

The Influence of Professionalism, Work Culture, and Discipline on Service Performance in Sidoarjo Regency with Appreciation as an Intervening Variable

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the effect of professionalism, work culture, and discipline on service performance, both directly and indirectly through the appreciation variable among public service employees in Sidoarjo Regency. **Method:** The data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 212 respondents during the period of December 2025 to January 2026, and then analyzed using the SEM-PLS method with the assistance of SmartPLS 3.0. **Results:** The results indicate that all variables have a positive and significant effect on service performance, with the highest coefficient values shown by work culture (0.326) and professionalism (0.311). The R Square value for service performance is 0.632, indicating that the model falls into a moderate to strong category. In addition, appreciation is proven to play a significant mediating role, although the indirect effects are relatively smaller, such as the relationship between work culture and service performance through appreciation (0.075). The NFI value of 0.819 suggests that the model has an acceptable level of fit. **Novelty:** Overall, these findings confirm that improving service performance is not only influenced by individual factors but is also strengthened by appreciation mechanisms within the organization.

INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Service Performance (PEKPPP) is a national instrument organized by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenPAN-RB) as part of the implementation of PermenPAN-RB Number 29 of 2022 concerning the Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Service Performance, as last amended by PermenPAN-RB Number 4 of 2023. PEKPPP uses several criteria, namely service policies, professionalism of Human Resources (HR), facilities and infrastructure, public service information systems (SIPP), consultation and complaints, and public service innovation [1]. These six aspects not only serve as technical assessment indicators but also as instruments for changing the work culture of officials to be more adaptive to the dynamic needs of society [2]. Nationally, the implementation of PEKPPP becomes important because it serves as a mechanism for continuous supervision and coaching of government agencies' performance in providing services to the public.

The professionalism of human resources becomes a strategic aspect because the apparatus are the main actors who interact directly with the community and serve as the face of the bureaucracy at the service level [3]. When employees have a strong work ethic, adequate technical skills, and an understanding of public service values, the quality of service will significantly improve. On the other hand, low professionalism can lead to systemic impacts such as decreased public trust, reduced work efficiency, and slower

achievement of regional performance targets [4]. Currently, the achievement of the Public Service Index (PSI) of Sidoarjo Regency can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Public Service Index Achievement Data.

No.	Institution	IPP 2022	IPP 2023	IPP 2024
1	Sidoarjo Regency	3,81	3,71	3,987
2	Surabaya City	4,57	4,53	4,57
3	Gresik Regency	4,58	3,48	4,16
4	Mojokerto Regency	3,47	4,27	4,3
5	Pasuruan Regency	4,44	4,25	4,52

Source: Organization Section of the Regional Secretariat of Sidoarjo Regency, 2025.

Based on Table 1 above, the IPP of Sidoarjo Regency in 2024 is rated 3.987 in the good category. This means that Sidoarjo Regency still needs to make more efforts to achieve this index. Efforts to improve the quality of public services are carried out through the enhancement of human resource aspects, service policies, and complaint management. Equally important is the aspect of innovation, which requires special attention for its development ecosystem in an effort to bring about novelty.

The performance of public services is fundamentally inseparable from the performance of individual employees as the main executors of the service function. In modern public management theory, service performance is viewed as the result of the interaction between systems, resources, and the behavior of individual officials in providing services to the community. Performance is a measure of the level of achievement in implementing an activity or program to realize the organization's goals, objectives, vision, and mission [5]. This means that public service performance reflects the extent to which government officials carry out their duties effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of the community. The quality of service is influenced by the ability of employees to provide reliable, responsive, empathetic service, as well as having assurance of trust and good physical evidence [6].

This research presents several novelties that differ from previous studies. The first novelty is the sampling design, which involves all service implementation employees. With this approach, the research results are believed to have a higher level of representation of the real conditions of the organization, making the empirical findings more valid as a basis for formulating policies to improve service performance. The second novelty is placing appreciation as an intervening variable that connects three organizational factors, namely professionalism, work culture, and discipline, with service performance in the bureaucratic environment of Sidoarjo Regency. Most mediation studies in the context of public and private organizations over the past decade tend to use variables such as job satisfaction, motivation [7], or organizational commitment as mediators; the use of appreciation as a mediator is still relatively rare and has only recently begun to appear in the latest literature exploring the role of recognition in motivation and performance.

Several recent studies show that appreciation has a direct positive impact on motivation and performance, and when included in a mediation model, it can explain mechanisms (for example, how professionalism or work culture enhances performance thru increased employee appreciation [8]). However, evidence regarding the role of appreciation as an intervening factor connecting the three specific independent variables (professionalism, work culture, discipline) to service performance, particularly in the local government sector such as Sidoarjo, is still limited. Most similar studies examine only one or two relationships or use satisfaction/motivation as a mediator [9] [10] [11].

Performance is the level of success of employees in carrying out the tasks that are their responsibility, reflected in the work process, work behavior, and results achieved in accordance with the standards set by the organization. Theoretically, performance is understood as work output influenced by the employees' abilities, experience, and dedication [12], as a series of activities that produce a tangible contribution to the organization's goals [13], and as work results that can be observed and accounted for within a certain period [14]. The performance variable describes how effectively employees perform their roles and contribute to the organization [15].

The professionalism of human resources, which is the focus of this research, reflects high dynamics when viewed from the perspective of its achievements. With a score of 3.366, the IPP of Sidoarjo Regency is still considered to have room for optimization from this perspective based on 6 evaluation aspects in PEKPPP. The uneven quality of human resources, especially in the sub-districts (3.082) and BUMD with 0.9, causes the overall picture to not yet be considered professional. The ability to understand tasks and communicate with the community remains the highest reason why this aspect requires further improvement.

Professionalism is the ability and expertise of individuals in carrying out their work according to their respective fields and levels. This concept encompasses the alignment between bureaucratic capacity and the demands of the tasks at hand, with the fulfillment of this alignment being a primary condition for the creation of a professional apparatus [16]. In other words, the expertise and capabilities of the apparatus reflect the vision and goals that the organization aims to achieve. Previous research shows that professionalism significantly affects performance [17]. However, another study found that professional expertise negatively impacts performance [18].

Professionalism reflects employees' ability to perform tasks based on expertise, integrity, and commitment to work values, which serves as the basis for organizations to assess whether someone deserves recognition [19]. It is emphasized that the higher someone's professionalism, marked by discipline, productivity, and loyalty, the greater the likelihood that the employee will receive appreciation in both financial and non-financial forms, as organizations tend to reward employees who make significant contributions to achieving goals [20].

Work culture is related to work patterns established by supervisors and colleagues, based on certain life values, creating an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable and not pressured while performing their tasks [21]. A positive work culture allows

employees to work calmly and simultaneously supports the company in achieving its targets. Previous research revealed that work culture does not have a partial effect on performance [22]. Meanwhile, in another study, work culture has a significant impact on performance [23].

A positive work culture or organizational culture greatly influences the emergence of appreciation for employees because a culture that prioritizes recognition, cooperation, and appreciation of individual contributions will create an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to excel. For example, studies show that a good organizational culture has a significant positive impact on work motivation and employee satisfaction, which in turn affects their overall performance [24].

Efforts to improve employee performance are closely related to the level of discipline possessed by the employees. Discipline is behavior, attitude, and actions that must follow the applicable rules [25]. If employees lack discipline, then their work results and daily activities can face obstacles. There are differences in previous research findings, namely that work discipline does not affect employee performance [26]. However, another study revealed that work discipline has a positive and significant impact on employee performance [25].

Work discipline, which includes adherence to rules, punctuality, consistency in task execution, and responsibility toward work standards, plays a key role in determining the level of appreciation received by employees because those who demonstrate high discipline are often viewed as reliable contributors and deserving of recognition from the organization. Previous research found that work discipline has a positive and significant impact on compensation with a high coefficient [27].

Employee appreciation is now viewed as a strategic factor in enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance, both through financial and non-financial rewards. Non-financial rewards such as recognition, career development, and job security have a stronger influence on work motivation compared to financial rewards, as they can fulfill employees' psychological needs for recognition and appreciation [28]. Furthermore, consistent recognition and appreciation strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation within the framework of providing freedom, self-efficacy, a sense of being valued by peers, and opportunities for development, thereby increasing productivity and commitment to the organization [29]. Appreciation can be defined as a form of recognition, reward, or positive evaluation given to individuals for their contributions, efforts, or work results [30]. Similar results are reinforced by showing that non-monetary forms of appreciation, such as training, work flexibility, and a supportive work environment, significantly contribute to employee satisfaction and loyalty [31]. The application of tangible appreciation (such as additional allowances, scholarships, or training opportunities) and non-tangible appreciation (such as verbal recognition, promotions, granting trust, or motivational counseling) can effectively build human resource professionalism. Appreciation as a variable has not been proven to affect performance as previous research [32] indicates. However, there are also conclusions

from other studies that state that appreciation has a positive relationship with performance, both directly and indirectly [33].

The appreciation variable in the context of this research is defined as a psychological or organizational mechanism that bridges the influence of three independent variables, namely professionalism, work culture, and discipline, on the dependent variable of service performance. Appreciation functions as an intervening/mediator variable, which is an intermediary variable that explains how or why the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y) occurs [34]. The mediator variable explains how or why two variables are related to each other [35].

In contrast to the moderating variable, the moderating variable affects the strength or direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, rather than bridging the process of that relationship [36]. The intervening variable explains how or why two variables are related to each other, while the moderating variable affects the strength or direction of the relationship between those two variables [37].

In the framework of this research, positioning appreciation as an intervening variable means that professionalism, work culture, and discipline enhance employee appreciation, which in turn impacts the improvement of service performance. Thus, appreciation is not just an additional variable, but part of the causal process that connects the independent variable with the dependent variable.

The importance of the appreciation variable as an intervening factor lies in its ability to reveal the internal mechanisms of the organization [38] that explain why and how professionalism, work culture, and discipline affect service performance. By adding appreciation as a mediator, this research can explain the process of inter-variable relationships more comprehensively and strengthen the novelty of the research. Additionally, the placement of appreciation as an intervening variable in the context of regional bureaucracy, such as Sidoarjo Regency, provides practical contributions to human resource policies, particularly in the development of employee reward and recognition systems.

Previous research has shown that professionalism supported by appreciation will improve employee performance [39]. If appreciation is used as an intervening variable between professionalism and performance, appreciation can significantly strengthen the factors that enhance performance. This creates an opportunity for employees to also improve their well-being factors.

In one study, it was mentioned that organizational norms encompass how organizations recognize good behavior, such as awards for exemplary employees, which ultimately reinforce behavior and improve employee performance [40]. Thus, appreciation can be positioned as a mediating variable between work culture and employee performance.

Previous research shows that work discipline has a positive and significant impact on employee performance in organizations that implement a reward and punishment system [41]. Appreciation serves as an important mediating variable in the relationship

between discipline and performance, where recognition of discipline strengthens employees' desire to maintain high performance.

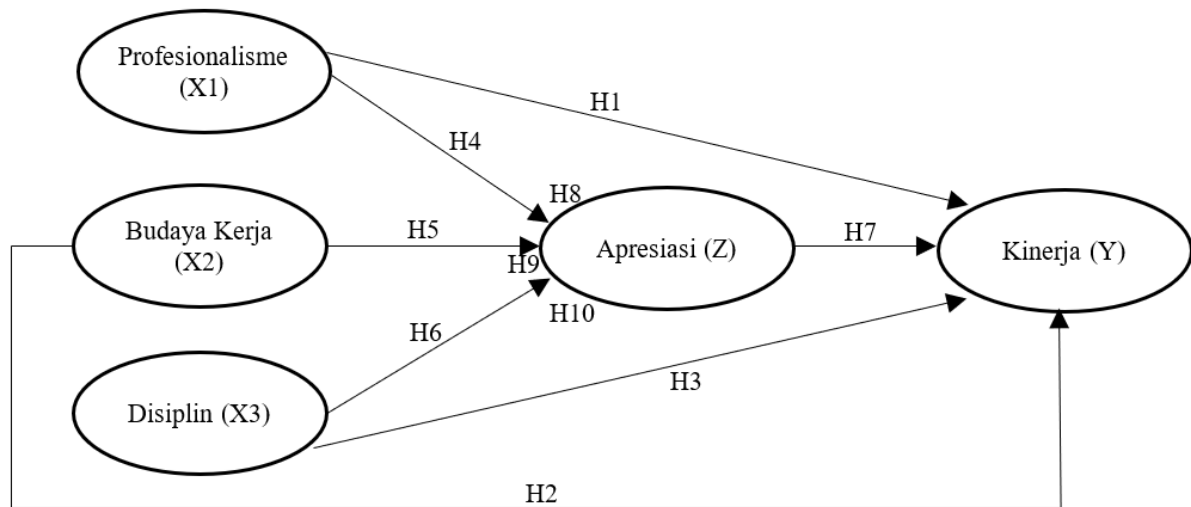


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Based on the framework of that in Figure 1 above, the hypotheses proposed in this study are:

H1: There is an influence of Professionalism on Performance.

H2: There is an influence of Work Culture on Performance.

H3: There is an influence of Discipline on Performance.

H4: There is an influence of Professionalism on Appreciation.

H5: There is an influence of Work Culture on Appreciation.

H6: There is an influence of Discipline on Appreciation.

H7: There is an influence of Appreciation on Performance.

H8: There is an influence of Professionalism on Performance through the variable Appreciation.

H9: There is an influence of Work Culture on Performance through the variable Appreciation.

H10: There is an influence of Discipline on Performance through the variable Appreciation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative method with causal analysis. The quantitative method is applied to study a specific population or sample with data collected through questionnaires or other instruments. The research was conducted based on numerical data to test the established hypothesis [42]. The aim of this quantitative research with causal analysis is to describe the studied conditions, supported by a literature review to strengthen the researcher's analysis in formulating conclusions. The research results were obtained from the processing of variable indicators, which were then explained in writing by the author.

The population in this study is the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) within the Sidoarjo Regency. Meanwhile, the sample taken consists of officers or direct service implementers, with a total of 212 respondents, which includes 31 supporting and technical regional apparatus, 18 sub-districts, 28 villages, 31 community health centers, and 3 regional-owned enterprises. The data used in this study is primary data obtained directly from the original source. The researcher provided questionnaires to the respondents. The data collection technique was carried out by preparing a questionnaire instrument through Google Form, which was then distributed via WhatsApp groups of service implementers in Sidoarjo Regency. The collected data is then exported in matrix form into an Excel file for further tabulation and processing. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with the statements in the questionnaire using a Likert Scale with values 1–5, with the criteria: 1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good, and 5 = Very Good. The details of the variables and indicators used in this study are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Research Variables and Indicators.

No.	Variable	Indicators	References
1	Professionalism (X1)	1. Technical competence: percentage of employees who meet job competency standards 2. Professional development: training hours per employee per year 3. Compliance with Standard Operating Procedures 4. Incidents of disciplinary violations 5. Service orientation: service user assessment of the professionalism of officers (satisfaction survey).	1. OECD (2021) – Public Personnel Management. 2. Yusuf (2024) – Evaluation of Competence in Improving the Commitment and Performance of State Civil Apparatus.
2	Work Culture (X2)	1. Consistency in compliance with the code of ethics 2. Internal collaboration and communication 3. Innovation climate: adopted ideas 4. Clarity of roles and responsibilities 5. Consistency of organizational values (BerAKHLAK)	1. Robbins and Judge (2022) – Organizational Behavior; Analysis of Organizational Culture in the Public Sector. 2. Zahara (2024) – The Influence of Organizational Culture and Competence on Employee Performance.
3	Work Discipline (X3)	1. Attendance and punctuality: percentage of employees arriving on time	1. Malayu S.P. Hasibuan (2020) – Human Resource Management.

4	Appreciation (Z)(Intervening Variable)	2. Completion of tasks according to deadlines	2. Simanjuntak (2022) – The Influence of Work Discipline and Work Environment on Employee Performance in Regional Government Offices.
		3. Commitment to maintaining data security	
4	Appreciation (Z)(Intervening Variable)	4. Appearance that meets standards	1. Armstrong, M., and Taylor, S. (2020) – Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice (15th ed.). Kogan Page. 2. Zahroh et al. (2024) – Employee Performance Reviewed from the Perspective of Employee Appreciation.
		5. Initiative and responsibility	
		1. Formal rewards (tangible): receipt of allowances/incentives	
		2. Provision of privileges for workplace flexibility	
		3. Managerial recognition (non-tangible): praise/publication	
5	Service Performance (Y)	4. Welfare and psychosocial support programs: counseling services	
		5. Structured reward system: reward-giving mechanism	
		1. Public Service Index	1. Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Guideline Number 5 of 2023 concerning PEKPPP Mechanisms and Instruments; 2. Mahmudi (2019) – Public Sector Performance Management.
		2. Service user satisfaction (Community Satisfaction Survey)	
		3. Service completion rate (Service Standards)	
		4. Complaint and resolution rate (SP4N-LAPOR)	
		5. Quality of service digitalization	

Data source: Processed by the author, 2025.

Based on Table 2, each variable used has indicators that are relevant to the measurement of service performance. Several recent references are deliberately used so that this research can address the latest modern challenges. The selected indicators are implementative in nature, encompassing aspects of competence, organizational values, compliance, as well as forms of both tangible and non-tangible rewards recognized in modern human resource management practices.

Quantitative data analysis techniques are used in this research to process the collected questionnaire data, to obtain an objective picture of the relationships between variables, and to test the validity of the formulated hypotheses. The stages of data analysis are as follows [43]:

1. Collecting data obtained from questionnaires or forms.
2. Checking the data to ensure the answers are complete and correct.
3. Inputting the data into Excel by compiling all respondents' answers into a data table.

4. Cleaning the data (data cleaning) by removing duplicate data or invalid answers.
5. Validity test, by checking whether the questionnaire questions truly measure the intended variables.
6. Reliability test, by checking whether the questionnaire is consistent and trustworthy.
7. Causality analysis, by calculating the average, percentage, and general overview of respondents' answers.
8. Inferential analysis by testing the relationships between variables.
9. Interpreting the results by explaining the meaning of the obtained figures.
10. Concluding the analysis results and providing recommendations.

Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis is used in this research as a modern statistical approach capable of testing and explaining the causal relationship between independent variables and dependent variables by involving intervening variables as mediators that strengthen or bridge the influence between these variables [44]. The quantitative approach in this research aims to measure and describe the phenomenon being studied objectively through the use of numerical data and statistical analysis [43].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

3.1. Respondent Characteristics

This research is based on the results of a questionnaire distributed in Sidoarjo Regency from December 2025 to January 2026. The data in question can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristic Data.

No.	Variable	Classification	Number (People)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	64	32,1
		Female	144	67,9
2.	Age	< 25 Years	3	1,4
		25–35 Years	72	34
		36–45 Years	69	32,5
		> 45 Years	68	32,1
3.	Length of Service	< 1 Year	3	1,4
		1–5 Years	49	23,1
		6–10 Years	37	17,5
		> 10 Years	123	58

Data source: Data Processing, 2026.

The respondent characteristic data in Table 3 shows that the majority are dominated by women at 67.9% (144 people), while men make up 32.1% (64 people). Based on age, the respondents are relatively evenly distributed across the age groups of 25–35 years (34%), 36–45 years (32.5%), and above 45 years (32.1%), with the smallest number in the under 25 years age group (1.4%). In terms of work experience, the majority of respondents

have more than 10 years of work experience at 58%, followed by the 1–5 years group (23.1%), 6–10 years group (17.5%), and the less than 1 year group (1.4%). This data indicates that the respondents are dominated by experienced workers with a relatively balanced composition of productive age.

3.2. Outer Model Analysis

The testing of the measurement model or outer model is essentially used to ensure whether the selected indicators truly represent the latent variables that cannot be measured directly. At this stage, the relationship between indicators and constructs is tested through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability, so that they not only appear strong numerically but also make conceptual sense. Several previous studies have shown that this approach is quite effective, especially when processing perception data, as it helps ensure that each indicator is indeed relevant, consistent, and does not deviate from the construct it represents [7].

3.2.1. Convergent Validity

When examining convergent validity in a measurement model with reflective indicators, we want to know whether the scores of each indicator truly align with the scores of the construct it represents. This relationship is usually seen from the correlation value. When the number exceeds the threshold of 0.70, the indicator is generally considered quite reliable [45], although in certain conditions it can still be considered contextually. The depiction of the relationships between variables in the study is visualized in the structural model in Table 4 and Figure 2 below.

Table 4. Data Outer Loading.

	Professionalism (X1)	Work Culture (X2)	Discipline (X3)	Appreciation (Z)	Service Performance (Y)
A1	0.740				
A2	0.745				
A3	0.890				
A4	0.872				
A5	0.872				
B1		0.816			
B2		0.810			
B3		0.833			
B4		0.912			
B5		0.903			
C1			0.870		
C2			0.896		
C3			0.830		
C4			0.855		
C5			0.816		
S1				0.756	
S2				0.748	
S3				0.860	
S4				0.879	

S5	0.863	
K1		0.900
K2		0.909
K3		0.933
K4		0.897
K5		0.880

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

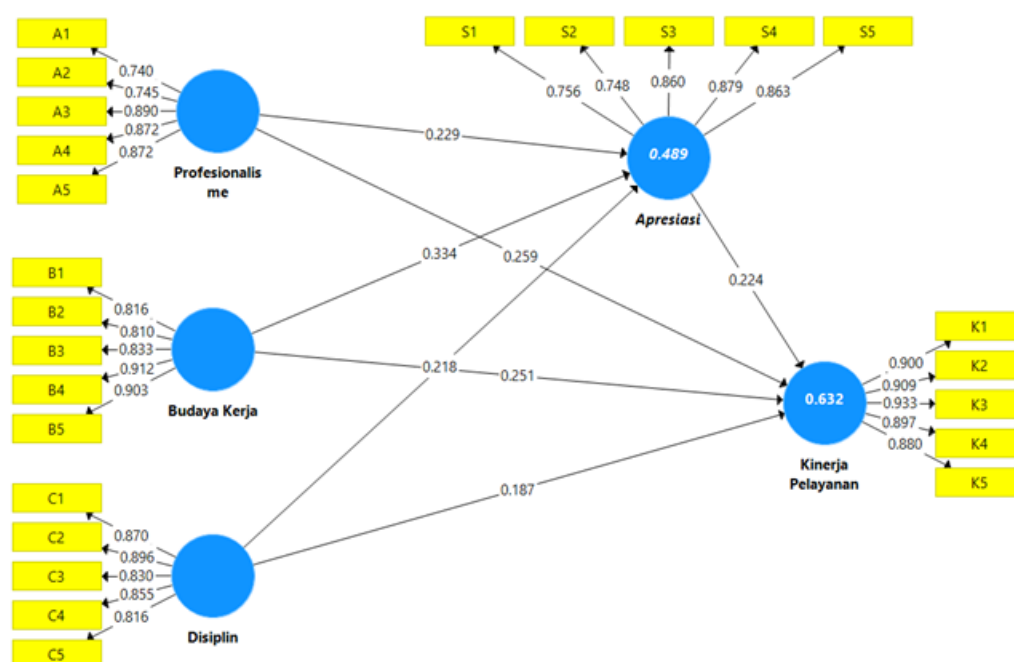


Figure 2. Outer Model.

Based on Table 4 and Figure 2 above, all indicators have a loading factor > 0.70 , which means all indicators are valid indicators for measuring their constructs.

3.2.2. Discriminant Validity

This section discusses the results of the discriminant validity test, which essentially aims to ensure that each indicator truly "belongs" to the intended construct, rather than being more suitable for explaining another construct. The approach used is to examine the cross-loading value, which involves comparing the strength of the correlation of an indicator with its own construct against other constructs. Ideally, the highest value should appear on the intended construct. If not, there is a possibility that the indicator is less specific, or even ambiguous. Interestingly, several previous studies have also emphasized the same point, that indicators with the highest cross-loading on relevant constructs tend to be more reliable in distinguishing one construct from another, making the measurement results clearer and non-overlapping [33]. The cross-loading data of the research can be seen in the following Table 5.

Table 5. Data Cross Loading.

	Professionalism (X1)	Work Culture (X2)	Discipline (X3)	Appreciation (Z)	Service Performance (Y)
A1	0.740	0.435	0.429	0.437	0.403
A2	0.745	0.442	0.441	0.532	0.550
A3	0.890	0.607	0.588	0.496	0.654
A4	0.872	0.616	0.634	0.486	0.556
A5	0.872	0.667	0.645	0.523	0.641
B1	0.641	0.816	0.675	0.444	0.577
B2	0.528	0.810	0.640	0.455	0.527
B3	0.504	0.833	0.551	0.640	0.531
B4	0.634	0.912	0.642	0.655	0.700
B5	0.592	0.903	0.663	0.553	0.681
C1	0.531	0.627	0.870	0.482	0.595
C2	0.587	0.666	0.896	0.542	0.640
C3	0.610	0.623	0.830	0.475	0.591
C4	0.625	0.640	0.855	0.536	0.563
C5	0.501	0.589	0.816	0.595	0.525
S1	0.469	0.441	0.442	0.756	0.496
S2	0.425	0.448	0.442	0.748	0.463
S3	0.544	0.571	0.560	0.860	0.576
S4	0.517	0.622	0.532	0.879	0.582
S5	0.509	0.569	0.550	0.863	0.578
K1	0.612	0.628	0.601	0.594	0.900
K2	0.617	0.655	0.631	0.595	0.909
K3	0.618	0.630	0.633	0.591	0.933
K4	0.638	0.635	0.595	0.643	0.897
K5	0.627	0.659	0.629	0.551	0.880

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

Based on the reference in Table 5, it is evident that several indicators in the research variables have cross-loading values above 0.70. At a glance, this signals that these indicators are strong enough to represent their respective constructs, thus not showing a tendency to overlap between variables. However, the assessment does not stop there. There is another method that is usually considered, which is by looking at the square root of Average Variance Extracted or AVE. At this point, a value above 0.5 is generally considered safe enough to indicate that the construct can explain the variance of its indicators well, although in practice, it still needs to be examined more carefully and not solely rely on that number [45]. The AVE data results in this study are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. AVE Results Data.

No.	Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
1.	Professionalism (X1)	0.683
2.	Work Culture (X2)	0.733

3.	Discipline (X3)	0.729
4.	Appreciation (Z)	0.678
5.	Service Performance (Y)	0.817

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

3.2.3. Reliability

The next stage shifts to testing construct reliability, which is usually seen through the composite reliability value of a set of indicators that form the latent variable. The number does not need to be too high to be considered acceptable; at least above 0.60 is already sufficient to indicate that the indicators are working consistently. On the other hand, there is also a measure often used for comparison, namely Cronbach's alpha. A value above 0.70 is generally considered safe, although there are sometimes questions about whether that number truly reflects consistency or is merely a statistical formality. Several previous studies tend to agree that when all indicators are above that threshold, the construct can be considered reliable [46]. In the context of this research, the testing was conducted on the variables, the results of which were then summarized in the form of loading values obtained from data processing using Smart PLS, which will be presented in the following table 7.

Table 7. Data Results of Construct Reliability and Validity.

No.	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
1.	Professionalism (X1)	0.882	0.892	0.915
2.	Work Culture (X2)	0.908	0.920	0.932
3.	Discipline (X3)	0.907	0.908	0.931
4.	Appreciation (Z)	0.880	0.889	0.913
5.	Service Performance (Y)	0.944	0.944	0.957

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

Based on Table 7 above, the results of the reliability test show that all variables are in a sufficiently good condition, even tending to be very good. Professionalism has a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.882 and composite reliability of 0.915, which clearly exceed the minimum threshold, thus can be declared reliable. Work culture and discipline also show a similar pattern, each with a Cronbach's alpha above 0.90 and composite reliability above 0.93, indicating strong internal consistency. Appreciation is indeed slightly lower, but with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.880 and composite reliability of 0.913, it still falls into the acceptable and qualifying category. Meanwhile, service performance recorded the highest value, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.944 and composite reliability of 0.957, indicating a very high level of consistency. Referring to the general criteria that Cronbach's alpha should be above 0.70 and composite reliability above 0.60, all variables in this study can be said to not only meet the requirements but also be very suitable for further analysis.

3.3. Inner Model Analysis

In the inner model testing, the focus begins to shift, no longer on the indicators but on how the relationships between the variables themselves work within the model. At this point, the model is evaluated based on the theoretical foundation that has been previously established, to see whether the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables truly makes sense, rather than just appearing statistically significant [11]. Sometimes, this is where the question arises: does the relationship formed truly reflect reality on the ground, or is it only strong on paper? To answer that, structural model evaluation is usually conducted through several specific indicators, which help ensure that the overall model remains consistent with the conceptual framework that was designed from the beginning.

3.3.1. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

One of the commonly used methods to assess how well the inner model works is through the coefficient of determination or R-square (R²) value. This figure provides a simple picture of how much the endogenous variable can be explained by the exogenous variables in the model. The higher the value, the more the model is usually considered capable of representing the existing data, although it certainly does not always mean it is perfect. In practice, an R² value of around 0.67 is often categorized as strong, 0.33 as moderate, and 0.19 as weak [9]. Using Smart PLS 3.0, the data processing results in this study then yield an R Square value that will be displayed in the following Table 8, as a basis for assessing how well the constructed model can explain the relationships between the variables being studied.

Table 8. R-Square Results Data.

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R-Square
Appreciation	0.489	0.482
Service Performance	0.632	0.625

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

If we look at the R-squared values for both variables in Table 8, the picture of the model's strength starts to become clearer, although not entirely perfect. The appreciation variable has an R Square value of 0.489 with an Adjusted R Square of 0.482, which, according to general criteria, falls into the moderate category. This means that approximately 48.9% of the variation in appreciation can be explained by the independent variables in the model, while the remaining portion is still influenced by other factors outside the model, which may be quite diverse and not covered in this research. Meanwhile, service performance shows an R Square value of 0.632 and an Adjusted R Square of 0.625, which is already approaching the strong category, or at least at the upper moderate to strong boundary. This indicates that the model is quite good at explaining the service performance variable, with more than 60% of its variance being explained by the constructs used. If compared to the general thresholds of 0.67 for strong, 0.33 for moderate, and 0.19 for weak, these two variables can be said to meet the criteria

and are suitable for further analysis, with the note that service performance has a better explanatory level compared to appreciation.

3.3.2. Goodness of Fit (GoF)

Assessment To see whether the constructed model truly fits the data, one of the commonly used measures is the goodness of fit value thru the NFI (Normed Fit Index) indicator. The value ranges from 0 to 1, so it is quite easy to interpret intuitively. When the NFI value exceeds 0.90, the model is usually considered to have a good fit. On the other hand, if it falls within the range of 0.80 to 0.90, its position is still acceptable, although it is often referred to as a marginal fit, a condition that is somewhat acceptable but not yet ideal [47]. Using Smart PLS 3.0, the data processing results in this study then produce the model fit values that will be displayed in the following Table 9.

Table 9. Data Model Fit.

Indicator	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Model
SRMR	0.062	0.062	Fit
d ULS	1.235	1.235	Fit
d G	0.742	0.742	Fit
Chi-Square	885.624	885.624	Fit
NFI	0.819	0.819	Marginal Fit

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

Based on Table 9 above, the NFI value is recorded at 0.819. This figure has not yet reached the good fit category, but it is still within the marginal fit range, which is generally considered quite acceptable. This means that the model built can be considered quite representative in depicting the data, although there may still be room for improvement. In many cases, such values are still accepted, especially if supported by consistent results from other tests. The model in this study can still be used to test hypotheses, with a level of confidence that remains sufficiently adequate.

3.4. Hypothesis Testing

After the inner model is deemed sufficiently adequate, the next step shifts to a more crucial matter, which is examining how the relationships between latent constructs truly operate according to the hypotheses formulated from the beginning. At this stage, the testing no longer merely examines the strength of the model, but begins to address the core question of whether the assumed relationship is indeed significant or not. Usually, the references used are the T-Statistics and P-Values. When the T-Statistics are above 1.96, and the P-Values are below 0.05, the relationship is generally considered significant [48], although in practice, it still needs to be interpreted with more caution in context. The bootstrapping method used to obtain these values is not without reason, as quite a few previous studies have shown that this approach is effective in capturing the significance of relationships between latent constructs. The results can be seen in the path coefficients that illustrate the direct influence between variables in the model in the following Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10. Direct Influence Testing.

Direct Effect	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Appreciation -> Service Performance	0.224	0.228	0.058	3.857	0.000	Accepted
Work Culture -> Appreciation	0.334	0.341	0.095	3.530	0.000	Accepted
Work Culture -> Service Performance	0.326	0.325	0.083	3.929	0.000	Accepted
Discipline -> Appreciation	0.218	0.209	0.093	2.342	0.020	Accepted
Discipline -> Service Performance	0.235	0.238	0.095	2.471	0.014	Accepted
Professionalism - > Appreciation	0.229	0.234	0.086	2.661	0.008	Accepted
Professionalism - > Service Performance	0.311	0.313	0.081	3.825	0.000	Accepted

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

Based on Table 10, it shows that with all T-statistic values above 1.96 and P-Values below 0.05, all hypotheses in this study can be stated as accepted.

Table 11. Testing Indirect Effects.

Indirect Effect	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Work Culture -> Appreciation -> Service Performance	0.075	0.078	0.031	2.415	0.016	Accepted
Discipline -> Appreciation -> Service Performance	0.049	0.047	0.024	2.075	0.039	Accepted
Professionalism -> Appreciation -> Service Performance	0.051	0.054	0.025	2.070	0.021	Accepted

Data source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026.

Based on Table 11, it shows that the three variables, namely work culture, discipline, and professionalism, still play a role in improving service performance through appreciation as a mediating variable. Indeed, the magnitude of its influence is not very

high, but it remains significant, as seen from the T-statistic value that has exceeded 1.96 and P-Values below 0.05. This shows that appreciation not only stands as an additional variable, but also bridges the relationship between these internal factors and service performance, although its role tends to be more of a reinforcement rather than a main factor.

Discussion

Based on the results of the data analysis, here is the discussion of the hypothesis: H1: There is an influence of Professionalism on Performance.

If we refer to the discussion of the first hypothesis, which is the influence of professionalism on performance, the results of this study show that the relationship is proven to be positive and significant. These findings are quite in line with the theoretical framework in the introduction, which positions professionalism as a strategic aspect in public service. It has been explained there that the apparatus is not merely a technical executor, but also a representation of the face of the bureaucracy in the eyes of the public. When competence, integrity, and service orientation are functioning well, it is natural for service performance to be driven as well.

If we take a closer look at the indicators, professionalism in this research does not stand on just one aspect. There are technical competencies, adherence to SOPs, and service orientation that are directly assessed by users. Interestingly, these indicators are quite concrete. For example, the ability to understand service procedures or consistency in following work standards. Things like this in daily practice often become the distinguishing factor between service that is merely completed and service that is truly of high quality. So, when the statistical results show a significant impact, it seems quite reasonable empirically.

These findings are also in line with several previous studies that state professionalism has a significant impact on performance [17]. However, on the other hand, there are also studies that find a different direction, where professional expertise negatively affects performance [18]. At this point, there seems to be an interesting contradiction. It could be that, in certain contexts, high professionalism is not always followed by optimal performance, perhaps due to other factors such as the organizational system or an unsupportive workload. But in the context of Sidoarjo Regency, the results of this study actually reinforce the view that professionalism remains an important foundation in improving service performance.

H2: There is an influence of Work Culture on Performance.

In the discussion of the hypothesis regarding the influence of work culture on service performance, the results of this study indicate a positive and significant impact. These findings align quite well with the description in the introduction, which positions work culture as the foundation in shaping the behavior patterns of the apparatus. It is explained there that work culture is not just about habits, but also includes values, norms, and the work atmosphere that influence how employees carry out their daily tasks. In the context of public service in Sidoarjo Regency, a work culture that supports collaboration,

communication, and innovation indeed becomes an important factor in driving better service quality.

If viewed from the indicators, the work culture in this study is measured through quite tangible aspects, such as consistency with the code of ethics, the quality of internal communication, clarity of roles, and the climate of innovation. Things like this, when you think about it, are very close to the work reality in government agencies. For example, when communication between employees runs smoothly, and each person's role is clear, the service process usually becomes faster and with fewer errors. The same goes for the culture of innovation, which, although often considered abstract, can actually be seen in the number of new ideas adopted in the service. So, when the results show a significant impact on performance, this relationship feels quite logical and not exaggerated.

Interestingly, when compared to previous research, these results are not entirely uniform. There are studies that state that work culture does not partially affect performance [22], while other research finds a significant impact [23]. Here, a quite clear difference in results is evident. In the context of this research, work culture has proven to play an important role, which may be influenced by the organizational conditions in Sidoarjo Regency that systematically promote public service improvements. It is possible that when the work culture is truly internalized and not just a slogan, its impact on performance becomes more evident.

Work culture actually operates subtly but consistently. It shapes the way employees think and act, which then influences how services are provided to the community. So, it's not something that is instantly visible, but rather it gradually shapes the overall quality of performance. And from the results of this research, it seems that work culture is indeed not just an addition, but rather one of the key factors in driving better service performance.

H3: There is an influence of Discipline on Performance.

The discussion of the hypothesis regarding the influence of discipline on service performance shows positive and significant results, and if we refer back to the introduction, this is actually not surprising. From the beginning, it has been emphasized that discipline is one of the key factors in supporting employee performance, especially in the context of public service, which demands accuracy, consistency, and responsibility. Discipline here is not only understood as adherence to rules, but also includes how employees manage their time, complete tasks according to targets, and maintain the established work standards.

Discipline is measured through quite concrete aspects, such as attendance and punctuality, completion of tasks according to deadlines, and initiative in carrying out responsibilities. Things like these, although they seem simple, often become crucial points in the quality of service. For example, employee tardiness or unfinished work can directly impact the duration of the service process experienced by the public. So, when discipline improves, the effect on service performance tends to be felt immediately, without having to wait long.

If compared to previous research, these results are not entirely consistent. There is research that states that work discipline does not affect employee performance [26], while other research shows a positive and significant impact [25]. At this point, a clear difference in results is evident. In the context of this research, discipline has proven to play an important role in improving service performance. Most likely, this is influenced by the organizational characteristics or work system in Sidoarjo Regency, which places significant emphasis on compliance and service standards.

H4: There is an influence of Professionalism on Appreciation.

The discussion regarding the hypothesis that professionalism influences appreciation shows positive and significant results, and if we refer back to the introduction, this relationship has actually been well-established from the beginning. Professionalism is not only seen as technical ability, but also reflects integrity, commitment, and alignment of work behavior with organizational standards. In that context, organizations tend to reward employees who demonstrate professional performance, as they are considered to make a real contribution to the achievement of organizational goals.

Professionalism in this study includes technical competence, adherence to SOPs, self-development through training, and service orientation. On the other hand, appreciation is measured through a variety of forms, ranging from formal awards such as incentives to non-financial recognition such as praise, development opportunities, or work flexibility. In practice, this relationship seems quite reasonable. Employees who have high competence, rarely break the rules, and are able to provide good service usually find it easier to gain recognition, both formally and informally. Even simple things like trust from superiors or the opportunity to participate in advanced training can be a tangible form of appreciation.

These findings are also in line with previous research that states that the higher the professionalism of employees, the greater the likelihood they will receive recognition from the organization [19]. In this context, there does not appear to be any significant contradiction, as the research results tend to be consistent with previous theories and findings. Professionalism is indeed often used as a basis in performance appraisal systems and reward allocation, so it is reasonable that this relationship appears significant.

Appreciation here is like a natural response from the organization to the individual's quality. Not something that appears suddenly, but the result of a consistent and visible work process. So, when professionalism increases, appreciation not only becomes possible but is almost an unavoidable consequence. And from the results of this research, the relationship has proven to be strong enough to explain how organizations respond to the quality of their employees.

H5: There is an influence of Work Culture on Appreciation.

The discussion of the hypothesis regarding the influence of work culture on appreciation shows positive and significant results, and if we trace it back to the introduction, this relationship has actually been quite noticeable from the beginning.

Work culture not only shapes the way employees work but also creates an environment that determines whether individual contributions are valued or ignored. In the previous explanation, it was stated that a work culture that emphasizes collaboration, recognition, and organizational values will encourage the emergence of appreciation for employees. So, when an organization has a healthy culture, appreciation is no longer something sporadic but becomes part of the ongoing system.

Work culture in its indicators is measured through aspects such as consistency with the code of ethics, internal communication, role clarity, and a moral climate. Meanwhile, appreciation includes formal rewards such as incentives, as well as non-financial forms like recognition from superiors, work flexibility, and wellness programs. In practice, this relationship is quite noticeable. For example, in an open and communicative work environment, employees' contributions are more easily seen and recognized. On the other hand, if the work culture tends to be rigid or non-transparent, employees' efforts often do not receive the appropriate appreciation, even if their performance is good.

If linked to previous research, these results tend to be consistent with findings that state that a positive organizational culture significantly influences employee motivation and satisfaction, which in turn impacts the recognition and rewards they receive [24]. In this case, there is no apparent contradiction. On the contrary, this research reinforces the view that work culture is one of the important factors shaping the appreciation mechanisms within organizations.

H6: There is an influence of Discipline on Appreciation.

The discussion of the hypothesis regarding the influence of discipline on appreciation shows positive and significant results, and if we refer back to the introduction, this relationship has actually been quite logical from the beginning. Discipline is not only understood as adherence to rules but also as a reflection of responsibility and consistency in work. In the context of public organizations, employees who arrive on time, complete tasks according to targets, and maintain work standards are usually regarded as reliable individuals. From there, there is a tendency for organizations to provide rewards or recognition as a response to such behavior.

Discipline in this study includes attendance and punctuality, completion of work on time, commitment to rules, and initiative in responsibilities. Meanwhile, appreciation is measured through tangible forms such as incentives, managerial recognition, work flexibility, and wellness programs. In practice, this relationship feels quite realistic. Employees who consistently arrive on time and complete their work well usually find it easier to gain trust, which can then develop into forms of appreciation, both formal and informal. Sometimes it's not just about incentives, but also opportunities to participate in training or even just recognition from superiors.

If linked to previous research, these results align with findings that state work discipline has a positive and significant impact on forms of recognition such as compensation [27]. In this case, there does not appear to be any significant contradiction, as the relationship between discipline and appreciation tends to be consistent across various research contexts. Disciplined employees are usually positioned as

organizational assets, so it is reasonable that they receive more attention in the reward system.

H7: There is an influence of Appreciation on Performance.

The discussion regarding the hypothesis that appreciation affects service performance shows positive and significant results, although upon reflection, this relationship does not always appear consistently in all studies. In the introduction, appreciation has already been positioned as a strategic factor capable of driving motivation, satisfaction, and employee performance. The logic is quite simple: when employees feel appreciated, whether through incentives, recognition, or opportunities for development, they tend to have a greater drive to perform well.

If we look at the indicators, appreciation in this study is not limited to financial aspects. There are formal rewards such as allowances, but also non-financial forms like recognition from superiors, work flexibility, and psychosocial support. Meanwhile, service performance is measured through fairly concrete indicators, such as public satisfaction, service completion rates, and the quality of service digitalization. In practice, this relationship feels quite reasonable. Employees who feel appreciated are usually more motivated to provide responsive, friendly, and timely service. Even something as simple as a word of appreciation from a supervisor can impact daily work morale.

If compared to previous research, these results are not entirely in line. There is research that states that appreciation does not affect performance, while other studies actually find a positive relationship, both directly and indirectly [32]. Here, a quite clear difference is evident. In the context of this research, appreciation has been proven to have a significant impact on service performance. It is possible that this difference is influenced by how the reward system is implemented within the organization. If appreciation is given consistently and perceived as fair by employees, its impact on performance becomes more evident.

Appreciation is not merely an addition to the organizational system, but rather a part of a quite strong psychological mechanism. It touches on the basic need of employees to be recognized and appreciated. From there, an intrinsic motivation emerges that cannot always be explained by numbers alone. And from the results of this research, it is evident that appreciation does play a role in shaping service performance, not as the main factor, but as a significant reinforcement in the overall work process.

H8: There is an influence of Professionalism on performance through the Appreciation variable.

The discussion of the hypothesis regarding the influence of professionalism on performance through appreciation shows that the mediating role of appreciation is proven significant, although the magnitude of its influence is not very dominant. If we refer back to the introduction, this framework has actually been established from the beginning, that professionalism not only directly impacts performance but also triggers the emergence of appreciation, which in turn strengthens that performance. In this context, appreciation is positioned as a mechanism that explains how professionalism can be translated into better service performance.

Professionalism encompasses technical competence, adherence to SOPs, self-development, and service orientation. When these aspects are met, employees tend to demonstrate consistent and reliable work quality. From there, the organization responds through various forms of appreciation, both in the form of formal awards, such as incentives, and non-formal ones, such as recognition, trust, or development opportunities. Well, at this point, the relationship becomes more interesting. The appreciation received by employees then encourages motivation and work spirit, which ultimately impacts the improvement of service performance, for example, in terms of public satisfaction or the speed of service completion.

These findings are in line with previous research that states that professionalism supported by appreciation can significantly improve employee performance [39]. In this case, there does not appear to be any significant contradiction; rather, the results of this study reinforce the role of appreciation as a relevant intervening variable. However, if we look at the relatively smaller indirect influence compared to the direct influence, appreciation here might play more of a reinforcing role rather than being the main pathway.

Professionalism without appreciation might still yield good performance, but it may not be optimal. There is a kind of extra motivation that arises when employees feel appreciated. So, this relationship is not just linear, but more like a layered process. Professionalism shapes work quality, appreciation strengthens motivation, and together they drive better service performance.

H9: There is an influence of Work Culture on Performance through the Appreciation variable.

The discussion of the hypothesis regarding the influence of work culture on performance through appreciation shows that this mediation path is proven significant, although, upon closer inspection, its strength is not as great as the direct influence. From the beginning in the introduction, the work culture has been described as an environment that shapes the way employees think and act, including how the organization recognizes individual contributions. In this context, appreciation serves as a kind of bridge that connects the values of work culture with the improvement of service performance.

Work culture is measured through tangible aspects such as consistency with the code of ethics, internal communication, clarity of roles, and an innovative climate. A work environment like this usually makes employees' contributions more visible and easier to appreciate. On the other hand, appreciation comes in the form of both formal and informal rewards, such as incentives, recognition from superiors, or development opportunities. When employees work in an open and supportive culture, their chances of receiving appreciation increase. From there, a psychological drive emerges that then impacts service performance, for example, in the form of increased responsiveness or the quality of interactions with the community.

These findings are quite in line with previous research that states that a positive organizational culture can enhance motivation and satisfaction, which ultimately affects performance [40]. In this study, the mechanism is more clearly seen through the role of

appreciation as an intervening variable. There are no significant contradictions; rather, these results reinforce that work culture not only has a direct impact but also operates through more subtle indirect pathways.

Work culture is like a foundation that shapes the organizational climate, while appreciation is a response to the behaviors that emerge from that climate. So, when the work culture is good, appreciation emerges, and from there, performance is driven. However, because its indirect influence is not very significant, appreciation here might play more of a supplementary role rather than being the main factor in the relationship between work culture and service performance.

H10: There is an influence of Discipline on Performance through the Appreciation variable.

The discussion of the hypothesis regarding the influence of discipline on performance through appreciation shows that this mediation path is also proven to be significant, although, upon closer examination, its strength is relatively smaller compared to the direct influence. From the introduction, discipline has been positioned as a fundamental factor that maintains employee work consistency, ranging from attendance, punctuality, to task completion according to standards. In that context, appreciation serves as a mechanism that explains how disciplined behavior not only directly impacts performance but also triggers an organizational response in the form of rewards, which in turn reinforces the performance itself.

Discipline is measured through fairly concrete aspects such as punctual attendance, completion of work on time, and commitment to work rules. Employees who are consistent in these matters are usually more easily recognized as reliable individuals. From there, organizations tend to provide appreciation, whether in the form of incentives, recognition, or greater trust. Meanwhile, the appreciation received then encourages motivation and a sense of ownership toward the job, which ultimately impacts the improvement of service performance, for example, in terms of service accuracy or public satisfaction.

These findings are in line with previous research that states work discipline positively affects compensation or other forms of rewards, and that a reward and punishment system can strengthen the relationship between discipline and performance [41]. In the context of this research, there does not appear to be any significant contradiction; rather, the results clarify that appreciation can indeed function as a mediating variable bridging that relationship.

The role of appreciation here seems to be more of an additional reinforcement. Discipline itself is already strong enough to directly drive performance, so when mediated by appreciation, its influence remains but does not become the main pathway. In other words, disciplined employees will continue to show good performance, but when that discipline is recognized and appreciated, the drive to maintain or even improve performance becomes stronger and more sustainable.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The results of this research yield several important findings as a basis for formulating policies to improve service quality in Sidoarjo Regency. The findings indicate that professionalism affects performance, work culture affects performance, and discipline affects performance. Additionally, professionalism also affects appreciation, work culture affects appreciation, and discipline affects appreciation. This research also proves that appreciation affects performance. Thus, professionalism, work culture, and discipline not only directly influence performance but also indirectly thru the appreciation variable. **Implication :** These findings imply that local government administrators in Sidoarjo Regency should not focus solely on enforcing discipline and training in isolation. Instead, establishing structured, transparent employee appreciation mechanisms can serve as a powerful catalyst, magnifying the positive impacts of work culture and professional standards on the overall quality of public services. **Limitation :** A primary limitation of this study is its geographic focus on public service employees specifically within Sidoarjo Regency, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different local cultures and administrative frameworks. Additionally, the data relies on self-reported questionnaires collected over a specific, short timeframe, which could introduce subjective bias and does not capture long-term behavioral or structural changes. **Future Research :** Future research should expand the geographical scope to comparative studies across multiple regencies in Indonesia to validate the broader applicability of this structural model. Furthermore, subsequent investigations could integrate qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, or explore additional mediating variables like leadership styles, workspace environments, and financial incentives to provide a more holistic view of public sector performance dynamics.

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