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STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CAREER DEVELOPMENT, INTRINSIC MOTIVATION, AND THE BEHAVIOURAL MEDIATION OF LECTURER PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices on lecturer performance within Indonesian private universities, focusing on the roles of intrinsic motivation, professional competence, and career development, with discipline as a proposed behavioural mediator. Data from 119 lecturers were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that intrinsic motivation has a significant direct positive effect on lecturer performance, while career development strongly enhances discipline. However, discipline does not mediate the relationships between the independent variables and performance, and professional competence shows no significant direct or indirect effects in this model. The findings underscore the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation and implementing structured career pathways to improve academic outcomes. They also challenge the assumed centrality of discipline as a key behavioural conduit in SHRM frameworks for higher education. The study contributes to theory by integrating SHRM with behavioural and motivational perspectives. It offers practical insights for academic leaders seeking to enhance faculty performance through targeted human resource strategies in the post-pandemic era.

KEYWORDS: Strategic Human Resource Management, Lecturer Performance, Intrinsic Motivation, Career Development, Discipline, PLS-SEM, Higher Education, Indonesia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) has emerged as a pivotal approach in reshaping the educational landscape within higher education institutions. Given the rapid transformation in the higher education sector driven by globalisation, technological advances, and increasing competition, it has become essential for academic institutions to align their human resource practices with the goals of faculty development and performance enhancement. This alignment not only promotes institutional competitiveness but also optimises lecturer engagement and performance, underscoring the significance of intrinsic motivation and career development in the academic environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified this need, fundamentally altering the operational and strategic landscape and compelling institutions [1], [2], [3] to rethink how they manage and develop their academic workforce [4], [5]. In this context, SHRM serves as a critical framework for aligning lecturer capabilities, motivations, and career trajectories with institutional goals for sustainable academic productivity [6], [7].

One critical element of SHRM is career development, which encompasses activities aimed at improving an individual's capabilities and promoting professional growth [8]. Research suggests that structured career development programs mediate intrinsic motivation, leading to higher lecturer performance. For instance, understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators behind faculty engagement is crucial to developing effective HR strategies that address varying motivational needs. This perspective aligns with empirical evidence indicating that faculty clarity on career advancement opportunities significantly correlates with their job satisfaction and performance metrics [9]. Notably, enhancing career adaptability and self-perception of employability has been identified as an instrumental factor in mediating intrinsic motivation and lecturer performance. Concurrently, fostering intrinsic motivation through supportive HR practices, such as job autonomy, recognition, and professional development, is essential to enhancing lecturer performance [10]. HRM practices that prioritise employee engagement, leadership development, and motivational alignment are key drivers of organisational growth and individual performance [11].

Translating motivation and career support into tangible performance outcomes [12], [13] often involves behavioural mediation. Discipline, as a form of self-regulation and professional consistency, is posited as a key behavioural conduit [14], [15]. However, the mediating role of discipline within SHRM frameworks remains underexplored, particularly in post-pandemic educational settings where behavioural execution gaps are pronounced. Moreover, while numerous studies have explored the interdependencies between motivational factors and performance outcomes in various professional settings, research specific to the nuances within higher education remains scant. There exists a noteworthy gap in the literature concerning the detailed exploration of behavioural mediation processes that impact lecturer performance through the lens of intrinsic motivation and career development.

Despite the growing recognition of SHRM's importance, several critical gaps persist. First, while studies have examined career development and intrinsic motivation in isolation, there is a lack of integrative research that positions these elements within a unified SHRM framework designed explicitly for the post-pandemic academic context [4], [16]. Second, the existing literature often adopts a siloed approach, focusing either on structural institutional support or individual psychological traits, thereby neglecting the crucial "behavioural execution gap" between intention and outcome [17]. Third, although career development is acknowledged as vital, research has predominantly focused on long-term policy interventions, overlooking its immediate behavioural implications, such as how structured career pathways influence daily professional discipline, punctuality, and proactive teaching engagement [18], [19]. Finally, while technology's role in HR is acknowledged, its integration with behavioural mediators, such as discipline, to enhance lecturer performance remains empirically underexplored [20].

This study introduces novelty by proposing and testing an integrative SHRM framework that bridges motivational theory, career systems, and behavioural science within higher education. Unlike previous research, this study explicitly positions discipline as a central behavioural mediator within the SHRM process, examining how intrinsic motivation and career development translate into consistent professional behaviour and, ultimately, enhanced lecturer performance. The research employs a robust quantitative methodology, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), to test both direct and mediated relationships within a single model, offering empirical clarity on pathways that have previously been theoretical or fragmented. Furthermore, the study is situated within the post-

pandemic Indonesian higher education landscape, offering culturally specific insights into the unique challenges of the digital transition and academic resilience in emerging economies. By doing so, it moves beyond Western-centric models and contributes to a more global understanding of SHRM applicability.

The study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the intricate relationships among SHRM practices, career development initiatives, intrinsic motivation, and how these collective elements, mediated by discipline, influence lecturer performance in higher education. By utilising a comprehensive framework that incorporates established psychological theories of motivation, such as self-determination theory, we aim to elucidate the role of intrinsic motivation in propelling faculty towards enhanced performance [21]. This study contributes not only to the systematic understanding of HRM within academic settings but also offers valuable, evidence-based strategies for policymakers and institutional leaders aiming to cultivate a vibrant, disciplined, and high-performing educational workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st century effectively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Strategic Human Resource Management in Higher Education

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) has solidified its position as a crucial framework for understanding how human resource practices align with institutional objectives, particularly in higher education. SHRM involves systematically integrating human resource practices into the university's strategic goals to enhance faculty performance and institutional outcomes. A meta-analysis by Combs et al. shows that high-performance work practices (HPWPs) positively contribute to organisational performance by fostering an environment conducive to greater employee engagement and productivity [22]. The significance of these practices becomes even clearer when examined alongside lecturer performance. Sun et al. identify the relational dynamics in SHRM,

suggesting that high-performance HR practices lead to improved organisational citizenship behaviours among faculty, thereby enhancing productivity and reducing turnover [23]. By aligning HRM practices with faculty expectations and career aspirations, institutions can foster an engaged workforce motivated to excel in their teaching and research.

In the post-pandemic context, this strategic alignment has become even more critical. The sudden shift to digital modalities highlighted the complexities of academic productivity, requiring not only output in research and teaching but also adaptability, innovation, and behavioural consistency from lecturers [4], [5]. As traditional metrics of academic success prove insufficient, SHRM offers a lens through which institutions can holistically manage factors contributing to lecturer performance, such as intrinsic motivation, competence, and career pathway clarity [6], [7].

2.2. Career Development and Its Impact

Career development is a quintessential aspect of SHRM in post-secondary education settings. The development of faculty careers can significantly influence not only individual performance but also overall institutional effectiveness. Research by Nawaz et al. emphasises the importance of structured career advancement initiatives, illustrating that career growth, including promotion speed and salary increases, directly correlates with faculty commitment and performance [8]. Similarly, Alshaikhmubarak et al. support these findings by highlighting the impact of high-performance HR practices on the research performance and overall career success of academics, reinforcing the mediating role of research performance [24].

Drawing on Career Construction Theory [25], career development is not merely about promotions but involves "career adaptability," encompassing concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, which fosters proactive and self-regulatory behaviours [26], [27]. Lecturers with well-defined career trajectories are more likely to engage in structured professional behaviours [18], [19]. Effective career management practices, such as performance feedback, involvement in decision-making, and training, positively correlate with job performance [28], while AI-based career management can enhance decision-making accuracy in career planning [29]. These initiatives are crucial for creating compelling and competitive institutions through transparent, competency-based advancement and inclusive HR management [30].

The role of career development initiatives in shaping lecturers' self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation cannot be understated. posit that enhanced self-efficacy leads to better academic performance, subsequently boosting employability and career prospects for students and faculty alike [31]. Career pathways linked with internalised motivation can lead to greater adherence to professional standards and teaching schedules [32], [33]. However, research has often focused on policy-

level interventions, neglecting their short-term behavioural implications, such as punctuality and proactive engagement in teaching duties [18], [19]. This study addresses this gap by contextualising career development in relation to daily academic behaviour.

2.3. Intrinsic Motivation and Lecturer Performance

Intrinsic motivation is a vital driver of lecturer performance in higher education, encouraging educators to engage deeply with their work and to innovate in their teaching methods. The framework of self-determination theory (SDT) supports this notion, suggesting that fulfilling psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can

Enhance intrinsic motivation among educators [21]. Lecturers with high intrinsic motivation demonstrate increased autonomy, perseverance, and resilience, especially under conditions of uncertainty [4], [34]. This internal drive underpins a lecturer's ability to innovate pedagogically and maintain consistent performance.

Research indicates that supportive HR practices can significantly influence intrinsic motivation. Job autonomy and HR practices like recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and compensation are critical in enhancing job performance [10]. HRM practices that focus on employee engagement, leadership skills, and motivation are essential for organisational growth and employee performance [11]. Studies such as those by Iqbal et al. have found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors significantly influence performance in higher education settings, further indicating that building a quality culture can mediate this relationship [35]. Additionally, faculty motivation is affected by leadership styles within educational institutions. Nguyen et al. explored how benevolent leadership enhances organisational citizenship behaviours among lecturers, demonstrating the importance of relational dynamics in improving both individual and collective performance [36].

Most existing studies adopt a siloed approach, examining either personal characteristics or structural aspects, often neglecting the behavioural execution gap between intention and outcome. There is limited understanding of how intrinsic drives manifest as consistent behaviours, such as discipline, that directly influence academic output [16], [17].

2.4. Behavioural Mediation Mechanisms

Understanding the behavioural mediation mechanisms through which HRM practices influence lecturer performance is crucial for advancing SHRM efforts in higher education. Jiang et al. assert that addressing the "black box" within SHRM research by identifying mediating factors will help clarify how HR practices translate into superior performance outcomes [37]. This study introduces discipline as a central behavioural mediator within this black box.

Discipline, as a behavioural construct, reflects a lecturer's ability to self-regulate and adhere to institutional expectations. It entails time management, professional conduct, and consistent engagement with students. The Theory of Planned

Behaviour (Ajzen, 2020) posits that behavioural control and intentions significantly shape actual performance. Likewise, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) theory emphasises conscientiousness and dependability as vital predictors of individual performance [15], [38]. Lecturers who exhibit disciplined behaviour are more likely to meet academic responsibilities, maintain quality instruction, and contribute positively to institutional reputation [16], [39].

The roles of mediators such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment are also particularly salient. Research by Romanto indicates that strategies integrating work motivation and organisational commitment correlated positively with faculty performance outcomes [40]. Furthermore, employee commitment serves as a mediating factor between SHRM practices and human capital development, indicating that committed employees are more likely to perform better [41]. HRM practices, including training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation, have a significant positive impact on sustainable development and lecturer performance [42].

The mediating role of discipline within SHRM frameworks remains underexplored, particularly in post-pandemic educational settings where behavioural execution gaps are pronounced. Most models overlook the importance of self-regulation, i.e., how motivated or competent lecturers translate intentions into consistent, productive actions [43]. This behavioural execution gap remains under-theorised and empirically untested in a post-pandemic context.

The reviewed literature underscores SHRM's pivotal role in aligning human resources with institutional goals in higher education. Integrating robust career development frameworks, fostering intrinsic motivation, and understanding mediating behavioural mechanisms can substantially enhance lecturer performance.

However, significant gaps persist:

1. An integrated SHRM framework that combines career development, intrinsic motivation, and behavioural mediation (specifically discipline) is lacking.
2. The behavioural translation of motivation and career support into performance is underexplored, with discipline rarely positioned as a key mediator.
3. The role of discipline as a mediator within this strategic framework remains untested, especially in the transformed post-pandemic educational environment.

These gaps highlight the need for an integrative model that empirically examines how SHRM-driven factors, channelled through professional discipline, culminate in enhanced lecturer performance, particularly in the unique context of post-pandemic higher education in emerging economies.

3. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to investigate the causal relationships between strategic human resource management (SHRM) factors, namely intrinsic motivation, professional competence, and career development and lecturer performance, with discipline posited as a behavioural mediator. The research was conducted within the context of Indonesian private higher education institutions, using a cross-sectional survey. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0 was applied, as this method is particularly suitable for predictive research, theory development, and testing complex models with mediation effects [44]. The use of PLS-SEM aligns with the study's objective of validating an integrative SHRM framework and examining the direct and indirect pathways through which HR practices influence academic outcomes.

Data were collected from a purposively selected sample of 119 lecturers from various universities in East Java, Indonesia. The purposive sampling technique ensured that participants had relevant experience in both traditional and post-pandemic teaching modalities. The sample size was determined based on the "10-times rule" [44], which recommends a minimum of 10 observations per indicator for the most complex construct. With three exogenous constructs directing paths toward the mediating variable (discipline), a minimum sample of 30 was initially required. To enhance statistical power and ensure robustness for mediation analysis, the sample was expanded to 119 respondents. The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=119).

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Highest Education	Master's Degree	74	62.20%
	Doctorate	45	37.80%
Length of Service	< 10 years	38	31.90%
	10 – 25 years	52	43.70%
	> 25 years	29	24.40%
Academic Position	Teaching Staff	19	15.90%
	Expert Assistant	38	31.90%
	Lecturer	39	32.70%
	Head Lecturer	21	17.60%
	Professor	2	1.90%

A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument, employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The measurement items were adapted from well-established theoretical frameworks and prior empirical studies to ensure contextual and construct validity. Intrinsic motivation was operationalised using indicators derived from Self-Determination Theory [21], [34].

Professional competence was measured using Spencer and Spencer's (1993) Competency Model, which incorporates pedagogical, technological, and adaptive skill items [45]. Career development was assessed using items grounded in Career Construction Theory [25] that focused on institutional support, advancement opportunities, and professional growth [19]. Discipline was conceptualised as a self-regulatory behavioural

construct, with items aligned with the Theory of Planned Behaviour [14] and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour [15]. Lecturer performance was evaluated using multi-dimensional indicators reflecting teaching effectiveness, research contribution, and institutional service in the post-pandemic environment [4], [16]. The instrument was pilot-tested with 20 lecturers to confirm clarity, relevance, and reliability before full-scale administration.

Data analysis followed a two-step PLS-SEM procedure. First, the measurement model was assessed to evaluate reliability and validity. Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with acceptable thresholds of 0.70 or higher. Convergent validity was confirmed through average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50. Discriminant validity was verified using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with all inter-construct values remaining below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Hair et al., 2021). Second, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesised relationships. Path coefficients (β) and their significance were determined through bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. The explanatory power of the model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2) for endogenous constructs, while predictive relevance was evaluated through Stone-Geisser's Q^2 via a blindfolding procedure. Effect sizes (f^2) were calculated to determine the substantive impact of exogenous variables. Mediation analysis was conducted by examining indirect effects using the bootstrapping approach to determine whether discipline significantly mediated the relationships between the independent variables and lecturer performance.

The study adhered to ethical research standards, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents. The proposed conceptual model, illustrated in Figure 1, integrates SHRM antecedents with behavioural mediation, providing a theoretically grounded and methodologically rigorous framework for understanding how strategic HR practices translate into enhanced academic performance in the evolving landscape of higher education.

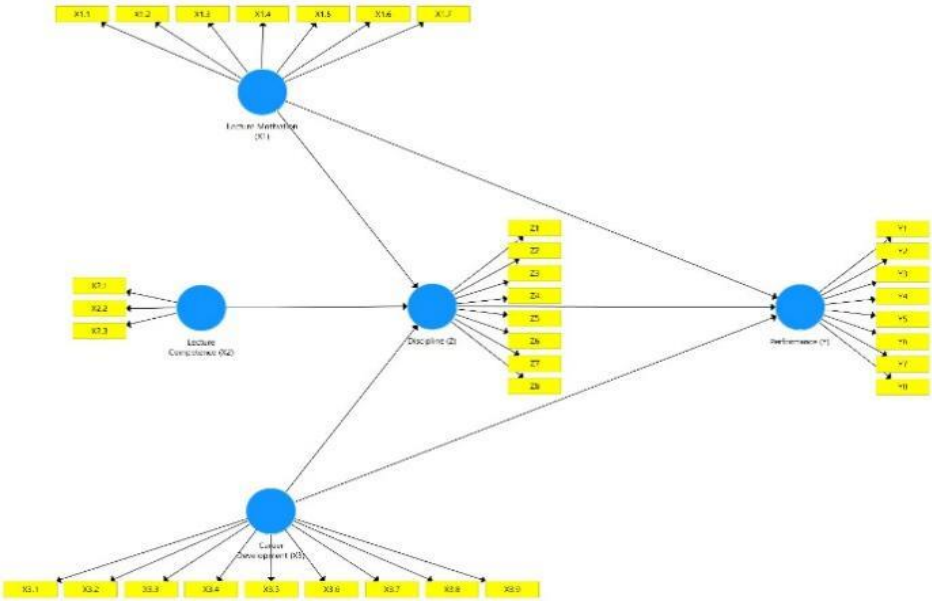

Figure 1: Conceptual Research Model.

4. RESULT

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model evaluation confirmed the reliability and validity of all constructs. As presented in Table 2, all constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was established, as the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded 0.50, indicating that the indicators adequately captured the underlying latent variables.

Table 2: Reliability And Convergent Validity of Constructs.

Construct	Items	Loadings Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Intrinsic Motivation	5	0.734 — 0.892	0.876	0.911	0.673
Professional Competence	5	0.712 — 0.881	0.845	0.894	0.628
Career Development	5	0.768 — 0.905	0.889	0.918	0.692
Discipline	5	0.745 — 0.888	0.862	0.902	0.651
Lecturer Performance	5	0.721 — 0.874	0.851	0.889	0.618

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct from the others (Hair et al., 2021). The highest correlation was observed between Career Development and Discipline (HTMT = 0.763), which is theoretically aligned, while other inter-construct correlations remained within acceptable limits

Table 3: Discriminant Validity: Htmt Ratio.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Intrinsic Motivation	-				
2. Professional Competence	0.412	-			
3. Career Development	0.385	0.452	-		
4. Discipline	0.398	0.399	**0.763**	-	
5. Lecturer Performance	0.529	0.410	0.478	0.215	-

4.2. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was evaluated for explanatory power, predictive relevance, and significance of hypothesised paths. The model explained 52.8% (R^2 = 0.528) of the variance in Discipline and 26.2% (R^2 = 0.262) of the variance in Lecturer Performance, indicating moderate and weak explanatory power, respectively, according to the benchmarks proposed by [44].

The predictive relevance of the model was confirmed with Stone-Geisser's Q^2 values of 0.286 for Discipline and 0.147 for Performance, both exceeding zero, thereby indicating adequate predictive relevance. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all constructs were below 3.3, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues.

The results of the hypothesis testing are summarised in Table 4. Career Development exhibited a strong, statistically significant positive effect on Discipline (β = 0.634, t = 7.594, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. In contrast, the effects of Intrinsic Motivation (β = 0.083, t = 0.920, $p > 0.05$) and Professional Competence (β = 0.119, t = 1.648, $p > 0.05$) on Discipline were not statistically significant; thus, H1 and H2 were not supported.

Regarding direct effects on performance, Intrinsic Motivation demonstrated a significant positive direct effect on Lecturer Performance (β = 0.512, t = 7.157, $p < 0.001$), supporting H5b.

However, Discipline did not show a significant direct effect on Lecturer Performance (β = -0.192, t = 1.700, $p > 0.05$), leading to the rejection of H4. Similarly, the direct effects of Professional Competence (β = -0.024, t = 1.021, $p > 0.05$) and Career Development (β = -0.024, t = 0.244, $p > 0.05$)

on Lecturer Performance were not significant; therefore, H6b and H7b were not supported.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing Results (Pls-Sem Bootstrapping: 5,000 Samples).

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	p-value	95% CI	Supported?
H1	Motivation → Discipline	0.083	0.920	0.358	[-0.095, 0.258]	No
H2	Competence → Discipline	0.119	1.648	0.099	[-0.022, 0.260]	No
H3	Career Development →Discipline	**0.634**	**7.594**	**0.000**	**[0.469, 0.799]**	**Yes**
H4	Discipline → Performance	-0.192	1.700	0.089	[-0.414, 0.030]	No
H5a	Motivation → Discipline →Perf.	-0.016	0.682	0.495	[-0.062, 0.030]	No
H5b	Motivation → Performance	**0.512**	**7.157**	**0.000**	**[0.374, 0.650]**	**Yes**
H6a	Competence → Discipline →Perf.	-0.023	1.021	0.307	[-0.067, 0.021]	No
H6b	Competence → Performance	-0.024	1.021	0.307	[-0.070, 0.022]	No
H7a	Career Dev. → Discipline →Perf.	-0.122	1.659	0.097	[-0.265, 0.021]	No
H7b	Career Dev. → Performance	-0.024	0.244	0.807	[-0.219, 0.171]	No

Note: CI = Confidence Interval; Perf. = Performance; Dev. = Development.

4.3. Assessment Of Mediation Effects

The mediation analysis revealed that Discipline did not serve as a significant behavioural conduit in the model. None of the indirect effects through Discipline were statistically significant: Motivation → Discipline → Performance (β = -0.016, t = 0.682, p > 0.05); Competence → Discipline → Performance (β = -0.023, t = 1.021, p > 0.05); and Career Development → Discipline → Performance (β = -0.122, t = 1.659, p > 0.05). Consequently, the hypothesised mediating roles of Discipline (H5a, H6a, H7a) were not supported by the data.

4.4. Effect Size and Model Fit

The effect size (f^2) of each exogenous construct was calculated to assess its substantive impact. Career Development exhibited a significant effect on Discipline (f^2 = 0.651). Intrinsic Motivation showed a small-to-medium direct effect on Performance (f^2 = 0.293). All other f^2 values were below 0.02, indicating negligible effects. The overall model fit, as assessed by the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), was 0.068, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit between the proposed model and the observed data.

In summary, the results highlight the strong influence of Career Development on fostering Discipline and the pivotal direct role of Intrinsic Motivation in enhancing Lecturer Performance. However, the postulated mediating mechanism of Discipline did not receive empirical support, suggesting that the relationship between SHRM factors and performance may operate through alternative behavioural or psychological pathways not captured in the current model [46].

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer a nuanced understanding of how Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices, specifically career development and intrinsic motivation, influence lecturer performance in the post-pandemic Indonesian higher education context. The results reveal a complex interplay between these factors, challenging some established assumptions while reinforcing others. This discussion synthesises the key outcomes, interprets them within the broader theoretical and empirical landscape, and highlights novel insights that extend the current literature.

5.1. The Central Role of Career Development in Fostering Discipline

The most robust finding of this study is the strong, statistically significant positive effect of career development on lecturer discipline (β = 0.634, p < 0.001). This result strongly aligns with Career Construction Theory [25], which posits that clear, structured professional pathways enhance an individual's sense of control, concern for the future, and proactive self-regulation. In practical terms,

lecturers who perceive that their institution invests in their long-term growth through transparent promotion frameworks, mentorship programs, and competency-based advancement [30] are more likely to internalise professional standards and exhibit disciplined behaviours such as punctuality, meticulous lesson planning, and adherence to academic responsibilities [18], [19].

This finding directly addresses a gap identified in the literature review, where career development was often studied as a long-term policy issue, neglecting its immediate behavioural consequences [18], [19]. Our research bridges this gap by empirically demonstrating that strategic HR investments in career systems yield tangible, short-term returns in the form of enhanced professional discipline, a critical asset in the volatile post-pandemic educational environment.

5.2. The Pivotal Direct Impact of Intrinsic Motivation on Performance

Consistent with Self-Determination Theory [21], intrinsic motivation emerged as the most powerful direct predictor of lecturer performance ($\beta = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$). This finding underscores that lecturers driven by internal satisfaction, autonomy, and a sense of relatedness are more resilient, innovative, and effective in their roles, particularly when navigating the challenges of hybrid and online teaching [4], [34]. This result corroborates prior studies emphasising that HR practices fostering autonomy and recognition are crucial for performance [10], [11].

The non-significant path from intrinsic motivation to discipline (H1 not supported) introduces a critical nuance. It suggests that while motivated lecturers perform well, their performance is not necessarily channelled through the mechanism of structured, rule-bound discipline. Instead, their excellence may stem from passion, creativity, and adaptive engagement qualities that are sometimes orthogonal to conventional measures of discipline. This decoupling of motivation and discipline challenges the implicit assumption in some Theory of Planned Behaviour and OCB literature that motivation invariably translates into standardised conscientious behaviour [14], [15]. It implies that for highly intrinsically motivated individuals, performance may be more organic and less dependent on strict self-regulatory discipline.

5.3. The Non-Significant Mediating Role of Discipline: Unpacking the Behavioural "Black Box"

A central and somewhat unexpected finding is the lack of significant mediation by discipline. Neither intrinsic motivation, professional competence, nor career development translated into improved performance through the behavioural conduit of discipline. This finding is pivotal for SHRM theory, as it addresses the "black box" problem highlighted by [37]. Our results suggest that for this sample, discipline is not the primary behavioural mechanism linking HR practices to performance outcomes.

Several interpretations arise. First, the measure of *discipline* in this study, focusing on punctuality, rule adherence, and consistency, may reflect a more compliance-based construct. In the complex, knowledge-driven work of academia, performance may be more strongly mediated by other behavioural or cognitive mechanisms, such as knowledge sharing [41], innovative work behaviour [47], or career adaptability [26], [27]. Second, the post-pandemic context may have redefined performance determinants, with adaptability, technological agility, and emotional resilience factors not fully captured by traditional disciplines becoming more critical [6], [7]. This finding invites a re-examination of the behavioural mediators within academic SHRM models, suggesting a need for more nuanced constructs that capture proactive, adaptive, and innovative professional behaviours.

5.4. The Limited Role of Professional Competence: A Contextual Paradox

The non-significant effects of professional competence on both discipline and performance were surprising, given the emphasis on competency models in HR and education literature [48], [49]. One explanation is the phenomenon of "competence saturation." In a sample where 100% of respondents hold at least a master's degree and 37.8% hold doctorates, basic pedagogical and subject-matter competence may be a ubiquitous baseline rather than a differentiating factor. Performance variations may therefore be driven less by *having* competence and more by *how* that competence is applied, mediated by motivation, creativity, or support systems, which aligns with findings that competence alone is insufficient without enabling conditions [50].

The finding may reflect the unique stressors of the post-pandemic era. Competence in traditional face-to-face pedagogy may not directly translate to effectiveness in digital or hybrid modes without corresponding motivation and institutional support for adaptation [45]. This highlights a critical implication for SHRM: investing solely in competency development (e.g., training workshops)

without concurrently fostering the motivational and career ecosystems may yield limited returns on performance.

This study synthesises and extends previous work in several key areas:

1. Integrating SHRM with Behavioural Micro-Foundations: While prior SHRM research in higher education often focused on macro-level practices [22], [23], this study zooms in on the micro-level behavioural mediator of discipline. Our finding that this specific mediator was non-significant is itself a valuable contribution, redirecting scholarly attention to other potential mechanisms, such as adaptability or proactive behaviour.
2. Contextualising Post-Pandemic Academic Work: The study validates and extends findings on the critical role of intrinsic motivation in times of crisis [4], [5]. It also provides empirical evidence from Indonesia, a context underrepresented in mainstream SHRM literature, showing that the positive link between career development and professional behaviour holds across cultural settings, yet the mediating pathways may differ.
3. Introducing Nuance to Established Theories: The results introduce important nuance to Self-Determination Theory and Career Construction Theory. They confirm that intrinsic motivation and career development are potent forces, but suggest their pathways to performance may be more direct and less reliant on the planned, disciplined behaviour emphasised in the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This calls for more integrative theoretical models that account for multiple, parallel pathways to performance.
4. Highlighting Unexplored Mediators from the Broader Literature: Our findings resonate with and point toward other significant mediators identified in related literature that were not the focus of this model. For instance, the strong direct effect of motivation aligns with research on job autonomy as a critical facilitator [10]. The non-significant mediation of discipline suggests the potential greater relevance of mediators such as organisational commitment [40] or technology-enabled engagement [20]. Furthermore, the emphasis on career systems supports the growing literature on AI-enhanced career management as a strategic tool [29].

The research provides a refined, context-sensitive map of the SHRM-performance landscape in higher education. It strongly affirms the strategic value of investing in intrinsic motivation (through autonomy-supportive cultures) and structured career development (through transparent, supportive pathways). However, it fundamentally challenges the assumed centrality of compliance-oriented discipline as the key behavioural conduit.

The primary theoretical implication is that SHRM models in academia should incorporate a wider array of behavioural and psychological mediators, such as adaptability, innovative behaviour, and digital fluency, which may be more salient in today's dynamic, technology-infused educational environment. In practice, university leaders should design HR systems that simultaneously strengthen motivational climates and career architectures while moving beyond discipline-based performance assessments toward evaluations that capture adaptive, creative, and student-centred excellence. Future research should employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to unpack the complex mediation "black box" further and explore the conditional effects of factors like leadership style, institutional culture, and digital transformation maturity.

6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the intricate relationships between Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices, specifically intrinsic motivation, professional competence, and career development and lecturer performance in Indonesian private universities, with discipline posited as a key behavioural mediator. Employing a quantitative explanatory design and analysing data from 119 lecturers using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), the research yields several conclusive insights that advance both theoretical understanding and practical application in post-pandemic higher education management.

The findings robustly confirm the direct and substantial influence of intrinsic motivation on lecturer performance, aligning with Self-Determination Theory and underscoring the irreplaceable value of fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness within academic roles. Simultaneously, the study reveals that structured career development serves as an influential antecedent to professional discipline, validating Career Construction Theory and highlighting the importance of transparent, supportive career

pathways in cultivating consistent, rule-adherent academic behaviour. However, contrary to the hypothesised framework, discipline did not mediate between the SHRM antecedents and performance outcomes. Furthermore, professional competence, while undoubtedly essential, did not emerge as a significant direct or indirect predictor of performance within this specific model and context, suggesting a potential "competence saturation" effect or the predominance of other enabling factors.

Theoretically, this research makes a distinct contribution by integrating SHRM principles with behavioural and motivational theories into a unified framework tailored for the higher education sector. It successfully addresses identified gaps in the literature by empirically testing the behavioural execution pathway, though the non-significant mediation result itself becomes a critical finding. It challenges the assumed centrality of compliance-oriented disciplines as the primary conduit for performance in knowledge-intensive academic work, suggesting that future models should incorporate more nuanced mediators, such as adaptability, innovative work behaviour, and digital agility. The study also enriches the application of SHRM theories across geographically diverse contexts by providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian context.

From a managerial perspective, the conclusions are clear and actionable. University leaders and HR policymakers should prioritise the dual strategy of:

1. Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation: By designing autonomy-supportive work environments, recognising professional achievements, and fostering a collaborative academic culture.
2. Strengthening Career Architecture: By implementing transparent, competency-based promotion systems, mentorship programs, and continuous professional development opportunities that clearly map future growth for lecturers.

Investments in these areas are likely to yield significant returns in performance and professional conduct. However, the findings advise against over-reliance on discipline-based metrics as the primary lever for performance enhancement. Instead, performance management systems should evolve to recognise and reward the adaptive, creative, and student-centred behaviours that intrinsic motivation uniquely fuels.

This study is not without limitations. Its cross-sectional design precludes definitive causal inferences, and the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias. The model, while informative, explained a moderate portion of the variance in discipline (52.8%) and a weaker portion in performance (26.2%), indicating the involvement of other significant factors, such as leadership styles, organisational climate, technological readiness, and personal well-being.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to trace the evolution of these relationships over time. Qualitative inquiries could richly elucidate the "how" and "why" behind the quantitative patterns observed, particularly the disconnection between discipline and performance. Expanding the model to include other potent mediators, such as career adaptability, knowledge sharing, or psychological empowerment, and moderators, such as digital transformation maturity or institutional culture, would provide a more comprehensive understanding. Ultimately, by embracing a more holistic, agile, and motivation-centred SHRM approach, higher education institutions can better navigate the post-pandemic landscape, enhancing not only lecturer performance but also the overall quality and resilience of the academic ecosystem.

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