

(Original Article)

## The Effect of Work Ethic on Job Performance, Mediated by Employee Discipline, at the Kapuas Regency Education Office

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**Abstract :** *This study aims to analyze the effect of work ethic on employee job performance, with work discipline as a mediating variable, at the Kapuas Regency Education Office. The research problem stems from fluctuations in employee discipline levels, which have the potential to affect organizational performance. This study employs a quantitative approach with an associative design. The study population consists of 97 employees, with a sample of 78 respondents determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error and stratified random sampling. Data were collected via a questionnaire using a Likert scale and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that work ethic significantly influences work discipline, work discipline significantly influences work performance, and work ethic significantly influences work performance. Furthermore, work discipline was found to mediate the relationship between work ethic and employee work performance. These findings indicate that enhancing work ethic values must be accompanied by strengthening disciplinary behavior as a mechanism that transforms value orientation into measurable performance. This study provides a theoretical contribution to strengthening the value-behavior-performance relationship model in the public sector, as well as practical implications for human resource management in local government agencies.*

**Keywords:** *Work Ethic; Work Discipline; Employee Performance; SEM-PLS; Public Sector*

### 1. Introduction

Human resources are a strategic asset that determines the success of public sector organizations in achieving effective governance and high-quality public services. In the context of modern bureaucracy, an organization's success is determined not only by the availability of resources and sound administrative systems, but also by the quality of performance of the civil servants who carry out governmental functions. Employee performance is a key indicator in measuring the effectiveness of public organizations because it is directly related to the achievement of organizational goals, service quality, and the level of public trust in the government. Therefore, efforts to improve the work performance of government officials continue to be a focus in studies of public sector human resource management.

Work performance is essentially the results achieved by an employee, both in terms of quality and quantity, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to them. From a human resource management perspective, work performance is influenced not only by technical competencies but also by behavioral factors and the work values held by the individual. Employees who are highly committed to their work tend to demonstrate higher levels of responsibility, consistency, and productivity compared to those who are solely focused on fulfilling administrative tasks. Thus, understanding the factors that influence work performance is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of public organizations.

One factor believed to play a role in shaping work performance is work discipline. Work discipline reflects the level of an employee's compliance with organizational rules, punctuality in carrying out tasks, and consistency in meeting established work standards. In public sector organizations, discipline holds a very important position because bureaucracy relies on procedural order, compliance with regulations, and service standards that must be consistently implemented. High levels of work discipline support organizational efficiency, whereas low discipline can hinder the achievement of organizational goals and reduce the quality of public services.

The issue of work discipline remains a challenge in various local government agencies, including the Kapuas Regency Education Office. Based on employee attendance data for the 2020–2022 period, disciplinary violations such as tardiness and leaving early were still observed. In 2022, there were 26 recorded cases of tardiness and 25 cases of early departure, indicating an upward trend compared to previous years. This situation suggests that work discipline has not yet been fully internalized as part of the organizational culture. If this situation persists, it could lead to a decline in the effectiveness of task execution and the overall work performance of employees.

From a theoretical perspective, work discipline does not arise spontaneously but is influenced by the values held by individuals. One value that has been extensively studied in the human resource management literature is work ethic. Work ethic is a set of beliefs and values that shape an individual's perspective on work. Individuals with a strong work ethic view work as a trust, a moral responsibility, a means of self-actualization, and a form of service to society. These values encourage individuals to work diligently, responsibly, and with a focus on optimal results. Thus, work ethic can serve as a fundamental factor shaping employees' work behavior within an organization.

The theory of value internalization explains that values embedded within an individual influence the actual behavior displayed in the workplace. In the context of public organizations, work ethic as an internal value is projected into tangible behavior such as adherence to rules, responsibility toward tasks, and consistency in work, which is reflected through work discipline. Furthermore, such disciplined behavior contributes to improving the quality and quantity of employees' work output. From this perspective, the relationship between work ethic and work performance can occur through specific behavioral mechanisms that bridge these two variables.

Several previous studies indicate that work ethic has a positive relationship with employee performance. Wahid's (2016) study found that work ethic significantly influences employee performance. Similar results were obtained by Dwi Pranata, Bagia, and Trianasari (2017), who demonstrated a positive influence of work ethic on performance. However, the study by Azka, Candana, and Purwasih (2022) found that work ethic does not have a significant direct effect on work performance. These differing research findings indicate an inconsistency in empirical findings (research gap), suggesting that the relationship between work ethic and work performance still requires further explanation.

In addition to the research gap, there is also a theoretical gap in explaining the mechanism of the relationship between work ethic and work performance. Most previous studies have focused more on the direct influence of work ethic on performance, while the indirect mechanisms explaining how work ethic values translate into work achievements have not been thoroughly examined. However, from the perspective of mediation theory proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), the relationship between independent and dependent variables often occurs through the presence of an intervening variable that explains the process or mechanism of that influence. Therefore, it is necessary to test variables that are conceptually capable of explaining the pathway of the relationship between work ethic and work performance.

Work discipline is viewed as a variable with strong theoretical justification to serve as a mediator in this relationship. Work ethic shapes an individual's value orientation and commitment to work, which is then manifested in disciplined behavior. Consistent disciplined behavior subsequently drives improvements in employee work performance. Thus, work discipline can be positioned as the mechanism that transforms the values of work ethic into measurable work outcomes. This value-behavior-performance relationship model provides a more comprehensive perspective in explaining the factors that influence the work performance of public sector employees.

Based on the above discussion, this study is important because it not only examines the direct relationship between work ethic, work discipline, and work performance but also investigates the role of work discipline as a mediating variable in the relationship between work ethic and work performance among employees of the Kapuas Regency Education Office. Testing this model is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of public sector human resource management literature, particularly regarding the value–behavior–performance relationship model, while also offering practical insights for policymakers in formulating strategies to enhance civil servant performance based on strengthening work ethic and work discipline.

Based on this background, the objectives of this study are to: (1) analyze the influence of work ethic on employee work discipline; (2) analyze the influence of work discipline on employee work performance; (3) analyze the influence of work ethic on employee work performance; and (4) test the role of work discipline as a mediating variable in the relationship between work ethic and work performance at the Kapuas Regency Education Office.

## 2. Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at elucidating the causal relationships among variables through hypothesis testing. The study focuses on analyzing the influence of work ethic on employee job performance, with work discipline serving as a mediating variable, at the Kapuas Regency Education Office.

The study population consisted of all 97 employees of the Kapuas Regency Education Office, including civil servants (PNS) and contract workers. Given the relatively small population size, this study employed saturated sampling, meaning that all members of the population served as research respondents. The use of saturated sampling aims to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the relationships among the variables under study and to minimize potential sampling bias.

Research data were collected through the distribution of a questionnaire designed based on the theoretical indicators of each variable. The work ethic variable was measured using the indicators of hard work, responsibility, work enthusiasm, perseverance, and honesty. The work discipline variable was measured using the indicators of time discipline, compliance with regulations, and work behavior. Meanwhile, the work performance variable was measured using the indicators of work output, job knowledge, initiative, work attitude, and punctuality in task completion. All indicators were measured using a five–point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS software version 3. The PLS–SEM approach was chosen because it is capable of

analyzing complex causal relationships, accommodates latent constructs with reflective indicators, and is suitable for use with relatively small sample sizes without requiring strict normal data distribution.

The analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved evaluating the measurement model (outer model), which included testing convergent validity through outer loadings ( $>0.70$ ), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ( $>0.50$ ), discriminant validity via cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and construct reliability using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha ( $>0.70$ ). The second stage is the evaluation of the structural model (inner model), which includes testing the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and testing the significance of relationships between variables using the bootstrapping procedure at a 5% significance level.

Hypothesis testing was conducted based on path coefficients,  $t$ -statistics, and  $p$ -values. In addition to direct effects, this study also examined indirect effects to determine the role of work discipline as a mediating variable in the relationship between work ethic and employee performance. The mediating effect was considered significant if the  $p$ -value was less than 0.05.

### 3. Results And Discussion

#### Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Data analysis was conducted using a Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) approach to test the structural relationships among work ethic, work discipline, and work performance. Before testing the hypotheses, the first step was to evaluate the measurement model (outer model) to ensure that each latent construct met the requirements for validity and reliability. Evaluating the measurement model is a critical step because the quality of the structural analysis results depends heavily on the indicators' ability to represent the constructs being measured.

The results of the convergent validity test indicate that all indicators used for the variables of work ethic, work discipline, and work performance have outer loading values above the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70. These findings suggest that each indicator is effective in explaining the latent construct it represents. The higher the outer loading value, the greater the indicator's contribution to forming the construct, thereby minimizing measurement error.

Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test showed that all constructs had AVE values greater than 0.50. This indicates that more than 50 percent of the indicators' variance can be explained by the respective latent construct. Thus, every construct in this study has met the criteria for convergent validity and is capable of adequately explaining its constituent indicators.

Discriminant validity testing via cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion also yielded satisfactory results. Each indicator exhibits the highest correlation with the construct it measures compared to other constructs. These findings prove that each variable possesses distinct conceptual characteristics and does not exhibit measurement overlap. In other words, work ethic, work discipline, and work performance are constructs that can be empirically distinguished from one another.

Meanwhile, the reliability test results indicate that the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs are above 0.70. These values indicate that the research instrument has a high level of internal consistency, enabling it to produce stable and reliable measurements. Based on the overall results of the outer model evaluation, it can be concluded that the research instrument has met all validity and reliability requirements and is therefore suitable for use in structural model testing.

### **The Impact of Work Ethic on Work Discipline**

The results of the structural equation modeling analysis indicate that work ethic has a positive and significant effect on employee work discipline. These findings demonstrate that the higher an employee's work ethic, the higher the level of work discipline exhibited in the performance of daily tasks. These results confirm the first hypothesis proposed in this study.

Theoretically, these findings can be explained by value internalization theory, which states that the values held by individuals shape the behavioral patterns they exhibit in the organizational setting. Work ethic is a set of values that encourages individuals to view work as a trust, a moral responsibility, a means of self-actualization, and a form of contribution to both the organization and society. When these values are strongly internalized, individuals tend to exhibit more disciplined work behavior, adhere to rules, and remain consistent in performing their duties.

In the context of the Kapuas Regency Education Office, employees with a high work ethic demonstrate greater awareness of the importance of punctuality, adherence to work procedures, and a sense of responsibility in completing assigned tasks. This situation demonstrates that work discipline is influenced not only by the organization's formal oversight mechanisms but also by internal factors stemming from an individual's value system.

This finding reinforces the view that fostering sustainable work discipline requires strengthening aspects of work values and culture. Organizations that rely solely on administrative sanctions tend to produce only temporary compliance, whereas discipline built through the internalization of values tends to be more stable and sustainable.

## **The Effect of Work Discipline on Job Performance**

The results of the analysis indicate that work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. These findings confirm the second hypothesis, which states that work discipline is a key determinant in improving the performance of government officials.

Conceptually, work discipline reflects an employee's ability to follow rules, use time effectively, and perform tasks in accordance with the standards set by the organization. In public sector organizations, discipline plays a strategic role because it is directly linked to the effectiveness of administrative processes and the quality of services provided to the public.

Employees with high discipline tend to arrive on time, complete work according to targets, avoid delays, and comply with applicable procedures. Such behavior contributes to increased productivity, work efficiency, and the quality of work outcomes. Conversely, low discipline has the potential to cause delays in task completion, a decline in service quality, and organizational inefficiency.

The results of this study indicate that work discipline is not merely an organizational control tool but a behavioral factor that tangibly influences employee performance outcomes. These findings further underscore that efforts to improve work performance must be accompanied by the strengthening of a culture of discipline supported by a continuous system of supervision, evaluation, and coaching.

## **The Impact of Work Ethic on Job Performance**

The test of the third hypothesis showed that work ethic has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. These results indicate that employees with a strong work ethic tend to perform better than those with a weak work ethic.

Work ethic serves as an intrinsic motivator that drives individuals to work diligently and responsibly. Individuals with a strong work ethic tend to give their best effort in completing tasks, maintain the quality of their work, and strive to achieve organizational goals to the fullest extent possible. Values such as hard work, honesty, perseverance, and responsibility are key factors in driving increased productivity.

In the context of public organizations, work ethic has a broader meaning because it relates not only to the achievement of individual goals but also to the responsibility of serving the public. Employees who view their work as a form of service will demonstrate a higher commitment to the quality of public service. Therefore, work ethic can be viewed as a psychological asset that contributes to improved work performance.

These findings indicate that human resource development must not only focus on improving technical competencies but must also include the reinforcement of work values capable of fostering employee motivation and commitment in performing their duties.

## The Role of Work Discipline as a Mediator in the Relationship Between Work Ethic and Job Performance

The results of the indirect effect analysis indicate that work discipline mediates the relationship between work ethic and job performance. These findings provide empirical evidence that the influence of work ethic on job performance occurs not only directly but also through behavioral mechanisms manifested in the form of work discipline.

Theoretically, these findings support the value-behaviour-performance model. In this model, work ethic acts as an internal value that shapes an individual's orientation towards work. This value is then translated into concrete behaviour in the form of work discipline. Furthermore, disciplined behaviour becomes a factor that drives improvements in the quality and quantity of work output.

These findings provide an explanation for the inconsistencies in previous research regarding the relationship between work ethic and work performance. The differences in results found across various studies likely arise because not all studies included behavioural variables as a mediating mechanism. When work discipline is incorporated into the model, the pathway linking work ethic and work performance becomes clearer and more comprehensive.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study indicate that the internalisation of work values alone is insufficient to achieve optimal performance improvement. These values must be translated into consistent and measurable behaviour through work discipline. Consequently, organisations need to ensure that work ethic development programmes are accompanied by an effective system for reinforcing discipline.

### Implications of the Research

Overall, this study reinforces the argument that improvements in the work performance of public sector employees result from the interaction between value-based and behavioural factors. Work ethic acts as a source of internal motivation that shapes employees' work orientation, whilst work discipline functions as a behavioural mechanism that transforms these values into measurable performance.

In the context of the Kapuas Regency Education Office, the practical implications of this study suggest that strategies to improve employee performance need to be implemented in an integrated manner through the strengthening of organisational culture, the internalisation of work values, the enhancement of employee commitment, and the consistent enforcement of discipline. This approach is believed to be capable of creating a productive, professional, and service-oriented work environment that delivers high-quality public services.

Thus, the success of public organisations in improving work performance is determined not only by employees' ability to work, but also

by the organisation's success in building strong work values and transforming them into sustainable disciplined behaviour.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyse the effect of work ethic on employee performance, with work discipline as a mediating variable, at the Kapuas Regency Education Office. The results of the analysis using SEM-PLS indicate that work ethic has a significant effect on work discipline, work discipline has a significant effect on performance, and work ethic has a significant effect on performance. Furthermore, work discipline was found to significantly mediate the relationship between work ethic and work performance.

The findings indicate that work ethic, as reflected in employees' attitudes of responsibility, perseverance and dedication to their work, plays a significant role in shaping levels of work discipline. High work discipline, in turn, is a key factor in driving improvements in employee performance, in terms of both the quality and quantity of work output.

Conceptually, the results of this study confirm that the relationship between work ethic and work performance is not only direct but also mediated through work discipline as an intervening variable. Thus, the value-behaviour-performance relationship model tested in this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of the determinants of civil service performance in the public sector.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Kapuas Regency Education Office strengthen the development of work ethic through the internalisation of professional values, the reinforcement of work culture, and leadership by example. Furthermore, the work discipline system needs to be consistently enforced through effective performance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Future research is recommended to include other relevant variables such as work motivation, job satisfaction, or organisational commitment to enrich the performance analysis model for public sector employees.

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