



Strategies for Enhancing Job Satisfaction: The Influence of Rewards, Work-Life Balance & Coworker Support

Nazarwin¹, Riki Wanda Putra*, Bambang Hermanto, Syafni Yelvi Siska
Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effects of rewards, work-life balance, and coworker support on employee job satisfaction. Employing a quantitative design with independent samples t tests, the research population comprised all employees of Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat in 2025 (150 persons), with a purposive sampling technique based on percentage to select respondents. So, the pilot sample is 37 persons, and the research sample is 113 persons. A structured questionnaire was used to measure the variables of recognition, work-life balance, coworker support, and job satisfaction, and data were analyzed using SPSS. The findings reveal that rewards, work-life balance, and coworker support significantly influence job satisfaction (t -calculated $>$ t -critical; 21.849, 14.508, 21.991 $>$ 1.66). Rewards also impact work-life balance, which in turn affects coworker support, although they do not directly influence it. Implications of this research suggest that implementing a structured reward system can be an effective strategy to enhance job satisfaction in vocational education settings. Future studies are advised to employ mixed methods designs and broaden the sample to multiple institutions to verify and generalize these results. It is recommended that the management of Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat develop and implement integrated reward programs and flexible work policies to optimize employee well-being and productivity.

Keywords: *Job Satisfaction, Rewards, Work-Life Balance, Coworker Support.*

INTRODUCTION

Employee job satisfaction is a critical element in achieving optimal organizational performance. Improvements in job satisfaction directly enhance productivity, efficiency, and the quality of work outputs (Kurniawan & Desiana, 2024). Employees who feel content with their work environment and the recognition they receive are more likely to be motivated and committed to their duties. Job satisfaction also plays a pivotal role in reducing stress levels and employee turnover, thereby fostering organizational stability. Organizations that successfully cultivate high levels of employee satisfaction typically exhibit a conducive and innovative work climate (Manihuruk & Soehari, 2020). Thus, investing in measures that enhance job satisfaction not only supports employee well-being but also bolsters overall organizational performance and productivity.

Meanwhile, job satisfaction refers to the favorable emotional response employees have when their work roles and environment align with their expectations and personal needs. This construct encompasses emotional, psychological, and social dimensions that influence employee motivation and engagement (Kosasih et al., 2024). It also reflects the extent to which employees feel valued and recognized for their contributions. Supportive working conditions, such as fair rewards, equitable rewards, and harmonious interpersonal relationships, are essential to fostering job satisfaction. As job satisfaction increases, organizational productivity and performance tend to improve (Abawa & Obse, 2024).

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Corresponding author's email: rikiii126@gmail.com

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Satisfied employees typically demonstrate higher loyalty and greater initiative in task completion. Consequently, job satisfaction serves as a key indicator for assessing the effectiveness of human resource management within an organization. Rewards, work recognition, or compensation, also known as incentives, comprise material and non-material incentives provided by the institution to motivate workers to enhance their efforts and performance (Carolan et al., 2021). Its purpose is to influence employees to meet or exceed targets set by supervisors. Incentives act as intrinsic motivational triggers that drive employee performance in fulfilling core job functions. Recognition is thus considered a vital mechanism to improve work efficiency and effectiveness within an organization. Work-life balance is defined as the harmony between job demands and personal life, enabling employees to manage both domains effectively. It emphasizes the proportional allocation of time, energy, and resources between professional activities and personal pursuits (Ahad et al., 2024). The concept entails the ability to separate work roles from private life to mitigate stress and emotional strain. Achieving this balance helps reduce the emotional exhaustion commonly associated with excessive work demands, making work-life balance a key element in promoting a healthy and mentally supportive work environment. Coworker support involves mutual recognition and appreciation of each individual's strengths in the workplace. This recognition extends beyond symbolic gestures to include practical and emotional assistance that encourages colleagues to maximize their potential (Moore et al., 2022). Supportive peers foster a conducive environment for personal and professional growth. Positive interactions enhance employee confidence and well-being, ultimately boosting work performance. An organizational culture that promotes mutual recognition and support is crucial for creating a harmonious and developmental atmosphere.

Together, these three factors constitute strategic levers for institutions aiming to foster a conducive work environment. Work-life balance enables employees to manage time effectively between work and personal life, reducing stress and enhancing mental well-being. Rewards provide appreciation for employee efforts and achievements, thereby increasing motivation, loyalty, and organizational commitment. Coworker support creates a supportive atmosphere that helps employees navigate challenges and strengthens teamwork. The integration of these factors is instrumental in shaping a positive organizational culture that encourages employees to reach their full potential. Consequently, improved job satisfaction not only enhances employee well-being but also directly impacts institutional productivity and overall performance.

This study was conducted at Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat (Poltekpel Sumbar) for several reasons. First, Poltekpel Sumbar is the representative of maritime vocational higher institutions in Indonesia, which has an environment where employees often assume multiple functional roles (e.g., serving simultaneously as lecturers and heads of academic units). This dual-role structure is relatively unique and has not been adequately addressed in the broader job-satisfaction literature, which tends to focus on single-role or corporate environments. Second, Poltekpel Sumbar is in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia; a region where access to continuing professional education and formalized career-advancement programs is comparatively limited. Employees report minimal opportunities for certification, skill-upgrading courses, or formal mentorship, all of which have been shown in other settings to correlate strongly with organizational commitment and job satisfaction. By focusing on this regional institution, the research uncovers how geographic and institutional isolation can exacerbate feelings of stagnation, making rewards and peer support mechanisms even more salient. The findings thus address a gap in the literature concerning how regional disparities in professional development opportunities bear upon employee attitudes.

Based on observations and interviews with several employees of Poltekpel Sumbar, four primary issues regarding job satisfaction emerged. First, many employees complained of disproportionate rewards. They reported that salaries, allowances, and incentives were not

commensurate with their workload and responsibilities, leading to perceptions of unfairness and dissatisfaction. Employees at Poltekpel Sumbar often carry dual roles, serving as lecturers and as heads of academic units, which ought to be recognized by leadership. Management's failure to adequately acknowledge and reward these contributions has left employees feeling undervalued, potentially undermining motivation and organizational loyalty. The second issue relates to a perceived lack of a supportive work environment, interpreted in terms of both infrastructure and human resources. Although the institution's building and general conditions are optimal, internal facilities remain incomplete, for example, the absence of scanners, insufficient workstation computers, and frequent equipment malfunctions. These deficiencies can hinder productivity and dampen employee morale. Third, employees cited limited career development opportunities, noting minimal access to training, skill enhancement, and clear career progression paths, which constrain their ability to realize professional growth.

An initial survey of all Poltekpel Sumbar employees on factors affecting their job satisfaction yielded the following distribution as presented in Figure 1 below.

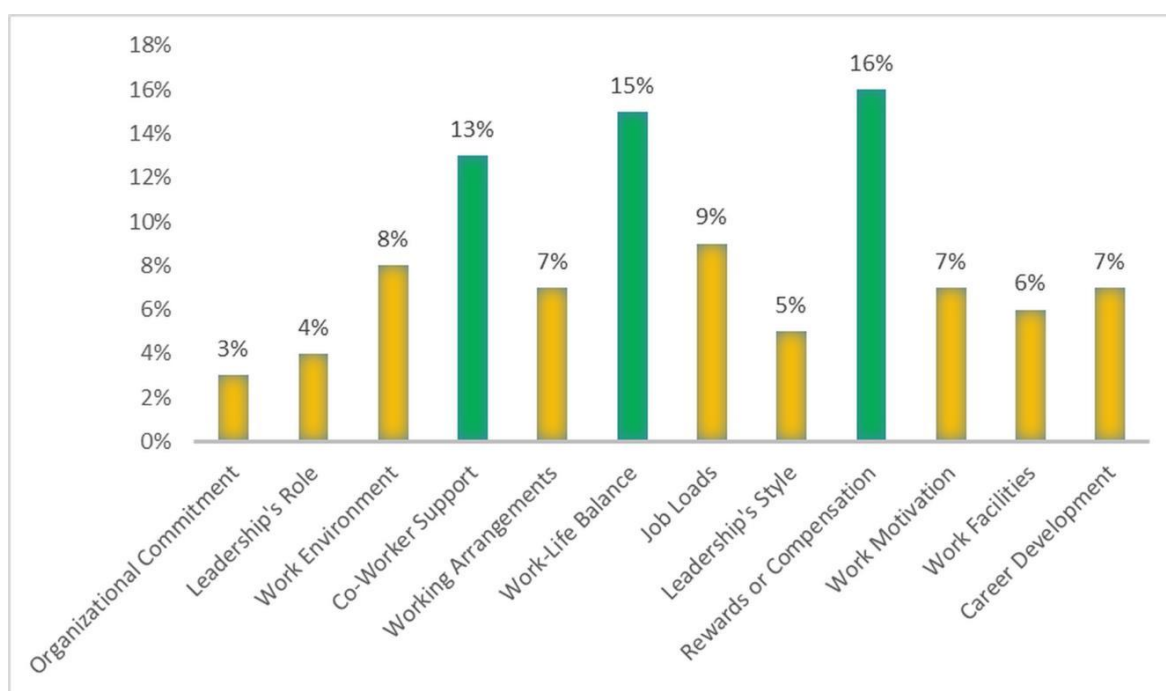


Figure 1. Survey Results on Factors Influencing Employee Job Satisfaction

Source: Research Data

From twelve assumed determinants, three emerged as dominant: rewards (16 %), work-life balance (15 %), and coworker support (13 %). Rewards emerged as the most influential factor, underscoring the importance of competitive compensation. Work-life balance demonstrated employees' emphasis on maintaining personal well-being and productivity. Coworker support reflected the extent to which peer assistance fosters comfort and motivation in the workplace. Strong mutual support cultivates a positive, collaborative climate.

This study contributes novelty by integrating three principal variables: work recognition, work-life balance, and coworker support within a comprehensive analytical framework tailored to the organizational context, thereby enhancing real-world relevance. This is due to the fact that previous studies have rarely examined these psychosocial levers in the specialized context of maritime vocational education. Consequently, the findings offer targeted insights for designing employee-centered policies that directly address the well-being and performance drivers specific

to Poltekpel Sumbar's teaching and administrative staff. The mixed methodology combining quantitative and qualitative data enriches the validity of the findings. The results serve as a foundation for developing innovative managerial strategies to improve employee satisfaction and productivity.

Previous research demonstrating that work rewards—such as performance awards or public acknowledgment—consistently boost employee motivation and organizational commitment directly informs the hypothesis that higher levels of recognition will correlate with increased job satisfaction at Poltekpel Sumbar. Likewise, studies showing that coworker support functions as a buffering resource against workplace stress support our research question regarding the positive impact of peer assistance on both employee well-being and productivity. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine strategies for improving employee job satisfaction at Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat by analyzing the roles of rewards, work-life balance, and coworker support. To address this objective, the research questions are formulated as follows: (1) Is there any significant effect of rewards on job satisfaction? (2) Is there any significant effect of work-life balance on job satisfaction? (3) Is there any significant effect of coworker support on job satisfaction? (4) Is there any significant effect of rewards on work-life balance? (5) Is there any significant effect of work-life balance on coworker support? (6) Is there any significant effect of rewards on coworker support?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drawing from established theoretical perspectives in organizational psychology and work behavior, this study develops a conceptual framework that links rewards, work-life balance, and coworker support with job satisfaction. The primary theoretical foundation is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between factors that contribute to job satisfaction (motivators) and those that prevent dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Second, the Equity Theory posits that employees evaluate fairness by comparing their inputs (effort, skills, time) and outputs (salary, recognition, status) relative to their peers or organizational standards. When an imbalance or perceived inequity arises, it can lead to dissatisfaction and prompt efforts to restore balance (Mensah et al., 2024). Third, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model categorizes work-related factors into job demands; elements that require sustained effort or energy (e.g., heavy workload, administrative demands) and job resources, which help employees achieve goals, reduce demands, and support personal growth (e.g., coworker support, autonomy, development opportunities) (Scholze & Hecker, 2024).

Fourth, the Social Exchange Theory views relationships between employees and their organizations, as well as among colleagues, as reciprocal exchanges. Employees are more motivated and satisfied when they perceive that their contributions are valued, prompting them to reciprocate with greater commitment or performance (Subramanian et al., 2022). Fifth, the Work-Family Border Theory suggests that work and personal life exist in separate domains with flexible boundaries, which can be influenced by organizational policies and individual motivation to achieve balance between the two (White & Thatcher, 2023). Lastly, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs proposes that human motivation is structured in a hierarchy of needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Higher-level needs can only be pursued once more basic needs are reasonably fulfilled (Taş, 2024).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's subjective evaluation of their work experience and environment. It embodies the positive feelings that arise when employees perceive that their job aligns with their expectations and values (Akbari et al., 2020). Mertala et al. (2022) define job satisfaction as a positive emotional state that emerges when an individual conducts a holistic appraisal of their work experience. This definition underscores that, beyond financial factors,

psychological and social dimensions also play a critical role in shaping overall satisfaction. Consequently, job satisfaction is widely regarded as a key indicator influencing performance, retention, and service quality (Ayele et al., 2020).

In general, job satisfaction is influenced by the balance between professional demands and personal life (Maloney et al., 2023). Interaction with colleagues and the support they provide in overcoming work challenges likewise constitute important determinants of satisfaction levels. Consistent with this view, John (2023) asserts that job satisfaction reflects an individual's positive perceptions of their work and its supportive environment. It indicates the extent to which actual working conditions meet personal expectations. Thus, job satisfaction emerges from the interplay between internal individual factors and external work environment characteristics, jointly determining comfort and motivation in fulfilling academic duties.

Numerous factors influence employee job satisfaction, which can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors originate within the individual employee, whereas external factors stem from the surrounding environment. Internal determinants include self-efficacy in organizational commitment and ethical behavior at work (Aryati & Armanu, 2023), work-life balance and work discipline (Prabowo et al., 2022), intrinsic motivation (Sutoro et al., 2024), job stress (Siburian et al., 2023), and job performance (Kahpi et al., 2020). In contrast, external determinants encompass leadership roles in policy making and organizational commitment (Pahlawi & Fatonah, 2020), work environment and recognition systems (Ingsih et al., 2022), flexible working hours, family culture, and work-family conflict (Aura & Desiana, 2023), transformational leadership and organizational behavior (Yuliantini et al., 2024), participative leadership and workload (Martini et al., 2023), career development opportunities (Wau & Purwanto, 2021), and factors such as education level, recruitment systems, and workplace facilities (Sunatar, 2023).

Rewards

The concept of reward captures the various forms of remuneration employees receive as a response to their workplace performance. It includes financial rewards such as salary, bonuses, and allowances, as well as non-financial recognition like appreciation, respect, and career development opportunities (Thai et al., 2022). According to Tanskanen (2025), work rewards are the returns employees obtain in response to their contributions and efforts. These rewards extend beyond monetary compensation to include intangible acknowledgments such as praise and personal growth opportunities.

Adequate rewards serve as a counterbalance to high workloads by helping to mitigate negative stress and fatigue (Liu et al., 2020). Rewards may take the form of promotions, positive feedback, and career advancement prospects (Zhao et al., 2024), all of which have been shown to reduce emotional disruption that might otherwise distract employees from their core tasks. As such, workplace rewards are viewed as an effective mechanism for enhancing focus, motivation, and performance (Walsh et al., 2021).

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance denotes an individual's ability to manage and harmonize the demands of their job with personal needs and activities. This concept has gained prominence as the boundaries between professional and personal life become increasingly blurred (Alotaibi & Aldossry, 2023). Work-life balance is characterized by workers' capacity to allocate time and energy effectively between occupational responsibilities and private life. Achieving this balance depends not only on time management skills but also on organizational support and policies that facilitate flexible working arrangements (Cho et al., 2023).

Work-life balance involves integrating and balancing diverse roles in both professional and personal spheres. It encompasses strategies for managing time, energy, and resources to prevent conflicts between intensive work demands and personal needs (Lee et al., 2024). Bhat et al. (2023)

noted that by adjusting work hours, workload, and location, employees can alleviate stress and fatigue commonly associated with heavy job demands. Overall, work–life balance is not merely about dividing time but also about promoting employee well-being, engagement, and productivity.

Coworker Support

Coworker support refers to the assistance provided by colleagues who share similar professional experiences and can offer empathy, validation, and inspiration to peers facing work-related challenges (Viking et al., 2022). This support involves mutual listening and narrative sharing that help individuals reconstruct their self-identity and grow personally (van de Ven & Pemberton, 2022). Colleagues thus act as sources of validation and empathy, enabling negative experiences to be reframed constructively.

Thompson and Doran (2024) describe coworker support as the process of mutual aid among colleagues in coping with pressures and challenges at work. Such interactions foster trust and solidarity, enhancing adaptation to a demanding work environment (Page-Reeves et al., 2024). Through experience exchange and moral support, employees feel more motivated and better equipped to manage stress arising from divergent perceptions and work demands. Melin and Lång (2024) further explain that coworker support functions as a preventive system among professionals to detect and address emerging work issues promptly. In this way, coworker support operates as a preemptive mechanism for early identification and timely intervention in mental health concerns within the workplace.

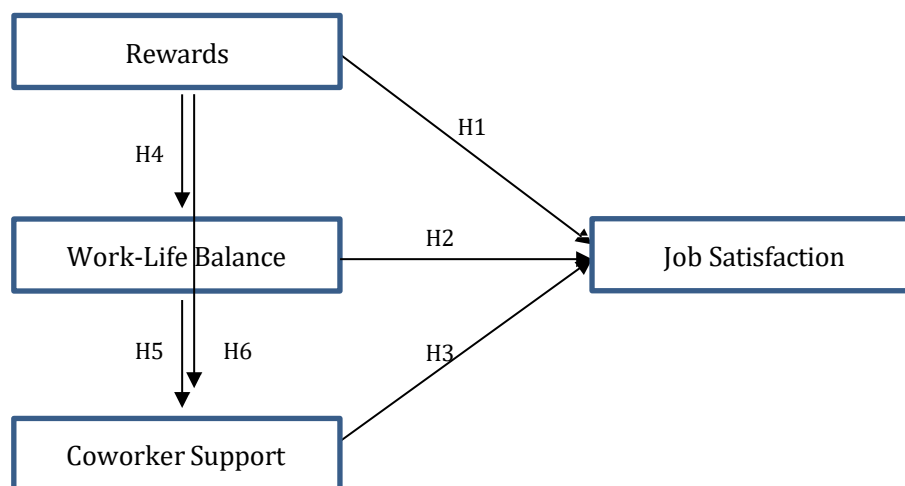


Figure 2. Research Framework

Source: Research Data

Despite robust evidence linking rewards, work–life balance, and coworker support individually to job satisfaction, few studies have examined their combined effects within the unique context of maritime vocational education. Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat presents distinct operational pressures—from overlapping job descriptions to the psychosocial demands of seafaring pedagogy—that may amplify or alter these relationships. By investigating these three variables simultaneously in this specialized setting, our study fills a critical gap in understanding how intertwined organizational and social factors shape employee well-being and performance in maritime training institutions. In doing so, it extends existing knowledge by offering tailored insights and actionable recommendations for enhancing job satisfaction and institutional

effectiveness in vocational maritime education. What is novel about our approach is the integration of rewards, work–life balance, and coworker support into a single quantitative framework tailored to Indonesian vocational education—a context rarely explored in existing research. Building on the benchmarking of prior studies, Figure 2 illustrates the research framework, which outlines the hypothesized relationships among the variables. The specific hypotheses formulated for this study are detailed below:

H1: Rewards have a significant effect on job satisfaction.

H2: Work–life balance has a significant effect on job satisfaction.

H3: Coworker support has a significant effect on job satisfaction.

H4: Rewards have a significant effect on work–life balance.

H5: Work–life balance has a significant effect on coworker support.

H6: Rewards have a significant effect on coworker support.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach, emphasizing the collection and analysis of numerical data to test the proposed hypotheses. An independent samples t-test was chosen to detect significant differences between two independent groups (Nazarwin et al., 2024). The research was conducted at Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat over ten months, from February 2025 to November 2025. The population comprised all 150 employees of the institution, and a purposive sampling technique—based on percentage quotas—was used to select respondents (Mengistu et al., 2023). The decision to use purposive (quota-based) sampling rather than simple random sampling was driven by our need to ensure that key subgroups within the 150 employees, consisting of PNS, PPPK, and PPNP, were each proportionally represented in the survey. Table 1 presents the sampling breakdown.

Table 1. Sampling Procedure

Employment Status	Total Population	Pilot Sample (25%)	Main Sample (75%)
PNS/Civil Servant	78	19	59
PPPK/ Government Employee under Work Agreement	11	3	8
PPNP/ Non-Civil Servant Government Employee	61	15	46
Total	150	37	113

Source: Human Resources Development Unit of Poltekpel Sumbar 2025

As shown in Table 1, a proportional approach was applied: 25% of each employment category (37 employees) participated in the pilot test, while the remaining 75% (113 employees) formed the main study sample. This stratified procedure ensures balanced representation across all staff categories, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of both the instrument trial and the main investigation. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire. First, the questionnaire was administered to the pilot sample to assess its validity and reliability. After refining the instrument, the final version was distributed to the main sample according to the predetermined quotas. Table 2 details the pilot test questionnaire items.

Table 2. Pilot-test Questionnaire

No.	Variable	Indicator	Statement	Code
1	Rewards	Financial Rewards	I believe my salary and allowances reflect recognition of my performance.	R1
			Financial bonuses and incentives at this institution	R2
2	Work-Life Balance	Financial Rewards	increase my motivation and commitment.	
			I perceive the financial reward system here as fair and commensurate with my contributions.	R3
			The process for determining financial rewards is transparent and accountable.	R4
		Non-Financial Rewards	I feel valued when I receive praise and recognition from supervisors and colleagues.	R5
			Non-monetary awards (e.g., certificates, plaques) strongly motivate me to improve my work.	R6
			Opportunities for training or seminars as rewards support my career development.	R7
			A culture of appreciation enhances my job satisfaction.	R8
2	Work-Life Balance	Time Balance	I feel that the time I allocate to work and personal life is well balanced.	WLB1
			I can schedule my work flexibly so that I still have time for personal activities.	WLB2
			I have sufficient time for rest and relaxation outside of working hours.	WLB3
		Involvement Balance	I participate actively at work without sacrificing my personal roles.	WLB4
			I balance my involvement between work tasks and family/community activities.	WLB5
			Support from colleagues and supervisors helps me maintain this balance.	WLB6
		Satisfaction Balance	I am satisfied with the balance between my work and personal life.	WLB7
			This balance contributes positively to my overall job satisfaction.	WLB8
			I feel that professional achievements and personal fulfillment are equally met.	WLB9
3	Co-Worker Support	Instrumental	My colleagues provide practical assistance when I face difficulties completing tasks.	CS1
			I receive adequate technical support from coworkers when needed.	CS2
			My coworkers are responsive to my requests for help.	CS3

			They supply information and resources to support my duties.	CS4
	Emotional		My colleagues show empathy and concern when I am under pressure.	CS5
			I feel heard and understood by my coworkers during stressful moments.	CS6
			Their emotional support makes me feel valued.	CS7
			I feel comfortable sharing personal experiences with my colleagues.	CS8
No.	Variable	Indicator	Statement	Code
4	Job Satisfaction	Salary	I believe my salary is commensurate with my contributions and workload.	JS1
			My salary motivates me to perform better.	JS2
			I am satisfied with the clarity and structure of the pay system.	JS3
	Promotion		I trust that promotions here are handled fairly and transparently.	JS4
			Promotion opportunities provide additional motivation for my career growth.	JS5
			The existing promotion system supports my professional development.	JS6
	Rewards		I feel the institution's rewards (financial and non-financial) match my achievements.	JS7
			Non-financial recognition, such as awards and certificates, boosts my morale.	JS8
			The reward system encourages me to reach higher performance levels.	JS9
	Comfortable working environment		The work environment supports effective collaboration and communication.	JS10
			The facilities provided enhance my comfort and productivity.	JS11
			I feel safe and comfortable working in the institution's well-maintained environment.	JS12

Source: Research Instrument

All questionnaire items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, where respondents indicated their level of agreement with each statement: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5). The independent-samples t-test was applied to compare the means of the research variables: job satisfaction (Y), rewards (X1), work-life balance (X2), and coworker support (X3). In addition to the t-tests, we conducted several analyses. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha for each scale (X1, X2, X3, Y) to confirm internal consistency. Validity checks via item-total correlations and exploratory factor analysis during the pilot phase. Assumption testing for all inferential tests, including the Shapiro-Wilk normality tests. All statistical procedures were performed in IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the instrument validity test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity Test of Research Variable

Variable	No.	Code	r-calculated	Result
r-critical = 0.3246				
Rewards (X1)	1	X101	0.439	Valid - usable
	2	X102	0.903	Valid - usable
	3	X103	0.518	Valid - usable
	4	X104	0.840	Valid - usable
	5	X105	0.694	Valid - usable
Variable	No.	Code	r-calculated	Result
Work-Life Balance (X2)	6	X106	0.453	Valid - usable
	7	X107	0.796	Valid - usable
	8	X108	0.408	Valid - usable
	9	X201	0.838	Valid - usable
	10	X202	0.847	Valid - usable
	11	X203	0.415	Valid - usable
	12	X204	0.850	Valid - usable
	13	X205	0.806	Valid - usable
Coworker Support (X3)	14	X206	0.543	Valid - usable
	15	X207	0.767	Valid - usable
	16	X208	0.899	Valid - usable
	17	X209	0.733	Valid - usable
	18	X301	0.880	Valid - usable
	19	X302	0.871	Valid - usable
	20	X303	0.895	Valid - usable
	21	X304	0.907	Valid - usable
Job Satisfaction (Y)	22	X305	0.819	Valid - usable
	23	X306	0.945	Valid - usable
	24	X307	0.743	Valid - usable
	25	X308	0.900	Valid - usable
	26	Y01	0.489	Valid - usable
	27	Y02	0.418	Valid - usable
	28	Y03	0.391	Valid - usable
	29	Y04	0.387	Valid - usable
	30	Y05	0.405	Valid - usable
	31	Y06	0.372	Valid - usable
	32	Y07	0.543	Valid - usable
	33	Y08	0.684	Valid - usable
	34	Y09	0.596	Valid - usable
	35	Y10	0.262	Not valid – unusable
	36	Y11	0.630	Valid - usable
	37	Y12	0.530	Valid - usable

Further assessment of reliability was carried out based on the criteria outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Test Criteria

Reliability Coefficient	Criterion
0,8 – 1,0	Very high instrument reliability
0,7 – 0,8	High instrument reliability
0,4 – 0,7	Moderate instrument reliability
0,2 – 0,4	Low instrument reliability
0,0 – 0,2	Very low instrument reliability (unreliable)

Source: [Syahlani and Setyorini \(2023\)](#)

The results of the reliability test are shown in Table 5. In the pilot study (N = 37), we first evaluated internal consistency for each scale using Cronbach's alpha. The results were:

Table 5. Reliability Test of Research Variables

No.	Variable	R-value	R-criterion
1	Rewards (X1)	0.859	Very high instrument reliability
2	Work-Life Balance (X2)	0.924	Very high instrument reliability
3	Coworker Support (X3)	0.967	Very high instrument reliability
4	Job Satisfaction (Y)	0.821	Very high instrument reliability

Source: Research Data

Based on the result above, all four constructs have high reliability, and confirming that the items coherently measure their intended dimensions. Further, Table 6 compares the number of questionnaire items before and after validity and reliability testing.

Table 6. Questionnaire Items Before and After Validity and Reliability Tests

No.	Variable	Items Before Test	Items After Test
1	Rewards (X1)	8	8
2	Work-Life Balance (X2)	9	9
3	Coworker Support (X3)	8	8
4	Job Satisfaction (Y)	12	11
TOTAL		37	36

Source: Research Data

After data collection, a normality test was performed to determine whether each variable's distribution was normal. The Shapiro-Wilk results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Data Normality Test Results

No.	Variable	Criterion	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.	Result
1	Rewards (X1)	> 0.05	0.055	Normal
2	Work-Life Balance (X2)	> 0.05	0.081	Normal
3	Coworker Support (X3)	> 0.05	0.056	Normal
4	Job Satisfaction (Y)	> 0.05	0.240	Normal

Source: Research Data

Then, the descriptive statistic results from each indicator can be seen below:

Table 8. Descriptive Statistic from Each Indicator

Variable	Mean	Median	Variance	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.	Range
Rewards (X1)	32.31	32.00	12.001	3.464	23	40	17
Work-Life Balance (X2)	35.53	35.00	18.894	4.347	25	44	19
Coworker Support (X3)	32.34	32.00	11.422	3.380	23	39	16
Job Satisfaction (Y)	44.20	45.00	21.485	4.635	33	54	21

Source: Research Result

Hypothesis testing was then conducted using independent samples t-tests, which were valid because all variables were normally distributed. The results of the six hypothesis tests are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of Six Hypothesis Tests

No.	Hypothesis Test	t-critical	t-calculated	Sig. Criterion	Sig. value	Result
1	X1 towards Y	1.66	21.849	< 0.05	0.000	H1 accepted
2	X2 towards Y	1.66	14.508	< 0.05	0.000	H2 accepted
3	X3 towards Y	1.66	21.991	< 0.05	0.000	H3 accepted
4	X1 towards X2	1.66	6.16	< 0.05	0.000	H4 accepted
5	X2 towards X3	1.66	6.168	< 0.05	0.000	H5 accepted
6	X1 towards X3	1.66	0.058	< 0.05	0.954	H6 rejected

Source: Research Result

The hypothesis tests were conducted by comparing the p-values from the independent-samples t-tests in SPSS against the study's significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). If the p-value is less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected; if the p-value exceeds 0.05, H_0 is retained and H_1 is rejected. In addition, the absolute value of the calculated t-statistic ($|t_{\text{calculated}}|$) was compared to the critical t-value (t_{critical}): if $|t_{\text{calculated}}| > t_{\text{critical}}$, H_1 is accepted; if $|t_{\text{calculated}}| < t_{\text{critical}}$, H_0 is accepted.

Hypothesis 1 (H_1) demonstrated that reward significantly affects job satisfaction among employees at Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat. Reward is a key determinant of employee satisfaction: according to the effort-reward imbalance model, equitable rewards for employee effort enhance job satisfaction (Giel & Breuer, 2023). Kristanti et al. (2021) found that financial compensation fosters satisfaction by conveying appreciation and acknowledgement of employees' contributions. When employees receive fair and competitive rewards, they are motivated to optimize their performance in pursuit of organizational goals. Such rewards also fulfill both material and psychological needs, thereby cultivating a positive work environment.

Reward plays a critical role in improving job satisfaction because it acknowledges employee contributions. Rewards may be financial or non-financial—such as performance recognition, certificates, public appreciation, career-development opportunities, or promotion (Maryani et al., 2022). Appropriate rewards motivate employees to maintain high performance and loyalty. Moreover, recognition fosters a favorable climate and enhances coworker communication. Properly administered rewards boost morale and motivation, making employees feel valued and

driven to contribute more (Jiang et al., 2023). When rewards meet expectations, they mitigate stress and strengthen employee loyalty (Pich & Fendy, 2021). A fair and transparent reward system ensures that every effort is objectively acknowledged, thereby creating a satisfying and productive work environment.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂) showed that work-life balance significantly influences job satisfaction. Saputra and Satrya (2024) highlight that maintaining a balance between professional responsibilities and personal life significantly contributes to improving employee satisfaction. Balanced time allocation reduces work stress, enabling greater focus and productivity during working hours. Dwinijanti et al. (2020) define work-life balance as the effective management of work and personal demands; this balance alleviates stress and fatigue from excessive workloads. Employees who have time for personal activities—such as family gatherings or hobbies—experience improved mental health, which in turn boosts motivation and productivity because they feel supported by their organization.

Lack of work-life balance leads to excessive workload and negatively impacts job satisfaction. When employees cannot balance professional and personal roles, stress and fatigue escalate, resulting in decreased motivation and productivity (Hidayat et al., 2024). Without adequate balance, employees feel a loss of control over their lives, diminishing job satisfaction. Role conflict between professional and personal spheres intensifies exhaustion and dissatisfaction (Kirana et al., 2021). In other words, poor work-life balance is a critical factor driving reduced job satisfaction and increased risk of burnout.

Hypothesis 3 (H₃) found that coworker support significantly affects job satisfaction. Iskandar et al. (2024) identify coworker support as a crucial factor enhancing employee satisfaction. When colleagues support one another, they create a harmonious and problem-solving work environment. This sense of solidarity makes employees feel valued and helps them manage their workload. The study by Swastasi and Sartika (2021) presents similar report that coworker support fosters a supportive atmosphere conducive to higher satisfaction. Positive interactions facilitate idea exchange and collective problem solving, reducing isolation and workplace stress. Supported employees are more motivated to perform optimally, and emotional bonds with the organization are strengthened, boosting loyalty.

Coworker support is pivotal in raising job satisfaction because it fosters a supportive climate. Colleagues who assist each other help alleviate stress and encourage resilience in facing work challenges (Pithaloka & Ardiyanti, 2024). Such support makes employees feel appreciated and motivated to give their best. A supportive environment also increases team engagement, which enhances confidence and satisfaction with one's work. Therefore, the presence of supportive coworkers is a key driver of job satisfaction and employee retention.

Hypothesis 4 (H₄) showed that reward significantly influences work-life balance. Tuhumury et al. (2023) reveal that recognition boosts employee motivation, prompting them to better manage the balance between work and personal life. When employees receive reward, they feel their efforts are acknowledged, reducing stress and fatigue. Reward encourages optimism in scheduling between professional obligations and personal needs. Reward-friendly workplaces often provide flexible scheduling, enabling employees to align professional commitments with personal activities more effectively.

Reward offers psychological benefits that enhance both satisfaction and motivation, enabling employees to manage their time between work and life more efficiently (Nameda et al., 2023). Fair and proportional recognition makes employees feel valued and supported. This support reduces stress and pressure that can disrupt work-life balance. By acknowledging achievements, recognition bolsters confidence, which positively impacts personal life. Recognition also motivates employees to set healthy boundaries between work and personal time (Zhang et al., 2024). In sum, fair reward systems reduce workload stress, allowing employees to enjoy personal time and

boosting overall well-being.

Hypothesis 5 (H_5) demonstrated that work-life balance significantly affects coworker support. [Baisa and Nilasari \(2022\)](#) describe how balanced work-life conditions reduce fatigue and stress from high job demands. With greater energy, employees interact more positively with colleagues, fostering empathy and solidarity. In addition, [Pensar and Rousim \(2023\)](#) noted that work-life balance helps manage stress and maintain emotional well-being, making employees more supportive of each other. When employees have sufficient personal and professional time, they are more open to communication and relationship building. This balance provides the energy necessary for collaboration, idea sharing, and mutual assistance.

Supportive work-life balance environments strengthen coworker interactions, trust, and solidarity. Good balance helps employees preserve mental and emotional health, preparing them to support colleagues. When employees manage time effectively between work and personal life, they have more capacity to build positive workplace relationships ([Barck-Holst et al., 2022](#)). Such environments nurture trust and empathy among coworkers. Balanced conditions also mitigate stress and fatigue that often cause conflict. With stable mental health, employees are more likely to collaborate and share experiences to overcome challenges together.

Hypothesis 6 (H_6) found no significant direct effect of recognition on coworker support. According to [Pratiwi et al. \(2022\)](#), rewards are typically granted based on individual achievements, focusing on personal performance rather than social interactions. As a result, recognition does not directly foster coworker cohesion or solidarity. Coworker support is more strongly influenced by organizational culture and naturally occurring daily interactions. Moreover, individual rewards can sometimes spur competition, which may undermine collaboration and reciprocal support. Consequently, recognition's impact on coworker support is not significant in interpersonal contexts. While recognition enhances individual motivation and performance, its effect on coworker support remains limited.

According to [Cooper et al. \(2023\)](#), formal rewards emphasize individual acknowledgment rather than emotional bonding among colleagues. Coworker support emerges organically through shared experiences and collective challenge management. These relationships grow from trust and empathy developed over time, not from formal reward mechanisms. Formal recognition from management differs from the intrinsic, social interactions that drive coworker support ([Strametz et al., 2025](#)). Thus, while recognition boosts individual morale, it does not substitute for the everyday social dynamics that underpin supportive coworker relationships.

These findings offer clear guidance for Poltekel Sumbar leadership to enhance employee well-being and institutional performance by strategically leveraging recognition, work-life balance, and coworker support. First, management should implement a transparent reward system—combining financial incentives, career development opportunities, and public acknowledgment—to reinforce desired behaviors and signal organizational appreciation. Second, adopting flexible scheduling policies and providing access to wellness resources will help employees manage the competing demands of maritime training simulations and personal commitments. Third, structured peer-mentoring programs and team-building workshops can cultivate coworker support networks that buffer workplace stress and foster collaborative problem solving. Fourth, department heads and supervisors should be trained to deliver timely, constructive feedback that not only recognizes individual contributions but also encourages teamwork. Fifth, integrating these measures into annual performance reviews ensures that recognition, balance, and support become embedded in the organizational culture. Sixth, entrepreneurship courses for staff could emphasize the practical application of these psychosocial levers to innovation and project management. Finally, institutional policymakers and social scientists can use the quantitative evidence generated to inform cross-sector comparisons and guide broader vocational education reforms.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that enhancing employee recognition leads to increased motivation and job satisfaction. Employees who maintain a healthy work-life balance tend to exhibit higher levels of satisfaction and productivity. Strong coworker support further motivates employees and fosters a comfortable environment for daily tasks. Institutional reward systems can serve as an indirect catalyst for achieving optimal work-life balance. Managing work-life balance is therefore a strategic imperative to strengthen interpersonal relationships and synergy within the workplace. However, although recognition is vital for improving job satisfaction, it does not directly influence coworker support. Theoretical contributions of this study center on how it refines and extends existing organizational-behavior frameworks by identifying work-life balance as an essential mediating resource that channels rewards into both job satisfaction and, in turn, coworker support, demonstrating that top-down recognition alone does not guarantee peer-to-peer support, and clarifying coworker support's dual role as a hygiene-cum-motivator resource.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

Despite its strengths, the study's findings should be interpreted with caution due to its narrow institutional focus and short data collection duration, both of which may limit relevance in varying organizational or temporal settings. Reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may also introduce response bias and overlook the dynamic, longitudinal nature of employee attitudes. Future research should therefore employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, expand to multiple institutions, and incorporate objective performance metrics to validate self-report measures. Additionally, examining moderating factors such as organizational culture or leadership style would enrich understanding of how rewards, work-life balance, and coworker support jointly influence job satisfaction.

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