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The Role of Healthcare Worker Motivation in the Relationship between Work Culture, Patient Satisfaction, and Performance at a Primary Healthcare Clinic

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare worker performance plays a crucial role in determining the quality of services in primary healthcare clinics. Organizational and service-related factors, such as work culture, patient satisfaction, and healthcare worker motivation, are considered important determinants of performance. However, empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of healthcare worker motivation in primary healthcare settings remains limited. This study aimed to examine the relationship between work culture and patient satisfaction with healthcare worker performance, both directly and indirectly through healthcare worker motivation as a mediating variable, in a primary healthcare clinic. An observational analytic study with a quantitative approach was conducted at a primary inpatient healthcare clinic in Mojokerto Regency, Indonesia, during September–October 2025. The study involved 20 healthcare workers and 50 patients, selected using total sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman correlation tests to assess relationships among variables. The results showed that work culture was positively associated with employee motivation ($r = 0.476$; $p = 0.034$), while patient satisfaction was positively related to healthcare worker performance ($r = 0.446$; $p = 0.049$). Healthcare worker motivation also demonstrated a significant mediating role in the relationship between work culture and healthcare worker performance ($r = 0.508$; $p = 0.022$). Improving healthcare worker performance in primary healthcare clinics requires an integrated managerial approach that emphasizes strengthening work culture, enhancing patient satisfaction, and maintaining healthcare worker motivation to support sustainable improvements in service quality.

Keywords: Healthcare Worker Motivation, Healthcare Worker Performance, Patient Satisfaction, Primary Healthcare Clinic, Work Culture.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive healthcare service environment, clinical performance has become a key indicator of success in healthcare delivery and organizational sustainability. Clinical performance is largely determined by the performance of employees and medical staff as the main actors in the service delivery process[1]. Healthcare worker performance is the output of individuals or teams in carrying out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with organizational standards, procedures, and objectives[2]. Therefore, improving healthcare worker performance is a strategic necessity for healthcare facilities to maintain service quality and institutional competitiveness[3].

Conceptually, employee performance is influenced by various internal and external organizational factors[4]. From a human resource management perspective, healthcare workers are regarded as the organization's most valuable assets; thus, performance quality is highly dependent on how organizations create a conducive work environment, establish a positive work culture, and effectively manage motivation systems [5]. An unconducive work culture may lead to interdepartmental conflict, work-related stress, decreased productivity, and the emergence of dysfunctional behaviors, such as high absenteeism and employee turnover[6], [7]. These conditions ultimately have a negative impact on the quality of the healthcare services provided to patients.

Patient satisfaction is a critical indicator o the quality of healthcare services [7]. Within the expectation–disconfirmation paradigm, patient satisfaction is formed through a comparison between patients' initial expectations and their perceptions of the services received[8]. Services that fail to meet or fall below expectations may result in dissatisfaction, which can subsequently affect the institutional image and patient loyalty[9]. However, empirical findings on the relationship between patient satisfaction and healthcare worker performance remain inconsistent. Some studies report a positive and significant association, whereas others indicate weak or indirect relationships, suggesting the presence of additional mediating variables in this relationship[8], [10].

Based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, healthcare worker motivation is assumed to play a mediating role in explaining the mechanism by which work culture and patient satisfaction influence healthcare worker performance[11]. Work motivation is defined as the internal and external forces that determine the direction, intensity, and persistence of individual behavior in achieving work-related goals[12]. Healthcare workers with high levels of motivation tend to demonstrate better performance, higher professionalism, and greater empathy in delivering patient-centered care. Conversely, low work motivation may lead to a decline in service quality and overall organizational performance[11], [13].

This phenomenon is reflected in the condition of a primary inpatient healthcare clinic in Mojokerto Regency, East Java Province, which in recent months has experienced a decline in patient visits, complaints, and negative reviews on social media platforms. In addition to issues related to physical services such as facility cleanliness, internal problems have also been identified, including an uncomfortable work environment, uneven workload distribution, and low healthcare worker motivation. These conditions indicate a close relationship between internal organizational factors and patients' perceptions of and satisfaction with healthcare services, which ultimately affects healthcare worker performance.

Based on these issues, this study aimed to analyze the relationship between work culture and patient satisfaction with healthcare worker performance, both directly and indirectly, through healthcare worker motivation as a mediating variable. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on human resource management in the healthcare service sector, particularly regarding motivational mediation mechanisms, and provide evidence-based insights for primary healthcare clinic managers in formulating human resource management policies to improve healthcare worker performance and ensure sustainable healthcare service quality.

2. METHOD

This study employed an observational analytic design with a quantitative approach at a primary inpatient healthcare clinic located in Mojokerto Regency, East Java Province, Indonesia, from September to October 2025. The study population consisted of two groups of respondents: healthcare workers and patients who received healthcare services at the clinic. The sample of health care workers was determined using a total sampling technique, considering the relatively small number of health care workers, whereby all members of the population were included as respondents. The patient sample was selected using purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria consisting of patients who had received healthcare services and were willing to provide assessments of the clinic's service quality.

This study involved four main variables: work culture and patient satisfaction as independent variables; healthcare worker motivation as a mediating variable; and healthcare worker performance as the dependent variable. Work culture was measured using indicators of organizational values, norms, and work-related behaviors. Patient satisfaction was measured using service quality dimensions including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Healthcare worker motivation was assessed based on internal and external drivers influencing task execution, whereas healthcare worker performance was measured through work outcomes, responsibility, and the quality of healthcare services provided.

Research data were collected by distributing structured questionnaires to healthcare workers and patients. The research instruments were developed using a five-point Likert scale to measure the respondents' levels of agreement with the proposed statements. Before data collection, the validity and reliability of the questionnaires were tested to ensure their appropriateness for measuring research variables.

The data analysis was conducted in several stages. A descriptive analysis was first performed to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of responses. An inferential analysis was subsequently conducted to examine the relationships among the research variables using Spearman's rho. The mediating role of healthcare worker motivation was tested using path analysis with multiple regression. Statistical significance was determined based on the coefficient values and confidence levels applied in this study ($p< 0.05$).

This study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles, including maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents' identities, obtaining informed consent before questionnaire administration, and ensuring that the collected data were used solely for academic purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty healthcare workers and 50 patients were included in this study. Most healthcare workers had a length of service of more than one year, indicating that they possessed an adequate understanding of the clinic's work culture and service system. Meanwhile, most patient respondents had received healthcare services more than once, suggesting that they were able to provide relatively objective assessments of the quality of services received.

The descriptive statistical analysis showed that the work culture variable was categorized as good, with a mean score of 3.96. This finding indicates that organizational values, norms, and work-related behaviors are implemented relatively consistently within an organization. Patient satisfaction was categorized as moderate to good, with a mean score of 4.58, although several aspects of the service still required improvement. Healthcare worker performance was classified as good with a mean score of 3.34. In addition, healthcare workers' motivation demonstrated a relatively high mean score of 3.74.

3.1. The Relationship between Work Culture and Patient Satisfaction with Healthcare Worker Motivation

Table 1. Results of the Analysis of Work Culture and Patient Satisfaction on Healthcare Worker Motivation

Variable	r	p-value
Work culture	0.476	0.034*
Patients' satisfaction	0.198	0.403

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$; r = Spearman's rho correlation coefficient.

The results indicated that work culture had a positive and significant relationship with healthcare worker motivation ($r = 0.476$; $p < 0.05$) (Table 1). This finding suggests that a conducive work culture can create a sense of security, role clarity, and organizational support that encourages increased motivation among motivation among healthcare workers. Although patient satisfaction showed a positive association, it did not have a statistically significant relationship with healthcare worker motivation ($r = 0.198$; $p > 0.05$). This result indicates that healthcare worker motivation is more strongly influenced by internal organizational factors than by external perceptions of patients[12], [14], [15], [16].

These findings are consistent with the motivation theory, which posits that work motivation is influenced by complementary intrinsic and extrinsic factors, with internal organizational factors often exerting a stronger influence on individual motivation[6], [17], [18].

3.2. The Relationship between Work Culture and Patient Satisfaction with Healthcare Worker Performance

Table 2. Results of the Analysis of Work Culture and Patient Satisfaction on Healthcare Worker Performance

Variable	r	p-value
Work culture	0.324	0.163
Patients' satisfaction	0.446	0.049*

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$; r = Spearman's rho correlation coefficient.

Based on Table 2, the results showed that work culture was positively associated with healthcare worker performance ($r = 0.324$; $p = 0.034$); however, this relationship was not statistically significant. This finding indicates that although a strong and supportive work culture can encourage healthcare workers to work more effectively and responsibly, its influence alone may not be sufficient to directly and significantly improve their performance. Theoretically, this result aligns with the view that organizational culture functions as a system of values that guides individual behavior within organizations[19], [20], [21]. A work environment that supports collaboration, role clarity, and performance recognition has the potential to increase healthcare worker commitment, which may ultimately contribute to improved performance[4].

Furthermore, the findings revealed that patient satisfaction had a positive and significant relationship with healthcare worker performance ($r = 0.446$; $p = 0.049$). This result indicates a reciprocal relationship between patients' perceptions of service quality and healthcare workers' performance[22], [23], [24]. From the expectation–disconfirmation perspective, patient satisfaction resulting from the fulfillment of service expectations may generate positive feedback that psychologically reinforces healthcare workers' work enthusiasm[6], [9]. This finding supports those of previous studies suggesting that patient satisfaction contributes to improved service performance, although its effect is not always direct[8], [10].

3.2. The Mediating Role of Healthcare Worker Motivation

Table 3. Results of the Analysis of Healthcare Worker Motivation on Healthcare Worker Performance

Variable	r	p-value
Motivation	0.508	0.022*

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$; r = Spearman's rho correlation coefficient.

Mediation analysis demonstrated that healthcare worker motivation mediated the relationship between work culture and healthcare worker performance ($r = 0.508$; $p < 0.022$) (Table 3). This finding indicates that work culture not only has a direct relationship with healthcare worker performance but also exerts an indirect influence through enhanced motivation. Conceptually, this result supports the view that motivation serves as a psychological mechanism

linking organizational factors and performance outcomes[11]. The mediating role of healthcare worker motivation is further illustrated in Figure 1, which visually represents the indirect pathway through which work culture influences healthcare worker performance. This study also reinforces previous findings that highlight the strategic role of work motivation in improving healthcare workers' performance[1], [9], [25].

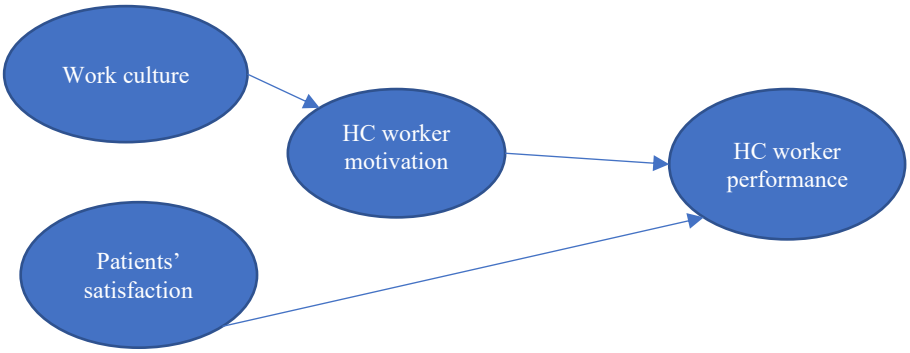


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Relationships among Work Culture, Patient Satisfaction, Healthcare Worker Motivation, and Healthcare Worker Performance

Overall, the results and discussion of this study emphasize that improving healthcare worker performance in primary healthcare clinics cannot be separated from strengthening the work culture and enhancing patient satisfaction, with healthcare worker motivation serving as a crucial linking factor. Therefore, clinical management is encouraged to design human resource management policies oriented toward the development of a positive work culture, improvement in service quality, and sustainable strategies to enhance healthcare worker motivation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between work culture and healthcare worker motivation as well as between patient satisfaction and healthcare worker performance. In addition, the findings demonstrate a positive and significant mediating relationship between healthcare worker motivation and performance. Based on these results, it can be concluded that human resource management should not only focus on fostering a positive work culture, but also on systematic efforts to maintain and enhance healthcare worker motivation. These findings emphasize the importance of a comprehensive managerial approach that involves strengthening work culture, improving patient satisfaction, and enhancing healthcare worker motivation in the management of primary healthcare clinics. This approach supports sustainable improvements in healthcare workers and healthcare service quality.

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