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Task Clarity, Work Motivation, and Employee Performance: Evidence from the Mediating Role of Work Stress

Maria Anastasia^{1*}, Jumriaty Jusman²

^{1,2}Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pancasetia Banjarmasin, Indonesia

* Corresponding author e-mail: anastasiamaria330@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effects of task clarity and work motivation on employee performance, with work stress serving as a mediating variable, using the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory. The research adopts a quantitative explanatory design and involves all 31 employees of the Martapura City Subdistrict Office as the research sample, applying a saturated sampling technique. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that task clarity has a significant effect on work stress but does not directly influence employee performance. Work motivation is found to have a positive and significant effect on both work stress and employee performance. Furthermore, work stress has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, indicating that manageable levels of stress may function as a challenge stressor that enhances performance. The indirect effect analysis reveals that work stress significantly mediates the relationship between task clarity and employee performance, while its mediating role in the relationship between work motivation and performance is marginally significant. These findings suggest that employee performance is not solely determined by structural and motivational factors but is strongly influenced by psychological mechanisms, particularly work stress. From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the JD-R Theory by demonstrating that job and personal resources often affect performance indirectly through stress-related processes. Practically, the results highlight the importance of managing work stress optimally when improving task clarity and work motivation, especially in public sector organizations.

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Introduction

Employee performance in 2025 is characterized by a growing paradox. On the one hand, productivity is increasingly driven by technological advancements, hybrid work arrangements, and data driven performance

management systems. On the other hand, employee engagement has shown a declining trend, while the emergence of the “quiet quitting” phenomenon has prevented many employees from fully realizing their performance potential. Consequently, performance can no longer be evaluated solely

based on output indicators, but must also encompass work processes, collaboration quality, learning capacity, and contributions to organizational culture (Global & Work, 2025). Employee performance constitutes a strategic issue for both public and private organizations in Indonesia, as it directly determines the effectiveness of organizational goal attainment and the quality of services delivered (Sari et al., 2024). Prior research suggests that employee performance is shaped not only by individual competencies but also by managerial and contextual factors embedded in job design and work environment (Putri et al., 2023). Among these factors, job clarity often conceptualized as role clarity plays a critical role in reducing ambiguity, aligning expectations, and enabling employees to perform tasks effectively (Breugh & Colihan, 1994; Parker et al., 2017).

In addition, work motivation has been widely recognized as a key psychological driver that energizes employees to invest effort, persist in task execution, and engage in discretionary behaviors that support organizational goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Empirical evidence from the Indonesian context indicates that declining or suboptimal employee performance frequently stems from two fundamental issues: unclear task allocation (low role clarity) and insufficiently developed work motivation. These conditions manifest in organizational symptoms such as delays in task completion, low productivity, task execution errors, and a lack of initiative and proactive participation among employees. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, job clarity and work motivation function as essential job and personal resources that help employees cope with work demands and sustain performance, whereas the absence of such resources increases the likelihood of work stress and performance deterioration (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This theoretical lens provides a robust framework for

understanding how managerial practices shape employee performance outcomes in contemporary organizational settings.

According to Fayol's principle of division of work, tasks should be broken down into smaller and more specialized components and assigned to individuals who are most suited to perform them, thereby enhancing efficiency and productivity through specialization (Fayol, 1980). In a broader organizational context, task allocation (or division of work) refers to a systematic managerial process through which work activities are identified, decomposed into specific tasks, and assigned to individuals or units based on their competencies, roles, and organizational requirements. Effective task allocation clarifies expectations, reduces role ambiguity, and enables employees to focus their efforts on tasks that align with their skills, ultimately supporting higher levels of performance (Awaluddin, 2023).

Unclear task allocation remains prevalent, particularly within local government institutions and public sector organizations. This condition is commonly manifested in overlapping tasks, multiple role assignments, and misalignment between workload and employee competencies. Such ambiguity in task allocation leads to confusion among employees in setting work priorities, reduces operational efficiency, and increases the likelihood of role conflict (Firmansyah et al., 2025). Moreover, disproportionate task allocation where some employees are burdened with excessive workloads while others experience relatively light responsibilities creates productivity imbalances and ultimately undermines overall organizational performance.

Empirical studies in local government organizations indicate that clear, fair, and competency-based task allocation contributes significantly to improvements in employee performance, both in terms of work quality and quantity (Situmorang et al., 2023).

However, contrasting evidence emerges from the private sector. A study by Yochinia (2025) conducted in a manufacturing company found that division of work did not have a significant direct effect on employee performance. Even when examined simultaneously with job training, task allocation remained statistically insignificant.

On the other hand, work motivation is also a key factor influencing employee performance in Indonesia. Work motivation is an internal and external drive that stimulates, directs, and maintains employee work behavior, encouraging them to work optimally, consistently, and oriented toward achieving organizational goals. Despite the implementation of performance appraisal and remuneration systems, various studies show that employee work motivation still tends to fluctuate (Mercuri & Hermina, 2025). Low motivation is often caused by a lack of recognition, limited career development opportunities, and perceived unfairness in task allocation and performance appraisals (HRnesia, 2024).

Previous research concluded that work motivation has a positive and significant impact on employee performance, with highly motivated employees tending to demonstrate greater commitment, discipline, and work productivity (Basyid, 2024). However, a study by Caroline & Sukandi (2023) found that partial remuneration in various institutions did not significantly impact performance or motivation, such as at Tamansari Semanggi Apartment.

Previous relevant research, particularly a study published in the Budapest International Research and Critics Institute Journal (BIRCI Journal) by Sasela & Agustian (2022), has directly examined the influence of task division and work motivation on employee performance. However, this research still has limitations because it only emphasizes the direct relationship between variables without examining the psychological mechanisms that explain how and why this relationship occurs. Based on an in-depth literature review, the authors found a research gap in the limited

empirical studies that include job stress as a mediating variable in the relationship between task division clarity, work motivation, and employee performance. Most previous studies have treated job stress as an independent variable or only examined the direct effect of work motivation on performance, without integrating task division clarity as an antecedent factor that triggers employee psychological conditions.

The main novelty of this research lies in the development of a mediation model that examines the role of job stress as a psychological mechanism that bridges the influence of task clarity and work motivation on employee performance. Thus, this study not only explains the causal relationship between variables but also reveals the internal processes employees use to respond to work demands stemming from task clarity and work motivation levels.

Furthermore, this study provides a contextual contribution by applying the model to an organizational environment, specifically to employees at the Martapura City sub-district office, who still face overlapping task allocation, disproportionate workloads, and high work pressure. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to enrich the human resource management literature, particularly regarding employee performance management through the mediating role of work stress.

Literature Review

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory

This research is based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, which states that employee performance is determined by the balance between job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Clarity in task allocation and work motivation are conceptualized as important job and personal resources because they reduce role ambiguity, increase work energy, and strengthen employees' ability to cope with job demands. Conversely, excessive or poorly managed job demands will increase job stress, ultimately weakening employee focus and

performance. Within this framework, job stress serves as a mediating mechanism through which clarity in task allocation and work motivation influence employee performance. Thus, the JD-R Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for explaining the direct and indirect effects tested in this study.

Hypothesis Development

The Effect of Task Clarity on Work Stress

Task clarity constitutes a critical structural aspect within organizations that determines the extent to which employees understand their roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of authority. When task allocation is clearly defined, employees have certainty regarding what needs to be accomplished, the performance standards expected of them, and the coordination processes involved (Rahmatullah & Ali, 2025). Such conditions reduce uncertainty and role ambiguity, thereby lowering the psychological pressure arising from role confusion and task overlap.

In contrast, unclear task allocation often generates role ambiguity and role conflict, which are recognized as primary sources of work stress (Rahmatullah & Ali, 2025). Employees who lack a clear understanding of their responsibilities tend to experience anxiety, mental fatigue, and emotional strain, as job demands are perceived to exceed their capabilities or available resources. From the perspective of Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, task clarity functions as a key job resource that helps mitigate psychological job demands and reduce work stress.

Theoretically, Role Theory proposed by Kahn (1964) explains that role ambiguity is a major antecedent of work stress, as individuals lack sufficient information to effectively fulfill role expectations. This perspective suggests that lower levels of task clarity are associated with higher levels of work stress experienced by employees. Furthermore, Beehr & Newman (1978) emphasize that job-related factors such

as task ambiguity and role conflict serve as central stressors that trigger both psychological and physiological stress responses in the workplace.

Consistent with these theoretical arguments, empirical findings and theoretical reviews by Nexus (2025) indicate that task clarity (role clarity) has a negative effect on work stress, implying that clearer task definitions and role expectations are associated with lower levels of stress, burnout, and psychological distress among employees.

H₁: Task clarity has a negative effect on work stress.

The Effect of Task Clarity on Employee Performance

Task clarity represents a critical structural aspect that determines how employees understand their roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of authority within an organization (Rahmatullah & Ali, 2025). Clearly defined task allocation enables employees to recognize what needs to be done, how tasks should be performed, and the performance standards expected of them. Such clarity reduces role ambiguity and task conflict, allowing employees to focus their time, energy, and competencies more effectively.

Conceptually, task clarity (or division of work) ensures that employees have a clear understanding of their assigned duties, expected outcomes, and the limits of their roles and responsibilities (Awaluddin, 2023). This clarity minimizes role ambiguity and task overlap, enabling employees to allocate their time and energy more efficiently, work in a more focused manner, and produce more consistent outputs. Accordingly, the clearer the task allocation within an organization, the higher the level of employee performance, as reflected in the quality, quantity, and timeliness of task completion.

A review of the literature on division of work and workload indicates that clear task allocation, appropriate job placement, and

effective performance evaluation have a positive effect on employee performance (Dwi & Ali, 2022). Furthermore, the study by Sasela & Agustian (2022) demonstrates that division of work has a significant effect on employee performance (significant *t*-test) and, when examined simultaneously with work motivation, also shows a significant joint effect (significant *F*-test).

H₂: Task clarity has a positive effect on employee performance.

The Effect of Work Motivation on Work Stress

Work motivation represents a psychological resource that plays a crucial role in determining how employees respond to job demands. Employees with higher levels of work motivation tend to possess greater energy, commitment, and psychological resilience when facing work-related pressures (LePine et al., 2005). Motivation enables employees to perceive job demands as manageable challenges rather than as threats that generate psychological strain. Accordingly, work motivation functions as a protective mechanism that helps suppress the emergence of work stress.

From an organizational behavior perspective, Schermerhorn et al (2011) explain that motivation enhances individuals' coping capacity in dealing with work pressures, thereby reducing stress levels. Similarly, Judge & Robbins (2017) argue that motivated individuals are more likely to exhibit stronger self-regulation and more positive work perceptions, which in turn are associated with lower levels of work stress. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory framework, work motivation is positioned as a personal resource that assists individuals in managing job demands and mitigating job strain.

A growing body of empirical evidence supports the negative relationship between work motivation and work stress. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) demonstrate that personal resources, including motivation and work

engagement, play a significant role in reducing work stress by strengthening individuals' capacity to cope with job demands. Empirical studies across organizational contexts further indicate that employees with high levels of work motivation tend to experience lower levels of work stress. Moreover, a quantitative study by Parker & DeCotiis (1983) shows that positive psychological conditions, including strong internal work drive, contribute to the reduction of emotional strain in the workplace.

H₃: Work motivation has a negative effect on work stress.

The Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that direct the intensity, direction, and persistence of employees' behavior in carrying out their job tasks (LePine et al., 2005). Employees with high levels of work motivation tend to demonstrate greater effort, stronger persistence, and higher work engagement in pursuing organizational goals. This condition enables employees to utilize their abilities and available resources more effectively, resulting in superior performance in terms of work quality, quantity, and timeliness.

From the perspective of organizational behavior, Judge & Robbins (2017) emphasize that motivation is a primary determinant of performance because it influences the amount of effort individuals are willing to exert in their work. Similarly, Mangkunegara (2011) argues that work motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing employee productivity and the quality of work outcomes. Accordingly, work motivation can be viewed as a personal resource that directly facilitates the achievement of higher performance levels.

A substantial body of empirical research supports the positive relationship between work motivation and employee performance. A study conducted by Sasela & Agustian (2022) in the Indonesian healthcare service sector found that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee

performance. Employees with higher levels of motivation consistently demonstrated more optimal performance compared to those with lower motivation.

H₄: Work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance

The Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance

Work stress has been widely recognized as a critical psychological condition that influences employees' ability to perform effectively. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, work stress emerges when job demands exceed employees' available resources, leading to strain, energy depletion, and reduced work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Under such conditions, employees experience cognitive overload, emotional exhaustion, and decreased concentration, which collectively impair task execution and decision-making quality.

Empirically, prior studies consistently demonstrate a negative relationship between work stress and employee performance. Excessive stress has been shown to reduce productivity, accuracy, and work quality, while increasing errors and withdrawal behaviors (Beehr & Newman, 1978; Judge & Robbins, 2017). When stress levels remain unmanaged, employees tend to allocate psychological resources toward coping rather than task accomplishment, ultimately undermining performance outcomes. Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, this study proposes the following hypothesis

H₅: Work Stress has a negative effect on Employee performance.

The Effect of Task Clarity on Employee Performance Mediated by Work Stress

Role clarity is a crucial element in job design, reflecting the extent to which employees understand the responsibilities, authority, and performance expectations inherent in their roles. Within the Job Demands–Resources

(JD-R) Theory framework, role clarity is viewed as a job resource that helps individuals manage job demands effectively, thus facilitating optimal performance. When tasks and roles are clearly defined, ambiguity and role conflict can be reduced, ultimately increasing employee focus and effectiveness in carrying out their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Conversely, unclear task allocation has the potential to increase work stress because employees are faced with role uncertainty, overlapping responsibilities, and unstructured work demands. Work stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's psychological and cognitive resources. International empirical studies show that low role clarity is positively correlated with increased psychological strain and burnout, indicating that task clarity plays a strategic role in reducing work stress. (Lang et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2022).

Furthermore, various studies published in reputable international journals show that work stress negatively impacts employee performance. High levels of stress can reduce concentration, decision-making capacity, and work motivation, thus impacting the quality and quantity of performance. Meta-analyses and empirical studies in organizational psychology and human resource management confirm that work stress is a significant determinant of individual performance impairment in organizations (Liu et al., 2022; Lang et al., 2007).

Based on the theoretical foundation and empirical evidence, work stress is positioned as a mediating variable in the relationship between clarity of task division and employee performance. High clarity of task division can reduce work stress levels by reducing role ambiguity and conflict, thereby creating a more conducive psychological environment for improved performance (Mañas et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that clarity of task division indirectly influences employee performance through work stress.

H₆: Work stress mediates the effect of task clarity on employee performance.

The Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance Mediated by Work Stress

Work motivation represents both internal and external drives that determine the direction, intensity, and persistence of individual behavior in performing job-related tasks. Within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation is viewed as a key psychological factor that encourages individuals to perform optimally through the fulfillment of basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Consistently, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory explains that work motivation functions as a personal resource that enhances employees’ energy, engagement, and psychological resilience in coping with job demands, thereby exerting a positive effect on performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

In addition to having a direct effect on performance, work motivation also plays an important role in shaping employees’ psychological responses to work pressure. Employees with high levels of work motivation tend to have better coping abilities and more positive perceptions of job demands, resulting in lower levels of work stress. Conversely, low work motivation can exacerbate perceptions of workload and increase emotional exhaustion. International empirical studies show that motivation and work engagement are negatively correlated with work stress and burnout, as motivated

individuals possess greater psychological capacity to cope with work-related pressures (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Broeck et al., 2016).

Furthermore, work stress has been consistently shown to have a negative effect on employee performance. High levels of work stress can disrupt concentration, reduce the quality of decision-making, and weaken motivation and work engagement, which ultimately leads to a decline in individual performance. Meta-analyses and empirical studies in organizational psychology journals indicate that work stress is a critical determinant that hinders the achievement of optimal performance, particularly under conditions of high job demands (Liu et al., 2022; Podsakoff et al., 2007).

Based on the theoretical foundation and empirical evidence, work stress is positioned as a mediating variable in the relationship between work motivation and employee performance. High levels of work motivation are able to suppress work stress by enhancing psychological energy, individual resilience, and work engagement, thereby creating more favorable conditions for performance improvement (Chandrakanta et al., 2025). Thus, work motivation not only has a direct effect on employee performance but also exerts an indirect effect through the reduction of work stress.

H₇: Work stress mediates the effect of Work motivation on employee performance.

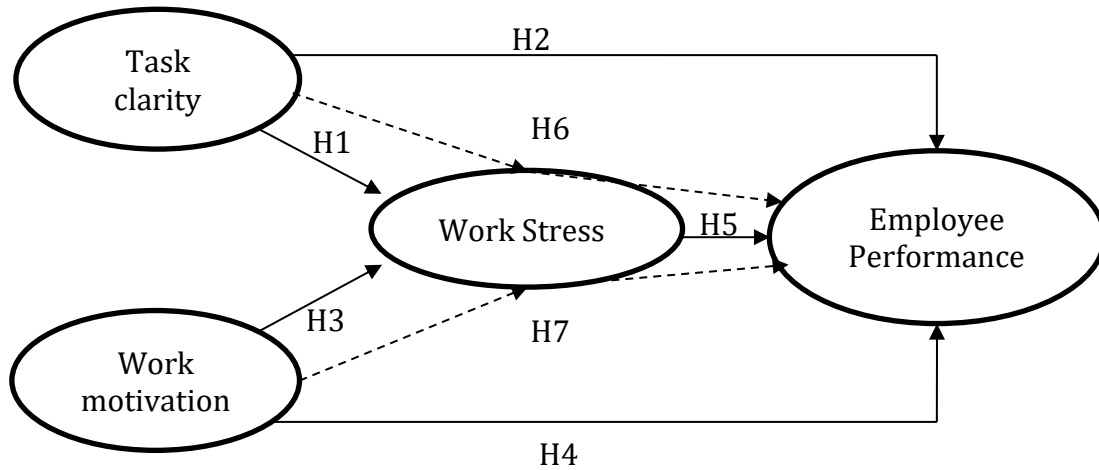


Figure 1 Research Model

Methods

This study adopts a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at testing and explaining the causal relationships among the variables under investigation. The independent variables in this study include task clarity and work motivation, while employee performance serves as the dependent variable. In addition, work stress is positioned as an intervening variable that mediates the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The quantitative approach is selected because it allows for

systematic and objective hypothesis testing through statistical analysis techniques.

The research population includes all employees of the Martapura Kota Subdistrict Office, totaling 31 individuals, consisting of 28 civil servants and 3 contract employees. Given the relatively small population size, this study employs a saturated sampling technique, in which all members of the population are included as the research sample. This study involves two exogenous variables and two endogenous variables, each of which is operationally defined to explain the concepts and their measurement in the research.

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Research Variables and Indicators

No	Variable	Variable Definition	Indicator	Source
1	Task clarity (X ₁)	Job assignment refers to written information that outlines the duties and responsibilities, working conditions, work relationships, and other job-related aspects associated with a specific position within an organization (Hasibuan, 2007).	Employee placement Workload Job specialization	(Hasibuan Malayu, 2007), (Dessler, 2017)
2	Work motivation (X ₂)	Motivation is the process of influencing or encouraging individuals or work groups from external sources to motivate them to carry out predetermined tasks or objectives (Samsudin, 2015).	Responsibility Work achievement Opportunities for advancement Recognition of performance Challenging work	(Samsudin, 2015)
3	Work Stress (Z)	Stress is a condition that exerts pressure on an individual’s mind and psychological well-being beyond their capacity, and if allowed to persist	Physical Psychological Behavioral	(Fahmi, 2016), (Judge & Robbins, 2017)

No	Variable	Variable Definition	Indicator	Source
		without solutions, it may adversely affect their health (Fahmi, 2016:214).		
4	Employee Performance (Y)	Performance is the work outcome achieved by an individual in carrying out assigned tasks, based on adequacy, experience, and timeliness (Hasibuan, 2016).	Work quality Work quantity Responsibility Employee attitude	(Hasibuan Malayu, 2016), (Mangkunegara, 2017).

Based on the research hypotheses and design, the collected data are analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS). PLS is a powerful analytical method because it can be applied to all data scales, requires fewer assumptions, and does not necessitate a large sample size. In addition to being used for theory confirmation, PLS can also be employed to build relationships and test propositions.

Results and Discussion

Validity Test

Convergent validity is used to assess the degree of validity of the relationship between each indicator and the construct or latent variable it represents. In this study, the criterion used to evaluate convergent validity is a minimum loading factor value of 0.60, as recommended by (Ghozali & Hengky, 2015).

Table 2.
Loading Factor Results

Indikator	Outer Loading	Indikator	Outer Loading
TC1	0,895	Z.1	0,803
TC2	0,861	Z.2	0,890
TC3	0,849	Z.3	0,856
TC4	0,862	Z.4	0,741
TC5	0,767	Z.5	0,807
TC6	0,822	Z.6	0,879
TC7	0,742	Z.7	0,898
WM1	0,802	Z.8	0,781
WM2	0,809	Y.1	0,837
WM3	0,766	Y.2	0,838
WM4	0,849	Y.3	0,863
WM5	0,792	Y.4	0,817
WM6	0,791	Y.5	0,830
WM7	0,772	Y.6	0,893
WM8	0,748	Y.7	0,892
WM9	0,806	Y.8	0,904
WM10	0,857	Y.9	0,813
WM11	0,857	Y.10	0,869

Source: Processed data (2025)

The results of the model testing indicate that all indicators have loading factor values above 0.60. Therefore, no constructs were eliminated from the measurement model. This finding suggests that all constructs in the study have met the criteria for convergent validity. Furthermore, discriminant validity is used to assess the extent to which a construct is clearly distinct from other constructs. In other words,

discriminant validity ensures that each construct in the model truly represents a different concept and does not suffer from measurement overlap with other constructs. In this study, discriminant validity was tested using the cross-loading method.

Table 3.
Cross Loading Results

	Task clarity	Work motivation	Work Stress	Employee Performance
TC1	0,895	0,628	0,714	0,598
TC2	0,861	0,662	0,634	0,692
TC3	0,849	0,575	0,711	0,575
TC4	0,862	0,412	0,651	0,567
TC5	0,767	0,524	0,530	0,399
TC6	0,822	0,595	0,570	0,506
TC7	0,742	0,510	0,548	0,581
WM1	0,431	0,802	0,528	0,648
WM2	0,690	0,809	0,663	0,674
WM3	0,571	0,766	0,428	0,449
WM4	0,494	0,849	0,486	0,627
WM5	0,559	0,792	0,409	0,570
WM6	0,693	0,791	0,642	0,764
WM7	0,437	0,772	0,649	0,673
WM8	0,557	0,748	0,586	0,556
WM9	0,464	0,806	0,543	0,569
WM10	0,516	0,857	0,538	0,725
WM11	0,537	0,857	0,709	0,703

Source: Processed data (2025)

Based on the results of the cross-loading test presented in the table, it can be observed that the correlation values between each indicator and its corresponding construct are higher than their correlations with other constructs. These findings indicate that all constructs or latent variables in the model have met the criteria for discriminant validity. Thus, the indicators within each construct block are able to represent their respective constructs more accurately than other constructs.

Reliabilitas Test

Reliability testing is conducted to assess the level of accuracy, consistency, and stability of the research instrument in measuring a construct. A variable is considered reliable if the resulting composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values exceed the threshold of 0.70, as suggested by Hair et al (2017).

Table 4.
Reliability Test Results

Variable	Composite reliability	Cronbach alpha
Task clarity	0,931	0,924
Employee Performance	0,963	0,959
Work motivation	0,950	0,946
Work Stress	0,944	0,937

Source: Processed data (2025)

The results above indicate that the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha values are considered satisfactory, as they exceed the

minimum threshold of 0,70. This implies that the constructs demonstrate good internal consistency and that the indicators used

consistently measure their respective constructs.

R Square Test

The R-square (R²) value is a measure that indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables in the research

model. In studies involving more than two independent variables, the adjusted R-square (adjusted R²) is used because it accounts for the number of predictor variables included in the model. The adjusted R-square value is generally smaller than the R-square value, as explained by Hair et al (2017).

Table 5.
R Square Test Results

Variabel	R-square
Work Stress	0,646
Employee Performance	0,747

Source: Processed data (2025)

The table shows that the R-square value for work stress is 0,646, indicating that task clarity and work motivation explain 64,6% of the variance in work stress, while the remaining 35,4% is explained by other factors not examined in this study. Based on the rule of thumb, this R² value reflects a strong relationship between the variables and work stress.

The R-square value for employee performance is 0,747, indicating that task clarity, work motivation, and work stress jointly explain 74,7% of the variance in performance, while the remaining 25,3% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Based on the rule of thumb, this R² value reflects a strong relationship between the variables and employee performance.

Predictive Relevance Test (Q²)

Q² is a measure used to assess the predictive power of a model and is commonly applied as part of model evaluation in PLS-SEM. It reflects the extent to which the model is able to predict or reproduce the values of endogenous variables that were not used in model estimation. The Q-Square (Q²) value serves a function similar to the coefficient of determination (R-Square) in regression analysis, where a higher Q-Square value indicates better predictive capability of the model. In other words, the higher the Q-Square value, the better the model fit to the research data (Chin, 1998). The Q-Square

value is calculated using the following formula:

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R^2) (1 - R^2)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0,646) (1 - 0,747)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - 0,0895$$

$$= 0,9104$$

Q² value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance for the dependent variable. This means that the model is able to predict the values of the dependent variable better than a model that relies solely on the mean.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted through the inner model (structural model) by examining the R-square values, path coefficients (beta), T-statistics, and P-values obtained from the bootstrapping results using SmartPLS 3.0. A hypothesis is considered supported if the relationship between constructs shows a T-statistic greater than 1,96, a P-value less than 0,05 (α = 5%), and a positive beta coefficient. The T-statistic reflects the strength of the relationship between constructs, while the P-value indicates the level of significance of the structural path (Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 6.
Direct Effect Path Coefficient Results

Variabel	Original sample	T statistics	P values
Task clarity -> Work Stress	0,507	3,198	0,001
Task clarity -> Employee Performance	0,036	0,172	0,864
Work motivation -> Work Stress	0,370	2,580	0,010
Work motivation -> Employee Performance	0,453	2,183	0,029
Work Stress -> Employee Performance	0,451	3,115	0,002

Source: Processed data (2025)

Based on the results of the direct path test in the structural model, several findings were obtained, namely:

1. Task clarity has a significant effect on work stress ($\beta = 0,507$; T-statistic = 3,198; P-value = 0,001). This result indicates that the level of task clarity plays an important role in influencing employees' work stress.
2. The relationship between task clarity and employee performance shows a positive but insignificant path coefficient ($\beta = 0,036$; T-statistic = 0,172; P-value = 0,864). This finding indicates that task clarity is not able to directly enhance employee performance.
3. Work motivation is also proven to have a significant effect on work stress ($\beta = 0,370$; T-statistic = 2,580; P-value = 0,010).
4. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0,453$; T-statistic = 2,183; P-value = 0,029), indicating that higher levels of work motivation are associated with better employee performance.
5. Work stress has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0,451$; T-statistic = 3,115; P-value = 0,002).

Table 7.
Indirect Effect Path Coefficient Results

Variable	Original sample	T statistics	P values
Task clarity -> Work Stress -> Employee Performance	0,229	2,028	0,043
Work motivation -> Work Stress -> Employee Performance	0,167	1,998	0,050

Source: Processed data (2025)

The results of the indirect path coefficient testing indicate that task clarity affects employee performance through work stress, with a coefficient value of 0,229, a T-statistic of 2,028, and a P-value of 0,043. The P-value, which is lower than 0,05, indicates that this indirect effect is statistically significant. These findings demonstrate that work stress serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between task clarity and employee performance. In other words, task clarity

influences employee performance through the mechanism of reducing or managing work stress.

Furthermore, the indirect path from work motivation to employee performance through work stress shows a coefficient value of 0,167, with a T-statistic of 1,998 and a P-value of 0,050. This value lies exactly at the 5 percent significance threshold, indicating that the indirect effect of work motivation on employee performance through work stress is

marginally significant. These results suggest that work stress also functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between work motivation and employee performance, although the strength of the effect is relatively weaker compared to the mediation path of task clarity.

Overall, these findings confirm that work stress plays an important role as an intervening mechanism that bridges the effects of task clarity and work motivation on employee performance. This indicates that organizational efforts to enhance task clarity and work motivation not only have a direct impact on performance but also exert indirect effects through more effective management of work stress.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that task clarity has a significant effect on work stress, suggesting that task organization and understanding play an important role in shaping employees' psychological conditions. Within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, task clarity is viewed as a job resource that helps employees manage job demands. When task clarity is low, employees experience role ambiguity and uncertainty regarding responsibilities, which increase cognitive and emotional demands and consequently trigger work stress. Conversely, well-defined task clarity helps reduce psychological pressure by making job demands more structured and predictable (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). These findings are consistent with international empirical evidence showing that role ambiguity and lack of role clarity are major sources of work stress. Eatough et al. (2011), in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, found that role ambiguity has a significant positive relationship with work stress and burnout. In addition, Lang et al. (2007) demonstrated that low role clarity increases psychological strain arising from job demands, which ultimately has a negative impact on individual well-being and performance. Therefore, the results of this study reinforce the JD-R framework by

emphasizing that task clarity functions as a strategic job resource capable of reducing work stress and maintaining employees' psychological well-being in the face of job demands.

The results of this study indicate that task clarity has a positive but insignificant effect on employee performance, suggesting that task clarity does not directly enhance performance. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, this finding can be explained by the assumption that job resources such as task clarity do not always exert a direct impact on performance but often operate through specific psychological mechanisms. The JD-R framework emphasizes that the effects of job resources on performance are typically mediated by other processes, such as the reduction of psychological strain (health impairment process) or the enhancement of motivation (motivational process). Consequently, the direct effect of task clarity on performance may become weak or insignificant when mediating variables are not taken into account (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). International empirical evidence supports this explanation. Lang et al. (2007), in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, found that role clarity is not always directly associated with performance but influences performance through the reduction of psychological strain. Similar findings were reported by Podsakoff et al. (2007) in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, which demonstrated that job characteristics often affect performance indirectly through employees' psychological conditions. Therefore, the insignificance of the direct effect of task clarity on employee performance in this study does not negate its importance; rather, it confirms that task clarity primarily functions as a job resource that operates through mediating mechanisms, in line with the conceptual framework of the JD-R Theory. The results of this study indicate that work motivation has a significant effect on work stress, highlighting the role of motivation as an important psychological factor in shaping employees' responses to job demands. Within

the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, work motivation is understood as a personal resource that enhances individuals' coping capacity in dealing with job demands, thereby influencing the level of stress experienced. This finding is consistent with international studies showing that motivation and work engagement are negatively associated with stress and burnout, as motivated individuals possess greater psychological resilience in managing work-related pressures (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Therefore, this study further strengthens the JD-R Theory by emphasizing that work motivation functions as a key personal resource in controlling employees' work stress.

The results of this study indicate that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, confirming that motivational conditions are a critical determinant of performance achievement. Within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, work motivation is understood as a personal resource that drives the motivational process a psychological process that enhances individual energy, engagement, and work effort thereby exerting a direct positive impact on performance. Employees with high levels of work motivation tend to demonstrate stronger commitment and greater work effort in completing tasks, even when faced with high job demands. This finding is consistent with international studies showing that motivation and work engagement have a strong positive relationship with employee performance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), thereby reinforcing the JD-R framework that personal resources function as primary drivers of performance achievement.

The results of this study indicate that work stress has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, suggesting that certain levels of stress may function as a performance enhancer. Within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, this finding can be explained through

the concept of *challenge stressors*, namely job demands that, although stressful, are perceived as challenges that can enhance individual focus, motivation, and work effort. When work stress remains at a manageable level and is supported by adequate job resources, job demands may stimulate performance improvement through motivational processes. Empirical evidence supports this explanation, A meta-analysis by LePine et al. (2005) published in the *Academy of Management Journal* demonstrates that challenge stressors are positively related to performance, in contrast to hindrance stressors, which have negative effects. In addition, Podsakoff et al. (2007), in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, found that challenging job demands can enhance performance when individuals possess sufficient resources to manage them. Therefore, the findings of this study extend the application of the JD-R Theory by showing that work stress is not inherently dysfunctional but can contribute positively to employee performance when maintained within optimal levels and supported by adequate job resources.

The results of the indirect path analysis indicate that work stress mediates the effect of task clarity on employee performance, suggesting that task clarity does not directly influence performance but instead operates through employees' psychological mechanisms. This finding is consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, which explains that task clarity functions as a job resource that reduces role ambiguity and task conflict, thereby suppressing work stress arising from job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). International empirical evidence further supports this finding. Lang et al. (2007), in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, demonstrate that psychological strain mediates the relationship between job demands and performance, and that role clarity plays a crucial role in reducing such strain. Similar findings are reported by Eatough et al. (2011), who identify role

ambiguity as a key stressor that negatively affects employee well-being and work effectiveness. In addition, a meta-analysis by Podsakoff et al. (2007) published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* confirms that work stressors, including role ambiguity, exert a significant negative effect on performance. The results of the indirect path testing indicate that work stress mediates the effect of work motivation on employee performance with marginal significance, suggesting that the mediating role of work stress in this relationship is limited. Within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, work motivation is conceptualized as a personal resource that primarily operates through the motivational process to enhance employees' energy, engagement, and work effort. Accordingly, work motivation tends to exert a stronger direct effect on performance, while its indirect effect through the reduction of work stress is relatively weaker and highly dependent on the context of job demands faced by employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). These findings are consistent with international empirical evidence indicating that motivational variables exert a more dominant influence on performance through the enhancement of work engagement rather than through stress reduction. Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, found that motivation and work engagement have a strong positive relationship with performance, whereas stress functions more as an inhibiting factor rather than as a primary mediating pathway. Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Podsakoff et al. (2007) published in the *Academy of Management Journal* demonstrates that the relationship between stress and performance is complex and context dependent, suggesting that the mediating effect of stress in the motivation performance relationship tends to be marginal. Therefore, the results of this study further reinforce the JD-R framework by showing that work stress is not the main mechanism explaining the effect of work motivation on employee performance.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the results of the direct and indirect path coefficient tests, this study concludes that the relationships among task clarity, work motivation, work stress, and employee performance exhibit different patterns of influence. Task clarity is not found to have a direct effect on employee performance, indicating that task clarity alone is insufficient to enhance performance in the absence of supportive psychological working conditions. However, task clarity has a positive and significant effect on work stress, and work stress is shown to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. These findings confirm that work stress plays a critical role as a mechanism that bridges the effect of task clarity on employee performance, as evidenced by the significant indirect path results. Therefore, work stress functions as a mediating variable in this relationship.

Furthermore, work motivation is proven to have a positive and significant direct effect on employee performance, indicating that higher levels of work motivation lead to better performance outcomes. Work motivation also has a significant effect on work stress, and work stress, in turn, is found to significantly influence employee performance. The results of the indirect effect testing indicate that work stress mediates the relationship between work motivation and employee performance, although with a relatively weaker level of significance compared to the mediation effect of task clarity. These findings suggest that work motivation not only affects performance directly but also indirectly through changes in the level of work stress experienced by employees.

The practical implications of this study indicate that improving employee performance cannot be achieved solely through task restructuring or isolated efforts to enhance work motivation. Organizations, particularly public sector institutions, need to pay greater attention to employees' psychological conditions by managing work

stress at an optimal level. Well-structured task clarity should be directed toward reducing dysfunctional stress, while work motivation should be managed in a way that enhances work energy without generating excessive pressure. Thus, effective work stress management becomes a strategic factor in optimizing employee performance. From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study strengthen the view that work stress is an important intervening variable in explaining the relationship between job characteristics, motivational factors, and employee performance.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the relatively small number of respondents drawn from a single institution may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader organizational contexts. Second, the measurement of variables relied on self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce subjectivity bias. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger sample sizes, expand the research scope to different institutions or sectors, and consider incorporating additional variables such as job satisfaction, workload, or organizational support to enrich the understanding of the mechanisms underlying employee performance improvement.

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