

# Reward and Punishment Mediation in the Relationship Between Employee Discipline, Communication, and Employee Commitment

Discipline,  
Communication,  
Reward Mediation

561

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Submitted:  
November 23, 2025

Revised:  
January 20, 2026

Accepted:  
January 28, 2026

Published Online:  
January 31, 2026

## ABSTRACT

*In the context of public-sector organizations facing increasing demands for accountability and performance, understanding the mechanisms that shape employee commitment remains a critical managerial concern. This study examines the mediating roles of reward and punishment in the relationships among employee discipline, communication, and employee commitment. Using a quantitative approach with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), data were collected from all 130 employees through total sampling. The findings indicate that employee discipline significantly influences employee commitment but has no significant effect on communication. Reward and punishment significantly improve communication, but do not enhance employee commitment. Mediation tests show that reward and punishment do not significantly mediate the relationship between discipline and employee commitment, although partial mediation occurs in the discipline–communication pathway. This study concludes that employee commitment in public-sector organizations cannot be effectively developed solely through extrinsic control mechanisms. This research contributes to public-sector HRM literature by demonstrating that structured reinforcement systems strengthen communication yet fail to build deeper psychological commitment.*

**Keywords:** Communication, Employee Commitment, Employee Discipline, Reward and Punishment.

## INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) in public institutions plays a vital role in ensuring the quality, efficiency, and accountability of government services. Among its key components, employee discipline, communication, and employee commitment serve as interrelated variables that shape organizational effectiveness. Discipline refers to employees' compliance with organizational rules and procedures, ensuring tasks are carried out consistently and in accordance with established standards (Titisari et al., 2021). A disciplined workforce contributes to a predictable workflow and supports the achievement of institutional goals (Turley et al., 2022). Equally important is organizational communication, which involves the clear, accurate, and timely exchange of information between leaders and employees.

Effective communication enhances transparency, reduces misunderstandings, and facilitates coordination toward shared objectives (Zainab et al., 2022). Employee commitment represents a psychological attachment to the organization, reflected in loyalty, responsibility, and willingness to contribute. Together with discipline and communication, it forms a key foundation for a productive public-sector work environment. However, these elements are difficult to sustain when reward and punishment systems are inconsistently applied, as is commonly observed in government agencies, including immigration offices. Such inconsistencies raise questions about the effectiveness of reinforcement mechanisms in strengthening communication and fostering

**JIMKES**

Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen  
Kesatuan  
Vol. 14 No. 1, 2026  
pp. 461-574  
IBI Kesatuan  
ISSN 2337 – 7860  
E-ISSN 2721 – 169X  
DOI: 10.37641/jimkes.v14i1.4620

deeper employee commitment. Previous research has yielded mixed findings regarding the relationships among discipline, communication, and commitment. Sabri et al. (2023) show that although discipline is important for procedural compliance, it does not always translate into improved communication among employees. Similar results were found by Puspitawati et al. (2023), who reported that discipline alone may not significantly enhance communication effectiveness, suggesting that communication quality may depend more on organizational culture and communication structures, in terms of commitment.

In terms of commitment, Taufiqurrahman et al. (2023) highlight that discipline can contribute to employee engagement, yet its influence on organizational commitment is often limited. Madiistriyatno and Wahyuningsih (2024) noted that other factors, such as leadership and work environment, have a more significant influence on employee commitment than employee discipline itself. Additionally, studies by Rahma et al. (2024) indicate that although reward and punishment systems positively affect employee discipline, their impact on performance and communication is not always significant. This research suggests that while rewards and punishments can influence discipline, they do not necessarily have a substantial impact on communication among employees, particularly in the context of public sector organizations. Furthermore, although rewards and punishments can enhance discipline, their influence on communication is more limited, especially when there is a lack of clarity in their application. Moreover, although reward and punishment systems are often considered important factors in enhancing commitment, recent research suggests that these systems may not yield the expected impact. Liu et al. (2022) argue that punishment is more effective for employees with low commitment, whereas it can undermine the commitment of more engaged employees. Research by Thi et al. (2023) further supports this finding, indicating that factors such as internal communication and teamwork have a greater influence on building employee commitment than reward and punishment systems.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative examination of reward and punishment as mediating variables in the communication commitment relationship within a public-sector setting. Unlike previous studies that focused on direct effects or treated reinforcement mechanisms merely as independent factors, this research positions reward and punishment as strategic mediators that may alter the strength and direction of communication outcomes. This study examines the mediating roles of reward and punishment in the relationships among employee discipline, communication, and employee commitment. Furthermore, the study employs measurement indicators specifically adapted to the structural and cultural characteristics of government institutions, thereby offering a more contextually grounded assessment. In addition to addressing theoretical gaps, this study responds to the practical urgency facing public organizations that must enhance service quality amid rising public expectations. By understanding how reinforcement mechanisms influence communication patterns and employee commitment, agency leaders can design more effective HRM strategies that balance compliance, motivation, and employee engagement. The insights from this study are expected to contribute not only to academic discourse but also to the development of evidence-based managerial policies to improve performance in government institutions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Effect of Employee Discipline**

Communication plays a crucial role in fostering harmonious relationships and a healthy work environment by improving task understanding, alignment with organizational goals, and decision-making, while strengthening trust, engagement, commitment, and loyalty (Rahimnia & Molavi, 2020; Zainab et al., 2022; Zaelani et al., 2024). Previous studies emphasize the close interaction between communication and employee discipline in shaping behavior and performance, where discipline enhances productivity and supports effective communication, while inadequate discipline may hinder organizational culture and communication effectiveness (Fitriyani & Evita, 2021; Miskiyah et al., 2021; Wisesa et al., 2022; Kadir et al., 2023).

Employee commitment reflects loyalty, willingness to remain, and support for organizational goals, and is associated with higher productivity and innovation, with affective commitment as the most influential dimension (Hadi & Tentama, 2020; Aziz et al., 2021; Isadora et al., 2021; Triguero-Sánchez et al., 2022; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022; Zaelani et al., 2024). However, empirical evidence shows that employee discipline does not consistently strengthen commitment, as commitment is more strongly influenced by leadership, work environment, motivation, and job satisfaction (Mochklas et al., 2021; Cay et al., 2022; Sudarmanto et al., 2023; Chayaningrum, 2025).

The reward and punishment system serves as a mechanism to motivate employees in achieving organizational goals. Rewards enhance motivation, discipline, commitment, and performance, while punishment functions mainly as a corrective tool for discipline when applied cautiously (Wu et al., 2022; McNamara et al., 2022). Empirical studies indicate that rewards positively affect employee discipline and performance, whereas punishment has a limited effect on performance, highlighting the importance of rewards, particularly when employee discipline acts as a mediating factor (Amalia et al., 2023; Sakinah, 2023; Arifin et al., 2024).

H1: Employee discipline has a positive effect on communication.

H2: Employee discipline has a positive effect on employee commitment.

H3: Employee discipline has a positive effect on reward and punishment.

### **The Effect of Rewards and Punishment**

Several studies support the view that reward and punishment do not significantly influence employee communication. Rewards and punishment tend to affect performance and compliance rather than communication quality, which is more strongly shaped by internal motivation, supportive environments, and collaborative organizational dynamics (Azwardi, 2021; Fatmasari & Nurdiana, 2022). Other findings indicate that although rewards and punishments may encourage rule compliance, they do not directly enhance communication, particularly among employees with diverse backgrounds or unclear expectations (Rimbahari & Wijaya, 2020; Liu et al., 2022). Moreover, excessive punishment can reduce motivation and weaken interpersonal communication, while structural incentives alone are insufficient to build strong relationships and effective communication (Jannah et al., 2023; Fahlevi & Rahadi, 2024).

The relationship between employee commitment and the reward–punishment system remains debated in the literature. Although often assumed to enhance commitment, several studies suggest that rewards and punishments do not always produce the expected effects. Punishment may be effective for employees with low commitment but can alienate highly committed employees, while rewards tend to encourage short-term focus rather than long-term commitment (Sulistiyan, 2022; Liu et al., 2023; Mahira et al., 2023). Other research indicates that internal communication, teamwork, and employee engagement are stronger predictors of commitment and performance than traditional reward–punishment mechanisms, highlighting the need for organizations to reassess these systems (Octario, 2022; Thi et al., 2023; Layek & Koodamara, 2024).

H4: Reward and punishment have a positive effect on communication.

H5: Reward and punishment have a positive effect on employee commitment.

### **Reward and Punishment as a Mediating Variable**

Employee discipline influences workplace communication through reward and punishment mechanisms, creating a motivational environment that enhances performance and communication. Research shows that rewards and punishments influence discipline, which plays a significant role in performance and communication. Putri et al. (2023) found that an effective reward and punishment system can improve employee behavior and communication in the workplace, while Siregar et al. (2022) shows that these two mechanisms increase productivity and effective communication

among employees. Pahlawi and Fatonah (2020) state that rewards improve employee discipline and performance through motivation, thereby contributing to better communication. Yandri and Alfian (2024) state that the combination of rewards and punishments regulates employee communication behavior and fosters a high-performance work ethic, creating an organizational culture that supports effective communication.

Employee discipline plays a significant role in influencing organizational commitment, with a structured reward and punishment system playing a key role. Research shows that rewards and punishments affect employee behavior and performance, which positively relates to their commitment to the organization. The application of rewards, especially contingent ones, is crucial for creating an environment that supports employee commitment. The strategic application of punishment, especially for employees with low commitment, is also important in enhancing commitment, such as financial penalties to prevent non-compliant behavior (Faiqoh et al., 2022; Liu & Zhou, 2022). Balancing rewards and punishments fairly can create a disciplined and committed workforce (Septiana et al., 2022). Rewards and punishments affect employee morale and perceptions of workplace fairness. Effective disciplinary actions improve Employee discipline and encourage employees to adjust their behavior. Therefore, a structured discipline system can improve long-term performance and commitment to the organization (Fahlevi & Rahadi, 2024)

H6: Rewards and punishments mediate the effect of employee discipline on communication.

H7: Rewards and punishments mediate the effect of employee discipline on employee commitment.

Employee discipline refers to the attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate employees' adherence to the rules, policies, and procedures set by the organization (Nasir et al., 2021; Anwar & Abrar, 2023; Pongtuluran & Marewa, 2025). In the context of organizational management, employee discipline plays a critical role in fostering a productive and efficient work environment. It encompasses aspects such as punctuality, work quality, and adherence to established guidelines and instructions (Simorangkir et al., 2021). Effective work discipline is not only essential for maintaining order but also for ensuring that organizational objectives are achieved in a timely and efficient manner. Several factors influence employee discipline, including intrinsic motivation, organizational culture, and the leadership style used within the organization (Diwanti et al., 2020). High levels of discipline are closely linked to improved organizational performance, as disciplined employees are more likely to contribute effectively to both individual and team-based goals (Fahlepi, 2020).

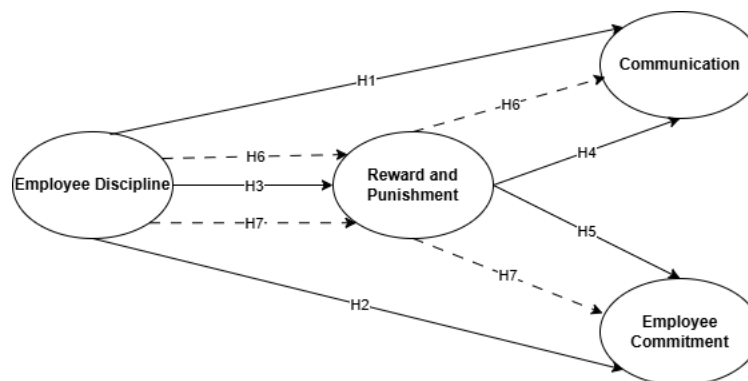


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1, which also shows the connections between employee commitment, communication, reward and punishment, and discipline. It is suggested that employee commitment, communication, and reward and punishment are all directly impacted by employee discipline. Reward and punishment serve as a mediating factor that connects employee dedication, communication, and discipline. Furthermore, it is anticipated that rewards and penalties would have a direct impact on employee dedication and communication, underscoring their crucial role in improving employee attitudes and behavioral results within the company.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative research design using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach to examine the causal relationships among employee discipline, reward and punishment, communication, and employee commitment. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is suitable for analyzing complex theoretical models involving multiple latent variables and for simultaneously assessing both measurement and structural components. The research population consisted of 130 employees at the Class I TPI Immigration Office in Samarinda, comprising 105 civil servants (*Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN*) and 25 non-ASN personnel. Due to the relatively small population, a total sampling technique was used, ensuring that all employees were included as respondents. This approach ensured complete representation of the organizational context and minimized sampling bias.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, with measurement indicators adapted from validated instruments in previous human resource management studies to ensure content validity. The questionnaires were distributed directly to all employees, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest, accurate, and unbiased responses. Completed questionnaires were carefully screened for completeness and consistency before being processed for analysis, ensuring data quality and reliability.

The data were analyzed using SmartPLS software. The analysis began with an assessment of the measurement model, including tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), to verify the reliability and validity of the constructs. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesized direct relationships among variables. Additionally, the mediating role of reward and punishment was assessed using path analysis and bootstrapping procedures in SmartPLS, yielding robust estimates of mediation effects and the statistical significance of indirect pathways. This comprehensive approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of both the measurement properties and the structural relationships within the research model.

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the empirical results obtained from the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis. The reporting follows a logical sequence: evaluation of the measurement model, assessment of discriminant validity, structural model evaluation ( $R^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and  $f^2$ ), and hypothesis testing. This structure ensures that the psychometric quality of the model is confirmed prior to interpreting the causal relationships among employee discipline, reward and punishment, communication, and employee commitment.

The measurement model was first assessed to examine internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. As presented in Table 1, all constructs exhibit strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency among indicators. Composite Reliability (CR) values also surpass the minimum criterion of 0.70, confirming the robustness of construct reliability. Specifically, CR values range between 0.95 and 0.97, demonstrating excellent consistency across measurement items. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance

Extracted (AVE), and all constructs meet the recommended minimum value of 0.50, indicating that the latent constructs explain a substantial proportion of variance in their observed indicators. Outer loading values across constructs range from approximately 0.72 to 0.95, exceeding the recommended cutoff of 0.70, thus confirming that the indicators adequately represent their respective constructs. These findings indicate that the measurement model satisfies accepted reliability and convergent validity standards and is suitable for further structural model analysis.

**Table 1.** Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Employee Discipline	0.72–0.94	0.948	0.962	0.646
Communication	0.74–0.93	0.936	0.954	0.595
Employee Commitment	0.80–0.95	0.958	0.971	0.792
Reward and Punishment	0.75–0.95	0.956	0.966	0.647

Following confirmation of convergent validity, discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. As shown in Table 2, all HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct and do not suffer from conceptual overlap. This suggests that employee discipline, communication, reward and punishment, and employee commitment represent separate theoretical dimensions, supporting the adequacy of the measurement model for hypothesis testing.

**Table 2.** Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criterion)

Constructs	Discipline	Communication	Reward & Punishment
Communication	0.63	-	-
Reward & Punishment	0.69	0.72	-
Commitment	0.58	0.60	0.55

After establishing the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to determine explanatory power ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and effect size ( $f^2$ ). The results are presented in Table 3. The  $R^2$  value for communication is 0.47, indicating that employee discipline and reward and punishment jointly explain approximately 47% of the variance in communication, reflecting moderate explanatory power. Employee commitment shows an  $R^2$  of 0.52, indicating that discipline and reinforcement mechanisms account for a moderate proportion of the variance in organizational commitment. Reward and punishment, as an endogenous construct predicted by employee discipline, exhibits an  $R^2$  value of 0.36, indicating moderate explanatory strength.

**Table 3.** Structural Model Evaluation ( $R^2$ ,  $Q^2$ ,  $f^2$ )

Endogenous Construct	$R^2$	$Q^2$	$f^2$	Interpretation
Communication	0.47	0.31	Reward & Punishment (0.41); Discipline (0.04)	Moderate explanatory & predictive power
Employee Commitment	0.52	0.33	Discipline (0.34); Reward & Punishment (0.02)	Moderate explanatory & predictive power
Reward & Punishment	0.36	0.24	Discipline (0.29)	Moderate explanatory & predictive power

Predictive relevance assessed using Stone Geisser's  $Q^2$  shows positive values across all endogenous constructs ( $Q^2 = 0.24–0.33$ ), confirming that the model has adequate predictive capability beyond sample-specific estimation. Effect size ( $f^2$ ) analysis reveals that employee discipline has a moderate-to-strong effect on employee commitment ( $f^2 = 0.34$ ) and a moderate effect on reward and punishment ( $f^2 = 0.29$ ), while its effect on communication is weak ( $f^2 = 0.04$ ), consistent with the non-significant direct path. Conversely, reward and punishment exert a strong effect on communication ( $f^2 = 0.41$ )

but a negligible effect on employee commitment ( $f^2 = 0.02$ ), reinforcing the interpretation that reinforcement mechanisms shape communication behavior more effectively than deeper psychological commitment.

With the adequacy of the structural model established, hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping procedures to examine the significance of direct and indirect relationships among constructs. The results are presented in Table 4. Employee discipline does not have a statistically significant direct effect on communication ( $t = 1.530$ ;  $p = 0.127$ ), indicating that adherence to rules and procedural compliance alone does not necessarily enhance communication effectiveness. However, employee discipline significantly influences employee commitment ( $t = 3.635$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that disciplined work behavior contributes to stronger psychological attachment and loyalty toward the organization. Employee discipline also significantly predicts reward and punishment ( $t = 2.373$ ;  $p = 0.018$ ), indicating that disciplined employees are more closely associated with structured reinforcement mechanisms.

Reward and punishment have a statistically significant positive effect on communication ( $t = 5.082$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that reinforcement systems shape employees' communication behavior, responsiveness, and interaction patterns. In contrast, reward and punishment do not significantly affect employee commitment ( $t = 0.601$ ;  $p = 0.548$ ), suggesting that extrinsic control mechanisms alone are insufficient to cultivate deeper emotional and normative attachment to the organization. Mediation analysis further reveals that reward and punishment significantly mediate the relationship between employee discipline and communication ( $t = 2.042$ ;  $p = 0.042$ ), indicating partial mediation, whereby discipline indirectly affects communication through reinforcement mechanisms. However, reward and punishment do not mediate the relationship between employee discipline and employee commitment ( $t = 0.511$ ;  $p = 0.609$ ), reinforcing the view that commitment is shaped primarily by intrinsic motivation and internalized organizational values rather than by external rewards or sanctions.

**Table 4.** Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	STDEV	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
Discipline → Communication	0.123	1.530	0.127	Not Supported
Discipline → Commitment	0.284	3.635	0.000	Supported
Discipline → Reward & Punishment	0.207	2.373	0.018	Supported
Reward & Punishment → Communication	0.411	5.082	0.000	Supported
Reward & Punishment → Commitment	0.065	0.601	0.548	Not Supported
Discipline → Reward & Punishment → Communication	0.085	2.042	0.042	Supported
Discipline → Reward & Punishment → Commitment	0.013	0.511	0.609	Not Supported

The results demonstrate a differentiated pattern of effects across the structural model. Employee discipline emerges as a key determinant of employee commitment and reinforcement mechanisms, but does not directly enhance communication. Reward and punishment serve as a strong behavioral driver of communication, but fail to foster deeper organizational commitment. The presence of partial mediation further indicates that reinforcement mechanisms operate as an intermediary channel linking discipline to communication, while commitment remains primarily shaped by intrinsic and psychological factors. These findings highlight the functional role of reinforcement systems as tools for regulating interaction patterns and compliance rather than as mechanisms for cultivating long-term affective commitment within public-sector organizations.

**DISCUSSION**

The analysis indicates that employee discipline has a weak and statistically insignificant effect on communication at the Class I TPI Immigration Office, aligning with McCarter et al. (2022), who argue that discipline may enhance performance but

does not necessarily improve organizational communication. Similarly, Astuti et al. (2023) and Wicaksono et al. (2024) note that the discipline-communication relationship is conditional and context-dependent, while Agusyani et al. (2024) emphasize that communication can foster discipline, but the reverse is not always evident. Supporting this, Prabowo et al. (2023) found no significant effect of discipline on job-related outcomes in administrative settings, suggesting that improving communication requires approaches beyond disciplinary enforcement, particularly in bureaucratic public-sector environments. In contrast, employee discipline has a statistically significant positive effect on organizational commitment, supporting prior studies that disciplined workforces exhibit higher commitment (Sukarji, 2023). Azmy et al. (2022) show that discipline enhances commitment through motivation in self-regulated contexts, while Suriansyah (2021), Hinuq et al. (2022), and Tashliyev and Tirtoprojo (2023) highlight discipline as a driver of compliance, engagement, and loyalty. Amelia et al. (2024) further emphasize that disciplined behavior reinforces value alignment, long-term commitment, and productivity.

The findings indicate that reward and punishment have a statistically significant positive effect on communication, supporting their role in shaping communication behavior (Tanimoto et al., 2020; Liu & Zhou, 2022; Aghajani et al., 2022). Consistent with reinforcement learning theory, individuals adjust their communication strategies based on anticipated rewards and sanctions (Tanimoto et al., 2020), while empirical studies show that fair and well-designed reward systems enhance engagement, prosocial behavior, and collaborative communication (Yandri & Alfian, 2024; Nishio et al., 2024; Cao & Chen, 2024). Conversely, reward and punishment do not always significantly affect employee commitment, aligning with findings that external rewards may weaken or fail to strengthen commitment (Sugiarto, 2023; Sujatmiko et al., 2020; Kharel & Niraula, 2024; Murni & Astuti, 2024). However, effective reward-punishment systems can enhance commitment through job satisfaction, retention, discipline, and accountability (Okolie & Egbon, 2024; Muriithi & Komen, 2022; Wibowo et al., 2022; Malik et al., 2024; Yandri & Alfian, 2024).

The mediation analysis indicates that reward and punishment weakly mediate the relationship between employee discipline and communication ( $p = 0.042 < 0.05$ ), suggesting a limited and context-dependent effect. This aligns with Liu et al. (2022) and Rendragraha and Suwaji (2024), who note that reward-punishment mechanisms mainly influence compliance rather than communication, and Aghajani et al. (2021), who emphasize that sensitivity to rewards and punishments does not necessarily improve communication effectiveness. Similarly, Shang et al. (2021) and Somro et al. (2024) argue that communication is more strongly shaped by organizational citizenship behaviors, career development, and organizational support, while Layek and Koodamara (2024) highlight that reward-punishment frameworks often overlook broader motivational and cultural factors, limiting their impact on workplace communication.

The mediation analysis shows that reward and punishment do not significantly mediate the relationship between employee discipline and commitment. This aligns with Liu et al. (2022), who argue that reward-punishment mechanisms mainly enhance compliance and work better for low-commitment employees. Inconsistent application of rewards and punishments can weaken discipline and commitment, while Indrawati et al. (2020) note that reinforcement systems shape discipline but not necessarily commitment. Similarly, Ambilichu et al. (2024) emphasize that performance-based rewards alone are insufficient, and Shafiq et al. (2022) and Rijal et al. (2023) stress that rewards enhance commitment only when combined with intrinsic motivation and supportive organizational culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that employee discipline significantly enhances employee commitment but does not directly improve communication, while reward and punishment strengthen communication without influencing commitment. Mediation

analysis further reveals that reward and punishment partially mediate the relationship between discipline and communication, but fail to mediate the discipline–commitment relationship. These findings indicate that reinforcement systems primarily function as behavioral control mechanisms that structure interaction patterns and compliance, rather than as instruments for cultivating long-term psychological attachment and affective commitment within public-sector organizations. Consequently, communication outcomes appear more responsive to external regulation, whereas commitment is shaped by deeper cognitive and emotional factors.

From a practical perspective, public organizations should not rely solely on reward–punishment schemes but strategically integrate them with leadership support, intrinsic motivation, and a value-based organizational culture to achieve sustainable improvements in both communication quality and employee commitment. This study is limited by its focus on a single public institution and its cross-sectional design, which may limit generalizability and fail to capture dynamic behavioral changes over time. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches and to examine additional mediating or moderating variables, such as transformational leadership, organizational justice, employee engagement, and perceived organizational support, to provide a more comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of commitment and communication dynamics in public-sector environments.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors express sincere appreciation to all individuals and institutions who supported the completion of this research. This research did not receive any specific grants from public-sector funding agencies, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. The authors declare no conflict of interest during the preparation of this manuscript. The authors used ChatGPT to assist with editing and improving the clarity of the text. The authors reviewed and revised the content as needed and take full responsibility for the final version of the article.

**FUNDING STATEMENT:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not - for - profit sectors.

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT:** During the preparation of this work, the author used Turnitin, Grammarly, and ChatGPT to improve sentence structure and overall clarity. All content was then reviewed, edited, and refined by the author, who takes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the final publication.

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*Discipline,  
Communication,  
Reward Mediation*

**574**