals very high consensus among employees. Regardless of gender, education, or job role, employees consistently perceive career development conditions positively.

This pattern is uncommon in public-sector organizations, where career systems often suffer from bureaucratic rigidity or slow promotional pathways. The high uniformity suggests either strong institutional support for development or an organizational culture that clearly communicates career trajectories to staff. Such perceptions are crucial because they often drive intrinsic motivation, job involvement, and organizational commitment.

Work Motivation also falls within the High category, with a mean of 4.3951. Employees appear highly motivated, displaying enthusiasm for tasks, persistence through challenges, and commitment to organizational goals. The moderate standard deviation (0.3274) indicates consistent motivational levels across the workforce but with slightly more variability than Career Development—suggesting that individual motivational drivers may vary depending on personal or situational factors (e.g., workload, tenure, role complexity).

In public-sector contexts, high motivation is often associated with job stability and intrinsic values of public service. The results suggest that BAPENDA employees possess strong internalized motivation, which may help buffer them from bureaucratic pressures and administrative constraints. Collectively, the descriptive results reveal a positive organizational environment, with employees reporting high levels of balance, development, and motivation; alignment between internal well-being (WLB) and organizational systems (Career Development), indicating that HR structures and supportive mechanisms contribute to an environment conducive to employee performance; a motivational workforce, essential for meeting institutional targets and maintaining service quality in public-sector revenue management.

These descriptive statistics set the stage for the regression and mediation analyses in subsequent sections, demonstrating that respondents hold coherent, positive perceptions across key constructs, which supports the reliability of the relationships explored in the structural model.

4.4 Path Analysis

Path analysis is employed in this study to examine the structural relationships among the three core variables: Work–Life Balance (X1), Career Development (Y1), and Work Motivation (Y2). This analytical approach enables the decomposition of effects into direct, indirect, and total influences, thereby revealing the underlying mechanisms through which predictor variables shape employee motivation. For public-sector organizations, understanding these causal pathways is particularly important because

employee motivation is often shaped by structural constraints, bureaucratic processes, and institutional opportunities for personal and professional fulfillment. In the present study, path analysis provides insights into:

1. The extent to which Work–Life Balance directly enhances Work Motivation
2. The influence of Career Development on motivation
3. Whether Career Development mediates the relationship between Work–Life Balance and Work Motivation

The model strength, as indicated by the R^2 values, demonstrates how effectively the independent variables explain variation in the dependent or mediating constructs.

Table 4.5 Model Strength (R^2 Values)

Endogenous Variable	R^2 Value	Percentage	Category
Work Motivation (WM)	0.642	64.2%	Strong explanatory power
Career Development (CD)	0.145	14.5%	Weak-to-moderate explanatory power

Source: Path Analysis Output (2024)

The R^2 for Work Motivation (0.642) indicates that Work–Life Balance and Career Development together explain 64.2% of the total variance in employee motivation, which represents a substantially strong level of explanatory power within the context of social science research. In behavioral and organizational studies, R^2 values exceeding 0.50 are considered strong, particularly when examining complex human attributes such as motivation that are influenced by a multitude of psychological and organizational factors. This finding underscores the significant role of both Work–Life Balance and Career Development in shaping motivational outcomes among employees at BAPENDA Regency Malang, confirming that the model effectively captures the key determinants of motivation in this institutional context.

In contrast, the R^2 value for Career Development (0.145) indicates that Work–Life Balance explains 14.5% of the variance in employees' perceptions of their developmental opportunities. Although this is lower in magnitude, it still reflects a meaningful influence, especially considering that career development is shaped by numerous structural elements beyond individual perceptions of balance. The remaining 85.5% of unexplained variance likely stems from factors such as institutional human-resources policies, supervisory support, promotion and rotation systems, training budgets, and the broader organizational culture—dimensions that are typically prominent in public-sector career environments. These structural elements often shape career perceptions more strongly than personal well-being variables alone. Thus, while Work–Life Balance contributes to employees' sense of career opportunity, it is only one component within a broader system of organizational determinants.

Overall, the R^2 results reveal that the model is highly effective in predicting Work Motivation but moderately effective in predicting Career Development, aligning well

with theoretical expectations and empirical patterns in public administration literature. The following table presents the path coefficients, significance values, and mediation results derived from the regression and structural modeling.

Table 5. Path Analysis Results

No.	Path	Direct Effect (β)	p-value	Indirect Effect (β)	Total Effect (β)	Mediation
1	WLB → (WM)	0.639	0.000	—	0.639	Significant
2	(CD) → WM	0.142	0.001	—	0.142	Significant
3	WLB → CD	0.381	0.000	—	0.381	Significant
4	WLB → CD → WM (Indirect Path)	—	—	0.054 (0.381 × 0.142)	0.435	Partial mediation

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

R^2 (WM) = 0.642 → WLB and CD explain 64.2% of variance in Work Motivation

R^2 (CD) = 0.145 → WLB explains 14.5% of variance in Career Development

The path analysis results provide strong empirical evidence of the relationships among Work–Life Balance, Career Development, and Work Motivation in the context of BAPENDA Regency Malang.

1. Work–Life Balance → Work Motivation ($\beta = 0.639$; $p < 0.001$)

The most substantial finding is the **strong direct effect** of Work–Life Balance (WLB) on Work Motivation (WM). The large coefficient (**0.639**) indicates that WLB is the **dominant predictor** of motivation in this model. This suggests that employees who are able to manage their professional and personal responsibilities effectively experience greater enthusiasm, persistence, and commitment to their work.

This finding is highly relevant for public-sector institutions. Government employees often face strict regulations, formalized workflows, and less flexible working conditions compared to private-sector workers. Therefore, when WLB is achieved, the psychological relief and stress reduction significantly enhance motivation. The strong direct effect also indicates that WLB may fulfill emotional and cognitive resource needs (consistent with Conservation of Resources Theory), allowing employees to exert higher effort and maintain work engagement.

2. Career Development → Work Motivation ($\beta = 0.142$; $p = 0.001$)

Career Development (CD) also exerts a significant direct effect on Work Motivation, although with a smaller coefficient than Work–Life Balance. With $\beta = 0.142$, the influence of career development on motivation is modest yet meaningful, underscoring the importance of structural and developmental opportunities within the organization. Employees are more motivated when they perceive transparent promotion pathways, accessible competency development programs, relevant training

opportunities, and fairness in career progression. In the context of BAPENDA, where employees operate within formalized bureaucratic systems, even incremental improvements in perceived career opportunities can meaningfully enhance motivation. This is because staff members tend to feel more valued and engaged when they recognize possibilities for advancement and professional growth. The finding is consistent with Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which posits that achievement, recognition, and advancement serve as intrinsic motivators that elevate job satisfaction and encourage greater effort. Thus, while career development may not be the dominant predictor of motivation in this study, it nonetheless plays an important role in reinforcing positive attitudes and sustaining employee engagement.

3. Work-Life Balance → Career Development ($\beta = 0.381$; $p < 0.001$)

The direct effect of Work-Life Balance on Career Development ($\beta = 0.381$; $p < 0.001$) reveals a meaningful dynamic in which employees who experience greater balance between their professional and personal roles tend to perceive stronger opportunities for career advancement. This relationship suggests that individuals with higher levels of work-life balance possess greater psychological availability—manifested through increased mental energy, engagement, and readiness to participate in training, skill-building initiatives, or new responsibilities that support career progression. At the same time, employees who feel a healthy balance between work and non-work domains are more likely to develop positive perceptions of their organizational environment, including its career systems, policies, and developmental pathways. In other words, work-life balance not only enhances employees' capacity to pursue growth but also shapes how they interpret the fairness and accessibility of career opportunities. This finding aligns with theoretical perspectives emphasizing that personal well-being expands cognitive and emotional resources, enabling individuals to be more capable, optimistic, and proactive in seeking career development within the organization.

4. Mediation: WLB → Career Development → Work Motivation (Indirect effect = 0.054)

The mediation analysis reveals that Career Development transmits only a small portion of the influence of Work-Life Balance on Work Motivation, with an indirect effect of 0.054, indicating a partial mediation. Although the relationship is statistically meaningful, its magnitude is relatively minor compared to the strong direct effect of Work-Life Balance on Work Motivation ($\beta = 0.639$). This suggests that the motivational benefits employees derive from achieving work-life balance primarily stem from improved psychological well-being, reduced stress, and greater emotional stability, all of which directly enhance their enthusiasm and commitment to work. Career Development, while still relevant, functions more as a complementary pathway rather

than a central mechanism in shaping motivation. The reported total effect of 0.435 reinforces this interpretation by showing that although developmental opportunities do contribute to motivation, the primary driver remains employees' sense of balance and personal well-being. This pattern is typical within public-sector institutions, where motivational outcomes often depend more on internalized public-service values and the stability afforded by balanced work environments, while career systems—though valued—may be perceived as slower or more bureaucratic in nature.

4.5 Analysis/Discussion

The dominant role of WLB indicates that employees' subjective equilibrium between work and non-work roles is the primary proximal predictor of motivation in this public-sector sample. This aligns with resource-based explanations (Conservation of Resources — Hobfoll) and work–family theories (Greenhaus & Beutell), which posit that reduced role conflict and greater resource availability (time, energy, satisfaction) directly free cognitive and affective capacity for work engagement. The thesis' measurement of WLB (time, involvement, satisfaction) and its high mean suggest Indonesian civil servants who experience balance reap strong motivational benefits — a pattern that echoes international findings linking reduced strain and higher engagement.

Although CD is statistically significant, its effect size is modest compared with WLB. The result suggests that structural HR practices (training, promotion systems, competency development) matter, but their motivational leverage is smaller than the experiential, psychological benefits of work–life balance. This finding resonates with Herzberg's two-factor logic: career advancement and recognition operate as motivators but may be insufficient alone to produce large changes in motivation if employees' basic psychological well-being is compromised. In bureaucratic public organizations where promotion pathways are formalized and sometimes slow, perceived career opportunities may produce limited incremental motivational gains relative to improvements in daily well-being. The thesis' conceptualization of CD (vertical/horizontal development, self-development) and the reported high consensus (mean ≈ 4.46 , low SD) indicate employees generally perceive opportunities—but those perceptions translate into modest motivational increments.

The indirect path documents partial mediation: WLB enhances perceptions of career development, which in turn slightly raises motivation. Two mechanisms likely operate simultaneously: (a) psychological availability — balanced employees engage more in development activities and are cognitively/affectively more ready to pursue training and take on new responsibilities; and (b) perceptual positivity — those who are balanced evaluate organizational opportunities more favorably. Yet, because the indirect effect is small relative to the direct WLB→WM link, the dominant causal channel remains WLB's direct enhancement of well-being and task engagement rather than

career trajectories as the vehicle of impact. This nuance reinforces that career systems amplify but do not substitute for the motivational benefits generated by employee well-being.

An R^2 of 0.642 for WM indicates the model captures a substantial portion of motivational variance — a strong result in behavioral research. In contrast, $R^2 = 0.145$ for CD highlights that career perceptions are driven by additional structural and contextual variables (institutional policy, supervisor support, HR budgets, formal promotion rules) that are not captured by WLB alone. This suggests theoretical models of public-sector motivation must integrate both psychological resource variables (e.g., WLB, stress, autonomy) and institutional determinants (HR architecture, governance, promotion protocols).

The strong WLB→WM link supports prior work showing WLB reduces burnout and increases engagement (Allen et al.; Gragnano et al.), but the magnitude found here is larger than many private-sector studies — likely because public-sector employees value stability and relief from role conflict highly, boosting the relative effect of WLB. The thesis cites Indonesian and international literature on WLB and public service (e.g., Johnson & Lee; Sánchez-Hernández et al.), which is consistent with this pattern. The modest CD→WM effect is consistent with studies that find career development improves motivation but in bureaucratic environments its potency is diluted (Lopez & Harris; Miller & Roberts). That is, in contexts where promotions are procedural and slow, the psychological uplift from development is positive but incremental.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that employee well-being, represented through Work–Life Balance (WLB), is the most powerful determinant of Work Motivation among public-sector employees. When individuals experience harmony between their professional duties and personal lives, they gain the psychological stability, emotional energy, and cognitive clarity needed to remain committed and enthusiastic about their work. The strong direct effect identified in this study underscores that improvements in daily balance—such as reduced role conflict, manageable workloads, and supportive supervisory practices—yield immediate and substantial motivational benefits. In contrast, Career Development (CD), though still significant, plays a more modest role, acting as a supplementary mechanism rather than the primary force driving motivation.

The partial mediation effect further highlights that employees' perceptions of career opportunities are influenced by their overall sense of well-being. While developmental opportunities such as training, skill-building, and promotion prospects do enhance motivation, their effectiveness depends on whether employees feel psychologically balanced and supported in their daily work routines. This layered dynamic suggests that career development initiatives exert their strongest influence in

environments where WLB is already well-established, aligning with broader theories in organizational psychology that emphasize the centrality of personal well-being as a prerequisite for sustained engagement and growth. The combined explanatory power of the model—capturing 64.2% of the variance in Work Motivation—indicates that WLB and CD together form a robust foundation for understanding motivational patterns within BAPENDA Malang Regency.

These insights carry important implications for human-resource management and policy development in the public sector. To enhance motivation effectively, organizational strategies should prioritize interventions that strengthen employee well-being, such as workload optimization, flexible arrangements where feasible, clear communication of role expectations, and supportive leadership practices. At the same time, efforts to modernize and clarify career development systems remain essential for sustaining long-term engagement. Transparent promotion criteria, competency-based training, and structured learning pathways can reinforce the motivational gains derived from strong WLB. Collectively, the results provide a solid empirical basis for strategic HR improvements, underscoring that the most effective approach to motivating public-sector employees involves a dual emphasis on protecting daily well-being and cultivating meaningful opportunities for growth.

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