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The Effect of Work–Life Balance and Work Environment on Employee Performance with Work Motivation as an Intervening Variable at the Department of Agriculture of North Tapanuli Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effects of work–life balance and work environment on employee performance, with work motivation as an intervening variable, at the Department of Agriculture of North Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The research employed a quantitative associative design to analyze both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The study population consisted of 244 employees, including civil servants (PNS), government employees with work agreements (PPPK), and non-civil servants. Using the Slovin formula with a 10% error tolerance, a sample of 80 respondents was selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with SmartPLS version 3.3.3. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability, with all indicators meeting the criteria for convergent and discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50, and Composite Reliability values above 0.70. Structural model evaluation revealed that work–life balance has a strong positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.958$; $t = 39.057$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who are able to balance work responsibilities and personal life tend to perform better. In contrast, the work environment does not have a significant direct effect on employee performance ($\beta = -0.072$; $t = 0.639$; $p > 0.05$). Furthermore, both work–life balance ($\beta = 0.163$; $t = 7.296$; $p < 0.001$) and work environment ($\beta = 0.897$; $t = 45.113$; $p < 0.001$) have positive and significant effects on work motivation. . However, work motivation does not significantly affect employee performance ($\beta = 0.119$; $t = 0.946$; $p > 0.05$) and does not mediate the relationship between work–life balance or work environment and employee performance. These findings suggest that employee performance improvement is driven primarily by direct work–life balance policies rather than through motivational mechanisms. Managerial implications highlight the importance of implementing effective work–life balance strategies supported by objective performance management systems in public sector organizations.

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Introduction

Employee performance is a primary indicator of organizational success in achieving predetermined objectives. In public sector organizations, employee performance is not only assessed based on the attainment of work targets but also on the quality of public services and the effectiveness of government program implementation (Wibowo, 2020). Therefore, improving employee performance has become a strategic agenda in human resource management within government institutions.

Previous studies indicate that employee performance is influenced by both individual and organizational factors. One factor that has received increasing scholarly attention is work–life balance (Ginting & Indrawan, 2023). Work–life balance refers to an individual's ability to manage and harmonize work demands and personal life responsibilities proportionally, thereby minimizing role conflict (Greenhaus & Allen, 2020). Employees who achieve a balanced work–life condition tend to experience lower stress levels and higher job satisfaction, which ultimately contribute positively to their performance (Allen et al., 2020).

In addition to work–life balance, the work environment plays a crucial role in shaping employee performance. The work environment encompasses both physical and non-physical conditions experienced by employees while performing their tasks (Efendi & Mesra B, 2023). Adequate physical conditions and harmonious non-physical environments create a supportive and conducive workplace that enhances employee productivity (Sedarmayanti, 2021). Conversely, an unfavorable work environment may reduce work comfort and negatively affect employee performance (Mangkunegara, 2021).

Work motivation represents an internal factor that functions as a primary driver of employee work behavior. Robbins and Judge (2022) explain that work motivation determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of individual efforts at work. Employees with high work motivation tend to demonstrate greater enthusiasm, commitment, and effort in carrying out their duties. Herzberg (2020) further emphasizes that work motivation is closely related to job satisfaction and employee performance.

A supportive work–life balance and a favorable work environment are believed to enhance employee work motivation. Employees who perceive their lives as balanced and work in a comfortable and supportive environment are more likely to be motivated to contribute optimally to organizational goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2022). Consequently, work motivation functions as an intervening variable that explains the mechanism through which work–life balance and the work environment influence employee performance.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study is important to empirically examine the effects of work–life balance and the work environment on employee performance, with work motivation as an intervening variable, at the Department of Agriculture of North Tapanuli Regency.

Method

This study employed a quantitative associative research design aimed at examining the relationships among multiple variables (Wahyuni & Rindrayani, 2025). The research model was developed to analyze both direct and indirect effects among variables. In this study, work–life balance (X1) and work environment (X2) were specified as exogenous variables, employee performance (Y) as the endogenous variable, and work motivation (Z) as the intervening variable.

The study was conducted at the Department of Agriculture of North Tapanuli Regency, located on Jalan S.M. Simanjuntak, Tarutung District, North Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia (Postal Code 22411). Data collection was carried out from December 2025 to February 2026.

The research population consisted of all employees of the Department of Agriculture of North Tapanuli Regency, totaling 244 employees, including civil servants (PNS), government employees with work agreements (PPPK), and non-civil servants. Population refers to the entire group of subjects possessing specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives and serving as the basis for generalization of research findings (Sugiyono, 2022). All employees were considered relevant to the study because they were directly involved in organizational tasks and functions related to work–life balance, work environment, work motivation, and employee performance.

Given time constraints and research efficiency considerations, not all population members were included as respondents. Therefore, the sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with an error tolerance level of 10% (0.10), which is commonly applied in social research involving relatively homogeneous populations. Based on this calculation, a minimum sample size of 70.93 was obtained and rounded up to 80 respondents. The sampling technique applied was simple random sampling, in which each population member had an equal opportunity to be selected as a respondent, thereby ensuring objectivity and minimizing sampling bias.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS version 3.3.3. Quantitative data analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the study variables.

The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated through validity and reliability testing. Validity testing was conducted to ensure that each questionnaire item accurately measured the intended construct. Reliability testing assessed the consistency and stability of the measurement instruments. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with recommended threshold values greater than 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Sugiarto et al., 2024; Cheung, 2024).

The structural model (inner model) was analyzed to examine the hypothesized relationships between exogenous and endogenous constructs using a bootstrapping procedure (Hair et al., 2021). Model evaluation included the coefficient of determination

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(R^2) to assess the explanatory power of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, the Stone–Geisser Q^2 test to evaluate predictive relevance, and path coefficient analysis to determine the direction and strength of relationships among variables. Hypotheses were considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 at a 5% significance level. Overall model fit was assessed using the Normed Fit Index (NFI), with values closer to 1 indicating a good model fit (Fauzi, 2022; Hair et al., 2022).

Results and Discussion

Outer Model Analysis

The outer model testing in this study was conducted using the algorithm analysis in SmartPLS version 3.0 to obtain outer loading values that meet the requirements of validity and reliability.

Convergent Validity Test Results

Convergent validity of the measurement model with reflective indicators can be evaluated by examining the correlation between item/indicator scores and their respective construct scores. Indicators with individual correlation values greater than 0.70 are considered valid; however, in exploratory research, indicator values of 0.50–0.60 are still acceptable. Based on the outer loading results, no indicators were found to have loading values below 0.60 or to be statistically insignificant. The outer loading values are presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1. ***Outer Loading***

Indicators	*Outer Loading*	Keterangan
Work–Life Balance (X1)		
KSK.1	0,992	Valid
KSK.2	0,990	Valid
KSK.3	0,975	Valid
KSK.4	0,978	Valid
KSK.5	0,983	Valid
Work Environment (X2)		
LK.1	0,970	Valid
LK.2	0,981	Valid
LK.3	0,986	Valid
LK.4	0,981	Valid
LK.5	0,969	Valid
Work Motivation (Z)		
MK.1	0,721	Valid
MK.2	0,952	Valid
MK.3	0,974	Valid
MK.4	0,974	Valid
MK.5	0,963	Valid
Employee Performance (Y)		

Indicators	*Outer Loading*	Keterangan
KP.1	0,971	Valid
KP.2	0,983	Valid
KP.3	0,982	Valid
KP.4	0,968	Valid
KP.5	0,982	Valid
KP.6	0,979	Valid

Sorce : Output Smart PLS, 2025

Based on Table 1. it can be observed that all indicators for each research variable have outer loading values greater than 0.60. Therefore, all indicators are declared valid and meet the criteria for convergent validity. According to Ghozali and Latan (2015), an indicator is considered valid if it has a loading factor of ≥ 0.60, indicating that the indicator adequately represents the latent construct being measured.

For the Work–Life Balance (X1) variable, the outer loading values of indicators KSK.1 to KSK.5 range from 0.975 to 0.992. These very high values indicate that all indicators have a very strong relationship with the work–life balance construct. This suggests that the indicators consistently reflect the balance between job demands and employees' personal lives, including work time arrangements, workload, and psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the Work Environment (X2) variable shows outer loading values for indicators LK.1 to LK.5 ranging from 0.969 to 0.986. These values indicate excellent validity and significant contributions of the indicators in forming the work environment construct. Thus, aspects of the work environment—such as physical conditions, work relationships, comfort, and organizational support—are accurately measured by the indicators used.

For the Work Motivation (Z) variable as the intervening variable, the outer loading values of indicators MK.1 to MK.5 range from 0.721 to 0.974. Although MK.1 has the lowest outer loading among the indicators, its value is still above the minimum threshold of 0.60 and is therefore considered valid. Overall, these results indicate that the motivation indicators consistently represent employees' internal drive to work, both intrinsically and extrinsically.

Meanwhile, the Employee Performance (Y) variable has outer loading values for indicators KP.1 to KP.6 ranging from 0.968 to 0.983. These very high values indicate that all indicators strongly contribute to measuring employee performance. This shows that performance aspects—such as work quality, work quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and responsibility—are well represented by the indicators used.

Based on the outer loading analysis, it can be concluded that all indicators for Work–Life Balance (X1), Work Environment (X2), Work Motivation (Z), and Employee Performance (Y) meet the criteria for convergent validity. Therefore, the measurement

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model (outer model) in this study is considered valid and reliable for further analysis of the structural model (inner model).

Discriminant Validity Test Results

The next step is testing discriminant validity, which aims to determine whether a reflective indicator is an appropriate measure of its construct based on the principle that indicators should correlate more strongly with their own construct than with other constructs. The results of the cross-loading analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 4.2 Discriminant Validity

Indikcators	Work–Life Balance (X1)	Employee Performance (Y)	Work Environment (X2)	Work Motivation (Z)
KP.1	0,971	**0,971**	0,530	0,642
KP.2	0,990	**0,983**	0,513	0,618
KP.3	0,974	**0,982**	0,521	0,628
KP.4	0,978	**0,968**	0,561	0,652
KP.5	0,965	**0,982**	0,545	0,654
KP.6	0,964	**0,979**	0,550	0,655
KSK.1	**0,992**	0,986	0,501	0,614
KSK.2	**0,990**	0,982	0,505	0,613
KSK.3	**0,975**	0,985	0,517	0,628
KSK.4	**0,978**	0,968	0,561	0,652
KSK.5	**0,983**	0,977	0,501	0,611
LK.1	0,483	0,503	**0,970**	0,933
LK.2	0,511	0,533	**0,981**	0,957
LK.3	0,517	0,542	**0,986**	0,974
LK.4	0,532	0,556	**0,981**	0,974
LK.5	0,525	0,548	**0,969**	0,963
MK.1	0,855	0,862	0,589	**0,721**
MK.2	0,503	0,525	0,971	**0,952**
MK.3	0,517	0,542	0,986	**0,974**
MK.4	0,532	0,556	0,981	**0,974**
MK.5	0,525	0,548	0,969	**0,963**

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that the cross-loading value of each indicator is higher for its associated construct than for other constructs. This indicates that each indicator has stronger correlations with its respective latent variable compared to other latent variables. Therefore, the discriminant validity based on cross-loading criteria is considered acceptable and valid.

Composite Reliability Test Results

Reliability testing was conducted by examining composite reliability values of the indicator blocks measuring each construct. A construct is considered reliable if its composite reliability value exceeds 0.60. In addition, reliability can also be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, where a value greater than 0.70 indicates good reliability. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

Indikator	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliabilitas Komposit	Rata-rata Varians Diekstrak (AVE)
Work–Life Balance (X1)	0,992	0,993	0,967
Employee Performance (Y)	0,991	0,992	0,955
Work Environment (X2)	0,988	0,991	0,955
Work Motivation (Z)	0,953	0,966	0,850

Source: *Output Smart PLS,* 2024

Based on Table 3. all variables have AVE values greater than 0.50, indicating that all constructs meet the criteria for discriminant validity. Furthermore, all variables have composite reliability values greater than 0.70, confirming that all constructs in this study are reliable.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The evaluation of the structural model (inner model) was conducted to ensure that the model is robust and accurate. The evaluation includes the following indicators:

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to assess the extent to which independent latent variables explain the variance of dependent latent variables. The R^2 results are presented in table 4.

Table 4. R Square Results

Variabel	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Employee Performance (Y)	0,993	0,993
Work Motivation (Z)	0,985	0,984

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 4., the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values for each endogenous variable fall into the very high category, indicating strong explanatory power of the structural model. For Employee Performance (Y), the R^2 value of 0.993 indicates that 99.3% of the variance in employee performance is explained by Work–Life Balance (X1), Work Environment (X2), and Work Motivation (Z). The remaining 0.7% is explained by other factors outside this model.

For Work Motivation (Z), the R^2 value of 0.985 indicates that 98.4% of the variance in work motivation is explained by work–life balance and work environment. This demonstrates that employee motivation is strongly influenced by these two factors.

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Overall, the high R^2 values indicate that the research model has excellent explanatory and predictive power.

Goodness of Fit Test

The Goodness of Fit test evaluates how well the proposed model fits the observed data. Model fit was assessed using the Normed Fit Index (NFI). A model is considered good if NFI values approach 1.00 and exceed the SRMR value.

Table 5. Model Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,099	0,099
d_ULS	2,252	2,252
d_G	2,411	2,411
Chi-Square	880,514	880,514
NFI	0,801	0,801

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 5, the NFI value of 0.801 is greater than the SRMR value of 0.099, indicating that the model demonstrates an acceptable level of goodness of fit and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing was conducted by examining T-statistics and P-values. A hypothesis is accepted if T-statistics > 1.96 and P-values < 0.05. The results of the direct effects are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Results
Work–Life Balance (X1) -> Employee Performance(Y)	0,958	0,958	0,025	39,057	0,000	**Accepted**
Work Environment (X2) -> Employee Performance (Y)	-0,072	-0,065	0,113	0,639	0,525	**Rejected**
Work–Life Balance (X1) -> Work Motivation (Z)	0,163	0,158	0,022	7,296	0,000	**Accepted**
Work Environment (X2) -> Work Motivation (Z)	0,897	0,900	0,020	45,113	0,000	**Accepted**
Work Motivation (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0,119	0,113	0,126	0,946	0,347	**Rejected**

Source: Output Smart PLS, 2023

The results indicate that Work–Life Balance (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y), while Work Environment (X2) does not significantly

affect performance. Work–life balance and work environment both significantly influence Work Motivation (Z); however, work motivation does not have a significant direct effect on employee performance. To examine the mediating role of work motivation, indirect effects were analyzed and presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Indirect Effects

Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Results
Work–Life Balance (X1) -> Work motivation (Z) -> Employee perpormance (Y)	0,019	0,019	0,022	0,901	0,370	**Rejected**
Work Environment (X2) -> Work motivation (Z) -> Employee perpormance (Y)	0,107	0,101	0,113	0,949	0,345	Rejected

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The results show that Work Motivation (Z) does not mediate the relationship between Work–Life Balance (X1) or Work Environment (X2) and Employee Performance (Y). Therefore, work motivation functions more as a consequent variable rather than an intervening variable in this study.

Discussion

The results of the direct effect analysis indicate that Work–Life Balance (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y), with a very strong path coefficient ($\beta = 0.958$; $t = 39.057$; $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that employees' ability to balance job demands with their personal lives contributes substantially to performance improvement. Employees who experience a healthy work–life balance tend to have lower stress levels, higher work focus, and more effective time management. These results are consistent with the findings of Greenhaus and Allen (2023) as well as Putra and Santoso (2024), who argue that work–life balance is a key determinant of employee performance, particularly in public sector organizations that require consistency and performance stability.

However, the findings reveal that the Work Environment (X2) does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Performance (Y) ($\beta = -0.072$; $t = 0.639$; $p > 0.05$). This result indicates that although the work environment plays an important role in supporting daily work activities, it does not necessarily lead directly to improved performance. This may be attributed to the characteristics of public sector organizations, which operate under formal work systems, standardized operating procedures, and performance targets that are largely determined by regulations rather than by physical or social working conditions. This finding aligns with the studies of Rahman et al. (2024) and Siregar and Lubis (2025), which report that the work environment does not always have a direct impact on performance when work systems and performance evaluation mechanisms are highly administrative and structured.

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Furthermore, the analysis shows that Work–Life Balance (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation (Z) ($\beta = 0.163$; $t = 7.296$; $p < 0.001$). This indicates that employees who are able to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives tend to exhibit higher enthusiasm, stronger internal drive, and greater work commitment. Such balance allows employees to recover psychologically, which in turn enhances their motivation to perform work tasks. This finding supports previous studies by Haar et al. (2023) and Wibowo and Ananda (2024), which emphasize that work–life balance significantly influences work motivation through improved psychological well-being.

In addition, the Work Environment (X2) is found to have a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation (Z), with a very strong path coefficient ($\beta = 0.897$; $t = 45.113$; $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that a comfortable, safe, and supportive work environment, combined with harmonious interpersonal relationships, can substantially enhance employee motivation. Employees working in a conducive environment are more likely to feel valued, secure, and encouraged to contribute optimally. This finding is consistent with Sedarmayanti (2023) as well as Kurniawan and Pratiwi (2025), who highlight the work environment as a primary factor shaping employee motivation, particularly in public sector institutions.

In contrast, the results indicate that Work Motivation (Z) does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance (Y) ($\beta = 0.119$; $t = 0.946$; $p > 0.05$). This finding implies that high levels of motivation do not necessarily translate directly into improved employee performance. Such a condition may result from limited opportunities for innovation, rigid task allocation, and performance appraisal systems that prioritize administrative compliance over actual performance outcomes. This result is in line with studies by Putri et al. (2024) and Nasution (2025), which suggest that work motivation does not always serve as a direct predictor of performance in public sector organizations characterized by strict regulatory frameworks.

Regarding the indirect effect analysis presented in Table 4.7, the results show that Work Motivation (Z) does not mediate the relationship between Work–Life Balance (X1) and Employee Performance (Y) ($\beta = 0.019$; $t = 0.901$; $p > 0.05$). This finding indicates that although work–life balance enhances work motivation, such increased motivation is insufficient to significantly transmit its effect to employee performance. This result supports the study of Hidayat and Ramadhan (2024), which found that the mediating role of motivation weakens when performance is more strongly influenced by organizational systems and policies.

A similar pattern is observed in the indirect pathway from Work Environment (X2) through Work Motivation (Z) to Employee Performance (Y), which is also not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.107$; $t = 0.949$; $p > 0.05$). This suggests that although the work environment significantly improves employee motivation, such motivation does not effectively translate into improved performance through an indirect mechanism. This

finding reinforces the conclusions of Sari and Nugroho (2025), who argue that work motivation often fails to function as a mediating variable in public sector organizations because employee performance is primarily determined by work structures and formal evaluation systems.

Overall, the findings of this study emphasize that Work–Life Balance is the most consistent factor in enhancing Employee Performance, particularly through its strong direct effect. Meanwhile, the Work Environment plays a crucial role in increasing Work Motivation, but does not exert either a direct or indirect influence on employee performance. Furthermore, Work Motivation is not supported as an intervening variable in the relationship between the independent variables and employee performance.

Therefore, improving employee performance in the context of this study cannot rely solely on increasing work motivation. Instead, it requires organizational policies that genuinely support work–life balance, such as proportional workload management, flexible work arrangements, and the strengthening of objective and measurable performance management systems. These findings provide important managerial implications, suggesting that organizations should integrate work–life balance policies with effective performance management systems to achieve sustainable improvements in employee performance.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the structural model (inner model) analysis using the SEM-PLS approach, as well as the preceding discussion, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Work–Life Balance (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y).
   The test results show a path coefficient of 0.958, a T-statistic value of 39.057 (> 1.96), and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05); therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This finding indicates that the better employees are able to balance work demands with their personal lives, the more optimal their performance becomes.
2. Work Environment (X2) does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance (Y).
   The analysis results indicate a path coefficient of −0.072, with a T-statistic value of 0.639 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.525 (> 0.05); thus, the hypothesis is rejected. This finding suggests that work environment conditions are not yet able to directly drive improvements in employee performance.
3. Work–Life Balance (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation (Z).
   The test results show a path coefficient of 0.163, a T-statistic value of 7.296 (> 1.96), and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05); therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that employees who are able to balance their work and personal lives tend to have higher levels of work motivation.

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4. Work Environment (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation (Z). The analysis results show a path coefficient of 0.897, a T-statistic value of 45.113 (> 1.96), and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05); thus, the hypothesis is accepted. This finding indicates that a conducive, comfortable, and supportive work environment is able to enhance employees' enthusiasm and work motivation.
5. Work Motivation (Z) does not have a significant effect on Employee Performance (Y). The test results show a path coefficient of 0.119, with a T-statistic value of 0.946 (< 1.96) and a P-value of 0.347 (> 0.05); therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This result indicates that work motivation alone is not sufficient to directly improve employee performance without the support of other structural and systemic factors.
6. Work Motivation (Z) does not mediate the relationship between Work–Life Balance (X1) and Employee Performance (Y). The indirect effect test results show an Original Sample value of 0.019, a T-statistic value of 0.901 (< 1.96), and a P-value of 0.370 (> 0.05). Thus, work motivation does not function as an intervening variable in the relationship between work–life balance and employee performance.
7. Work Motivation (Z) does not mediate the relationship between Work Environment (X2) and Employee Performance (Y). The indirect effect test results show an Original Sample value of 0.107, a T-statistic value of 0.949 (< 1.96), and a P-value of 0.345 (> 0.05). This confirms that although the work environment has a significant effect on work motivation, this effect cannot be significantly transmitted to improve employee performance.

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