

# The Influence Of Work Ethic On Employee Performance Through The Work Motivation Of YPK Merauke High School Employees

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of work ethic on employee performance, either directly or through work motivation as a mediating variable at SMA YPK Merauke. Employee performance is an important factor in achieving quality education, so it needs to be improved through strengthening work ethic and motivation. Work ethic is understood as a positive attitude and responsibility towards work, while work motivation refers to internal and external drives that affect an individual's work ethic. This study uses a quantitative approach with a population of 105 employees, and the sampling technique is carried out in saturated samples. The data analysis technique used is Partial Least Square (PLS) with the help of SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results of the study show that work ethic has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through work motivation. Work motivation has been proven to be a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between work ethic and employee performance. These findings provide practical implications for school management to improve employee performance through the development of a work ethic and effective work motivation.

**Keywords:** Work Ethic, Work Motivation, Employee Performance, Education, SEM-PLS.

## 1. Introduction

Employee performance is one of the factors that greatly determines the success and effectiveness of an organization, including in the education sector. In educational institutions such as SMA YPK Merauke, the success of the educational process and the quality of graduates does not only depend on the quality of the curriculum and facilities, but is greatly influenced by the performance of employees, both teachers, administrative staff, and support staff. Therefore, improving employee performance is a top priority to improve the quality of education at the school. One of the important factors in improving employee performance is work ethic. Work ethic can be interpreted as an attitude and mental pattern that includes commitment, responsibility, discipline, and enthusiasm for work. Employees who have a good work ethic usually show punctuality, high quality of work, initiative in completing tasks, and a sense of responsibility for their work.

Especially in the educational environment, work ethic is not only related to administrative efficiency, but also to the quality of the teaching process, classroom



management, and contribution to student development. However, a high work ethic does not arise by itself without supporting factors. One of the main factors that plays a role in building it is work motivation. Work motivation here refers to the drive that comes from within the individual to work better and more productively, which in turn can be influenced by external factors such as recognition of achievements and a supportive work environment. Motivated employees tend to have a high motivation to achieve organizational goals and strive to exceed expectations. At SMA YPK Merauke, although most of the employees have shown a fairly good work ethic, there are still challenges in maintaining and increasing work motivation so that employee performance is consistently optimal. Some employees feel that they lack management support and feel that their efforts have not received the recognition they deserve, which can ultimately reduce motivation and impact their work ethic.

Based on the theory put forward by (Marwansyah, 2020), performance problems in organizations can be triggered by four groups of factors: (1) lack of knowledge or skills, (2) poor work environment, (3) limited resources, and (4) low motivation. All of these factors are also relevant to the context of SMA YPK Merauke, especially when viewed from the aspects of mastery of information technology, learning facilities, and employee work motivation. Self-work motivation, as explained by (Kadarisman, 2021), is something that gives rise to the spirit or encouragement in a person to want to work hard and well. In practice, motivation consists of two types, namely internal motivation and external motivation. Internal motivation comes from within the individual, while external motivation comes from external factors of the individual. In schools, motivation can be used to grow, encourage, and direct employee behavior to achieve performance according to the standards that have been set (Winoto, 2020). From the results of a preliminary survey of 48 employees at SMA YPK Merauke, it was found that there were indications of low work motivation: for example, 37.50% of employees felt bored doing the same routine, 41.67% wanted to break away from the work they had been doing, 39.58% liked to postpone work, and 43.75% often missed work for no apparent reason. These findings show that the work motivation of employees in this school is still relatively low, which has implications for their performance and ultimately the quality of educational services provided.

Thus, this study focuses on the influence of work ethic on employee performance through work motivation as a mediator variable at SMA YPK Merauke. Employees with a strong work ethic tend to have high commitment, greater responsibility, and good motivation to complete their tasks well. Conversely, without sufficient motivational support, a work ethic alone may not be enough to produce optimal performance. Therefore, it is important to understand how these two variables interact with each other to formulate policy recommendations for school management in creating a supportive work environment, increasing employee morale, and ultimately improving their performance in providing quality educational services. Based on the background that has been described earlier, this study focuses on efforts to understand the influence of work ethic on employee performance through work motivation at SMA YPK Merauke. The formulation of the problem in this study includes three main things, namely: whether work ethic affects employee performance, whether work motivation affects employee performance, and whether work ethic affects employee performance through work motivation. In line with this formulation, the purpose of this study is to find out and analyze the extent to which work ethic affects employee performance directly or through work motivation as a mediating variable. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of human resource management science in the field of education, as well as practical benefits for school management in designing effective policies to improve employee motivation and performance.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Work Ethic

Work ethic is a set of positive values and attitudes that are reflected in the way a person perceives, runs, and gives meaning to their work. Work ethic is not only related to technical abilities, but also involves moral, psychological, and social dimensions that encourage individuals to work wholeheartedly and responsibly (Barsah & Ridwan, 2020; Hadiansyah & Yanwar, 2019). A good work ethic makes a person have high spirits, dedication, and commitment to provide the best results for the organization. In addition, a work ethic also helps to create harmonious working relationships through cooperation, effective communication, and high integrity (Tasmara, 2020). Factors such as culture, life experience, and personal values also shape a person's work character (Dodi et al., 2019), while a strong work ethic is the main driver of increased performance and productivity (Fadillah, 2020). Furthermore, a strong work ethic reflects a person's life principle at work, namely the desire to continuously improve the quality of oneself and work results (Lie & Wijaya, 2019). Individuals with a high work ethic tend to have a great sense of responsibility, work disciplined, diligently, and maintain honor in every action taken. Based on (Wardana, 2023), the indicators of work ethic include five main things: full of responsibility, high work spirit, discipline, diligence and seriousness, and maintaining dignity and honor. These indicators illustrate that work ethic plays an important role in shaping professionalism and improving employee performance in an ongoing manner.

### 2.2. Work Motivation

Work motivation is an internal and external drive that moves individuals to strive to achieve organizational goals consistently. (Robbins and Judge, 2019) explain that motivation is not only about how much effort a person puts into work, but also the direction and perseverance of the effort. (Afandi, 2019) added that motivation involves emotional aspects such as sincerity and personal satisfaction, which make a person work not just out of obligation, but because of the intrinsic drive that fosters commitment. (Poltak and Sarton, 2019) emphasized that work motivation is important to increase employees' contribution to organizational goals, while the satisfaction theory and process theory put forward by (Khalil in Poltak and Sarton Sinambela, 2019) explain that motivation is formed through the fulfillment of needs, expectations, and rewards that are in accordance with individual values and goals. Therefore, understanding motivational factors is key for management in creating a productive, supportive, and encouraging work environment for employees to provide the best performance.

According to Maslow quoted by (Kusuma, 2016), work motivation can be measured through five main indicators, namely: physiological needs such as salary, bonuses, and basic facilities; the need for a sense of security that includes social security and occupational safety; social needs in the form of acceptance and harmonious relationships in the workplace; the need for awards through recognition of achievements; and the need for self-actualization, which is the opportunity to develop potential and skills to the maximum. Fulfilling these five needs will increase employee morale, satisfaction, and loyalty to the organization, thus having a positive effect on overall performance and productivity.

### 2.3. Performance

Performance basically describes the extent of the effectiveness and efficiency of a person or group in carrying out the tasks for which they are responsible. Performance can be interpreted as a comparison between the results achieved and the resources used in a certain

period (Kussrianto in Sutrisno, 2019). According to Siagian (in Sutrisno, 2019), performance improvement can only be achieved through the active role of human resources as a strategic factor in the organization. Meanwhile, Tohardi (in Sutrisno, 2019) emphasized that performance is a mental attitude that is always oriented towards improving and improving work results. Aigner (in Hidayat, 2013) also views performance as a reflection of human desire to continue to improve the quality of life and work results in various fields. Thus, employee performance can be interpreted as the result of work obtained from the implementation of duties based on applicable responsibilities, morals, and ethics to achieve organizational goals (Fachrezi & Khair, 2020; Burhannudin et al., 2019). Employee performance is influenced by various factors such as training, mental and physical condition, and communication between superiors and subordinates (Simanjuntak in Sutrisno, 2019). To assess the extent of employee work effectiveness, performance measurement is important so that organizations can find out the deviation between actual results and set targets. (Maryati, 2021) mentions four main indicators in measuring employee performance, namely: work quality, reflecting the accuracy and accuracy of work results; quantity of work, related to volume and speed of task completion; the execution of duties, namely the ability of employees to carry out work accurately without errors; and responsibility, which shows seriousness in carrying out duties according to organizational policies. Through these indicators, organizations can evaluate the effectiveness of their human resources and encourage continuous performance improvement.

#### **2.4. The Influence of Work Ethic on Employee Performance**

Research conducted by Nurjaya (2021) proves that work ethic has a significant influence on employee performance and the two are closely related, where a high work ethic is needed in organizational progress because without it the organization will have difficulty competing and be hampered in achieving long-term goals. Employees who have a high work ethic show a positive attitude, strong commitment, and enthusiasm for completing work optimally so that it has a direct effect on the responsibility and performance of the organization as a whole. Similar findings were conveyed by (Tangkudung et al., 2021) which emphasized that work ethic has a significant effect on employee performance; Employees with a strong work ethic tend to work more productively, are results-oriented, and have a high dedication to the organization. Other research by (Nugraheni, K.S., Adhistyo, T., & Satatoe., 2020), (Arifin & Putra, 2020), and (Suryadi, 2022) also showed a positive relationship between work ethic and employee performance, where employees with a good work ethic have high motivation to work efficiently, commit to tasks, and strive to improve work quality sustainably. Thus, work ethic is not only a personal attribute, but also a key factor that determines an organization's success in improving performance and achieving a competitive advantage in the midst of dynamic competition.

#### **2.5. The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance**

Work motivation is an important factor that can improve employee performance in an organization. According to (Hasibuan, 2020), work motivation is the encouragement given to individuals to want to work well, both for personal satisfaction and for the achievement of organizational goals. High motivation encourages employees to work harder, increase productivity, and commit to their work. (Halim, 2021) emphasized that employees with good work motivation tend to have more optimal performance than those who are less motivated. The results of (Iskandar's, 2020) research also show that work motivation has a positive effect on performance, where motivated employees are more enthusiastic about completing their tasks and achieving better results. This is in line with the findings of (Suhartini, 2022) who stated that well-maintained work motivation has a significant impact on increasing

productivity and creating a more productive work environment. (Marfai, 2021) found that in the education sector, work motivation is closely related to high performance achievement, because motivation is the main driver for employees to achieve targets in terms of quality and quantity, even in the midst of job challenges. Furthermore, research by (Putra & Widodo, 2020) confirms that appreciation and recognition for work results can strengthen employees' commitment to provide their best performance. Meanwhile, (Wahyuni & Rizal, 2022) revealed that work motivation that is oriented towards achieving long-term and personal goals can improve performance because employees feel that their work is meaningful and impactful. Thus, work motivation not only plays a role as a driver of individual productivity, but is also the key to the success of the organization in achieving its goals through improving the performance of its employees.

## 2.6. The Influence of Work Ethic on Employee Performance Through Employee Work Motivation

A high work ethic has a significant impact on employee performance in the organization and is often mediated by work motivation. Work ethic reflects employees' attitudes, habits, and commitment to their duties and responsibilities, where according to (Nurjaya, 2021), a strong work ethic can increase employee work motivation, which ultimately has a positive impact on improving performance. (Tangkudung et al., 2021) also emphasized that work ethic is closely related to motivation, where employees who are disciplined, responsible, and highly motivated will be more motivated to work hard and achieve maximum results. In line with that, (Nugraheni, et al., 2020) show that a good work ethic directly influences work motivation, which then improves performance through commitment, focus on targets, and higher job satisfaction. Similar results were also found by (Arifin & Putra, 2020) who stated that work ethic, such as discipline and responsibility, encourages increased motivation, which affects the quality and quantity of work results. Meanwhile, (Suryadi, 2022) emphasized that work motivation mediated by work ethic plays an important role in maintaining continuity and quality of long-term performance. Overall, these studies show that work ethic and work motivation have mutually reinforcing relationships in improving employee performance. A positive work ethic creates an intrinsic drive to work better, while motivation provides additional energy for employees to achieve optimal results, so organizations need to foster an ethical and productive work culture to achieve mutual success.

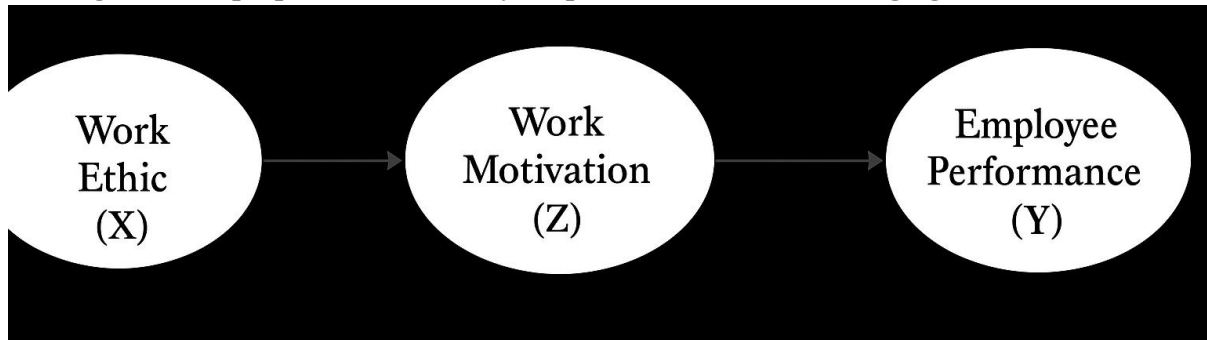
To support the relationship between variables, here is a table of previous research.

**Table 1.** Previous research

Yes	Researcher & Year	Variables Studied	Key Results
1	Lamere, L., Kirana, K. C., & Welsa, H. (2021)	Work ethic, work motivation, employee performance	Work ethic and work motivation have a significant effect on employee performance; Work motivation plays the role of a mediator.
2	Novita, S., Sari, M. W., & Pratiwi, N. (2023)	Work ethic, work discipline, work motivation, teacher performance	Work ethic and work discipline have a positive effect on teacher performance with work motivation as an intervening variable.
3	Butarbutar, M. et al. (2021)	Work ethic, employee performance	Work ethic has a significant effect on employee performance.
4	Musfirah, A. (2024)	Work motivation, work ethic, employee performance	Motivation and work ethic have a positive effect on employee performance.
5	Etyawati, K., & Cori, C. (2022)	Work ethic, employee performance	Work ethic has a positive effect on improving employee performance.

## 2.7. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

Based on the review of the theoretical foundations and previous research, a framework of thought can be prepared in this study, as presented in the following figure:



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

### Research Hypothesis

In accordance with the variables to be studied, the hypotheses that will be proposed in this study are:

- H1: Work Ethic has a significant positive effect on employee performance
- H2: Work Motivation has a significant positive effect on Employee Performance
- H3: Work Ethic has a Significant Positive Effect on Work Motivation
- H4: Work Ethic has a significant positive effect on employee performance through work motivation.

## 3. Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach because it aims to test theories and hypotheses objectively through statistical data analysis. According to (Sugiyono, 2019), the quantitative approach is based on the philosophy of positivism and is used to research certain populations or samples with random sampling techniques, data collection using research instruments, and numerical data analysis. This research is also classified based on its objectives, benefits, and data collection techniques. The variables in this study include work ethic (X), work motivation (Z), and employee performance (Y). Work ethic reflects a positive attitude towards work that is characterized by responsibility, high work spirit, discipline, perseverance, and maintaining dignity (Wardana, 2023). Work motivation is related to internal and external motivations to work, which include five needs according to Maslow in (Kusuma, 2016): physical needs, a sense of security, social needs, reward, and self-fulfillment. Employee performance is measured based on indicators of work quality, work quantity, task implementation, and responsibility (Maryati, 2021). The measurements were conducted using a Likert scale with five rating levels ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

The population of this study is all employees of YPK Merauke High School as many as 105 people, and because the number is relatively small, the sampling technique used is a saturated sample (Sugiyono, 2019). Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documentation. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 105 employee respondents at SMA YPK Merauke directly as a sample. The following is a sampling according to the respondents' gender in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Respondent Characteristics

Yes	Characteristic	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Man	45	42,9%
		Woman	60	57,1%
2	Age	< 30 years old	20	19,0%
		30–39 years old	40	38,1%
		40–49 years old	30	28,6%
		≥ 50 years old	15	14,3%
3	Final Education	High School/Vocational School	5	4,8%
		D3	10	9,5%
		S1	75	71,4%
		S2	15	14,3%
4	Employment Status	Foundation Permanent Teacher	50	47,6%
		Honorary Teacher	25	23,8%
		Education Personnel (TU, etc.)	20	19,0%
		Support Officers (Security Guards, OB)	10	9,6%
5	Long Time Working	< 5 years	30	28,6%
		5–10 years	40	38,1%
		> 10 years	35	33,3%

Source: Data processed, 2025

Data analysis was carried out using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS 3.0 software because it is suitable for causality models and small data (Ghazali, 2015; Sholihin & Ratmono, 2020). The model evaluation included the outer model (validity and reliability), the inner model ( $R^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and path coefficient), and the hypothesis test using a t-statistical value of  $\geq 1.96$  and a p-value of  $< 0.05$  to determine the significance of the relationship between variables. The results of this analysis aim to find out how much work ethic and work motivation influence employee performance at SMA YPK Merauke, as well as provide an empirical basis for improving the performance of human resources in the educational environment.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Description of Research Results

The frequency distribution was used to describe respondents' responses to each statement in the research questionnaire. The following statement includes three main variables, namely Work Ethic (X), Work Motivation (Z), and Employee Performance (Y). In Table 3, the statements are coded indicators (X1–X5, Z1–Z5, and Y1–Y4) for easy data analysis.

**Table 3.** Questionnaire Statement

Variable	Code	Statement
Work Ethic (X)	X1	I completed the task with full responsibility.
	X2	I work with high enthusiasm despite the challenges.
	X3	I comply with the rules and procedures that apply in the workplace.
	X4	I remained diligent despite facing difficulties at work.
	X5	I maintain integrity and honesty in my work.
Work Motivation (Z)	Z1	The salary and allowances I received were sufficient to meet the needs of life.
	Z2	I feel safe with the existence of labor social security from the agency.
	Z3	Social interaction with colleagues adds to my motivation.
	Z4	I appreciate the appreciation given by my boss for my work.

	Z5	My work is challenging and makes the most of my potential.
Employee Performance (Y)	Y1	I complete tasks meticulously, pay attention to detail, and ensure completeness.
	Y2	I can complete the task by the set deadline.
	Y3	I carry out my duties accurately and on time.
	Y4	I am responsible for work in accordance with school policies and procedures.

Source: Data processed, 2025

#### a) Work ethic

From 105 respondents of YPK Merauke High School employees, a grand mean value of 3.64 was obtained on a Likert scale of 1-5, which shows that the level of work ethic of employees is quite high. The majority of respondents showed a positive attitude towards aspects of responsibility, enthusiasm, discipline, perseverance, and integrity at work. Item X1 ("I always complete tasks responsibly") has a high mean of 3.75, indicating that responsibility is the strongest aspect of work ethic. In contrast, X2 ("I always work with high morale despite challenges") had a low mean of 3.52, indicating that morale under pressure still varies between employees. The standard deviation value of 1.04–1.14 indicates a moderate difference of opinion, influenced by the diversity of age, position, and work experience. Overall, these results reflect that YPK Merauke High School employees have a good work ethic, although increased motivation in facing challenges is still needed to strengthen work morale.

#### b) Work motivation

The frequency distribution of the Work Motivation variable, consisting of five items (Z1-Z5) with 105 respondents, obtained a grand mean of 3.66, showing that the level of employee work motivation is relatively high. The majority of respondents chose the categories "Agree" and "Strongly Agree", indicating a positive attitude towards aspects of work motivation. Item Z5 obtained the highest mean of 3.73 and the lowest SD of 1.04, illustrating the high and consistent level of agreement between respondents. Meanwhile, the Z3 had a mean low of 3.57 and a high SD of 1.11, indicating a slightly greater variation in opinion, although it remained in the good category. The SD range between 1.04–1.11 indicates a moderate difference in views, which indicates a fairly uniform level of understanding among respondents. Overall, these results show that YPK Merauke High School employees have good work motivation, with perceptual consistency that supports the creation of optimal performance, although aspects with a lower average can still be strengthened.

#### c) Employee Performance

The distribution of the variable frequency of Employee Performance (Y1–Y4) with 105 respondents obtained a grand mean of 3.75, which shows that the level of employee performance is relatively high and is in the category of "Agree" to close to "Strongly Agree". These results indicate that respondents have a positive perception of their performance. Item Y4 had the highest mean of 3.85, indicating the highest level of agreement with the statement, while Y3 recorded the lowest mean of 3.64, but remained in the good category. Standard deviation values between 1.03–1.09 indicate low to moderate response variation, which means most respondents have a uniform view of performance indicators. Overall, these results reflect that YPK Merauke High School employees show good and consistent performance, although improvements in aspects with a lower average are still needed to strengthen the overall performance quality.

## 4.2. Data Analysis Process and Testing of Research Models

The SEM-PLS analysis measures refer to the procedure developed by Chin (1999), and Hair, et., all. (2020), which includes:

### a) Evaluation of measurement models (outer model)

The measurement model (outer model) functions to assess the validity and reliability of constructs in research. The evaluation was carried out by testing convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. The validity of the convergence was assessed based on the loading factor value, which must be more than 0.70, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, which exceeded 0.5. Meanwhile, the validity of the discriminant is determined from the cross-loading value of each indicator, which must be higher in its own construct compared to other constructs, with a minimum limit of 0.70. The reliability test was performed by looking at Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values, both of which must be greater than 0.70. All analyses were carried out using the SmartPLS 3.0 program. The following measurement model output is shown in Figure 2, and the results of the construct reliability and validity are shown in Table 3.

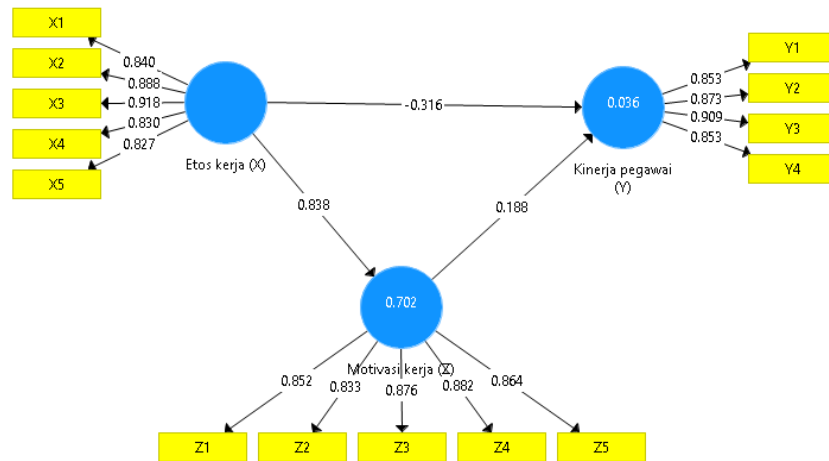


Figure 2. Measurement model results

Table 4. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Work Ethic (X)	0,913	0,913	0,935	0,742
Employee Performance (Y)	0,899	0,930	0,927	0,761
Work Motivation (Z)	0,913	0,913	0,935	0,743

Source: Data processed, 2025

Based on the results of the analysis of Outer Loadings and Construct Reliability and Validity on the variables of Work Ethic (X), Employee Performance (Y), and Work Motivation (Z), it was found that all indicators met the criteria of convergent validity and construct reliability. All indicators have loading factor values above 0.70; even most of them exceed 0.80, such as X3 (0.918), Y3 (0.909), and Z4 (0.882), which show a strong contribution to their construct. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.899–0.913 and Composite Reliability (CR) above 0.90, signifying excellent internal consistency. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value also met the criteria  $>0.50$ , with the highest results in Employee Performance (0.761), followed by Work Motivation (0.743) and Work Ethic (0.742). Overall, these results show that all constructs are valid and reliable, so the measurement model is feasible to use for further analysis at the inner stage of the model.

### b) Discriminant Validity

Based on the results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion analysis (Table 5), it can be concluded that the research model has met the criteria of discriminant validity, which means that each construct can distinguish itself from other constructs and accurately measure different concepts. The diagonal value, which is the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), shows results of 0.861 for Work Ethic (X), 0.872 for Employee Performance (Y), and 0.862 for Work Motivation (Z). All of these values are higher than the correlation between non-diagonal constructs, for example, the correlation between Work Ethic and Work Motivation of 0.838, which is lower than the AVE root of each variable. Similarly, the correlation between Employee Performance and other constructs (-0.159 and -0.077) is also well below its AVE root value. This shows that each construct has a good level of discrimination and that there is no conceptual overlap between variables. Thus, this strong discriminant validity strengthens the reliability of the measurement model and ensures that each latent variable is clearly measured and distinct from the other.

**Table 5.** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Work ethic (X)	Employee performance (Y)	Work motivation (Z)
Work ethic (X)	0,861		
Employee performance (Y)	-0,159	0,872	
Work motivation (Z)	0,838	-0,077	0,862

Source: Data processed, 2025

### c) Structural Model (Inner Model)

#### *Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)*

The results of the R Square analysis (Table 6) show that Work Ethic (X) is able to explain 70.2% of the variability of Work Motivation (Z), which means that the influence is strong and significant. However, Work Ethic and Work Motivation only explain 3.6% of the variability of Employee Performance (Y), so their effect on performance is relatively weak. This shows that there are still other factors outside the model that have a greater impact on employee performance.

**Table 6.** Determinant Coefficient Values

	R Square
Employee performance (Y)	0,036
Work motivation (Z)	0,702

#### *Predictive Relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>)*

Based on the calculation of *Predictive Relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>)* using the formula proposed by Ghazali and Latan (2015):

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R_1^2)(1 - R_2^2)$$

It is known that the value for Work Motivation (Z) is 0.702 and for Employee Performance (Y) is 0.036, then:  $R^2$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0,702)(1 - 0,036)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (0,298)(0,964)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - 0,287272$$

$$Q^2 = 0,712728$$

Thus, the  $Q^2$  value is 0.71, indicating that the model has a strong predictive relevance, as the value is above 0.35. This means that 71% of data diversity can be explained by structural models, while the remaining 29% is influenced by factors outside of the research model.

#### d) Hypothesis Testing

The following presents the results of testing the direct and indirect effects between variables in the research model using path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values (Table 7). This test aims to determine the significant relationship between the variables of Work Ethic (X), Work Motivation (Z), and Employee Performance (Y). The hypothesis is accepted if the t-value is  $> 1.96$  and the p-value is  $< 0.05$ .

**Table 7.** Direct and indirect influence

	Relationship	$\beta$	<i>T-value</i>	<i>P-values</i>	Decision
H1	Work ethic (X) -> Employee performance (Y)	0,408	2,522	0,012	Confirmed
H2	Work ethic (X) -> Work motivation (Z)	0,885	17,758	0,000	Confirmed
H3	Work motivation (Z) -> Employee performance (Y)	-0,054	2,011	0,045	Confirmed
H4	Work ethic (X) -> Work motivation (Z) -> Employee performance (Y)	0,108	2,268	0,024	Confirmed

Source: Data processed, 2025

#### *Hypothesis 1 (H1): Work Ethic $\rightarrow$ Employee Performance*

Work Ethic has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance with a coefficient value of 0.408, t-value of 2.522, and p-value of 0.012. This means that the higher the employee's work ethic, the better their performance. A strong work ethic reflects responsibility, discipline, and commitment at work, which drives increased productivity at SMA YPK Merauke.

#### *Hypothesis 2 (H2): Work Ethic $\rightarrow$ Work Motivation*

Work Ethic has a very strong and significant effect on Work Motivation with a coefficient value of 0.885, t-value of 17.758, and p-value of 0.000. This shows that employees with a high work ethic have a great internal drive to carry out their duties. Work ethic is an important basis in forming high work motivation.

#### *Hypothesis 3 (H3): Work Motivation $\rightarrow$ Employee Performance*

Work Motivation has a significant but negative effect on Employee Performance with a coefficient value of -0.054, t-value of 2.011, and p-value of 0.045. These results indicate that employee work motivation may not be well directed or still external, so it has not been able to improve performance optimally.

#### *Hypothesis 4 (H4): Work Ethic $\rightarrow$ Work Motivation $\rightarrow$ Employee Performance (Mediation)*

Work Motivation acts as a significant mediator between Work Ethic and Employee Performance with a coefficient value of 0.108, t-value of 2.268, and p-value of 0.024. Despite the influence of motivation on negative performance, this mediating relationship remains

significant. This means that Work Ethic can improve Employee Performance indirectly through Work Motivation.

### 4.3. Discussion

#### 4.3.1. The Influence of Work Ethic on Employee Performance

Work ethic has a fundamental role in shaping optimal employee performance, especially in an educational environment such as SMA YPK Merauke. The work ethic includes the values of responsibility, discipline, integrity, and perseverance that encourage professionalism in completing tasks. The results of the first hypothesis test showed a significant influence of work ethic on employee performance, with a coefficient value of 0.408, a t-value of 2.522, and a p-value of 0.012 ( $<0.05$ ), which indicates that an increase in work ethic is followed by an increase in performance. This finding is in line with research by (Ratnasari and Sutjahjo, 2021) who emphasized that the consistent application of work ethic increases employee responsibility, focus, and productivity. At SMA YPK Merauke, indicators such as responsibility, work ethic, compliance with rules, and honesty are the main keys in producing quality performance. This is in line with the view of (Cameron and Quinn, 2021) who stated that an organizational culture that emphasizes hard work and collaboration will encourage the best performance of employees. In addition, Robbins and Judge (2019) also added that a strong work ethic forms a harmonious and stable work environment, which in the long run creates high loyalty and work initiative. Thus, strengthening the work ethic is an important strategy in improving individual and collective performance at SMA YPK Merauke.

#### 4.3.2. The Influence of Work Ethic on Motivation

Based on the results of the second hypothesis test, it is known that work ethic has a very significant effect on employee work motivation with a path coefficient value of 0.885, a t-value of 17.758, and a p-value of 0.000. This shows that the stronger the work ethic of employees, the higher the motivation they have in carrying out their duties. Work ethic in this case reflects enthusiasm, responsibility, diligence, and compliance with work norms. (Koesmono, 2016) states that work ethic plays a role as an internal factor that generates intrinsic motivation of employees, where individuals who have a high work ethic tend to work enthusiastically and responsibly. Furthermore, (Mangkunegara, 2019) emphasized that the value of a work ethic that is instilled consistently can increase motivation because employees feel that they have meaning and an important contribution to the organization's goals. Thus, the implementation of a work culture oriented towards discipline, dedication, and responsibility is the main driver for increasing employee work motivation at SMA YPK Merauke.

#### 4.3.3. The Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

The results of the third hypothesis test showed that work motivation had a significant effect on employee performance, but with a negative relationship direction ( $\beta = -0.054$ ). This phenomenon indicates that even though motivation is high, work environment conditions can be an inhibiting factor in achieving optimal performance. In the context of SMA YPK Merauke, high motivation does not necessarily produce maximum performance if it is not accompanied by support from external factors such as effective leadership, a balanced workload, and a fair evaluation system. Vroom in Expectancy Theory explains that new motivation has a positive impact if the individual believes that the effort made will result in rewarded performance. Ganta (2014) also emphasized the importance of alignment between individual motivation and organizational goals, because motivation that is not in the direction can lead to counterproductive performance. In addition, according to the Job Demands-Resources model by (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004), motivation only has a positive effect when there is a balance

between demands and work resources. Therefore, this result implies that improving performance at SMA YPK Merauke needs to be accompanied by a supportive work environment, transparency of assessment, and proportionate rewards so that motivation can be converted into real performance.

#### 4.3.4. The Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Based on the results of the fourth hypothesis test, it is known that work motivation plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between work ethic and employee performance at SMA YPK Merauke. This shows that work ethic not only has a direct effect on performance, but also indirectly through increased work motivation. (Luthans, 2011) explained that work ethic provides a moral and psychological basis that fosters intrinsic motivation to achieve optimal performance. In line with that, (Wibowo, 2016) added that a strong work ethic fosters meaning and a sense of belonging to work, which ultimately increases the drive to achieve. In the context of SMA YPK Merauke, values such as discipline, responsibility, and loyalty will be more effective if accompanied by intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, such as awards and recognition of achievements. Therefore, school management needs to instill the value of work ethic while internalizing it through an award system, continuous coaching, and a supportive work environment so that motivation can be directed at improving employee performance.

## 5. Conclusion

Research conducted at SMA YPK Merauke shows that work ethic plays an important role in improving employee performance, both directly and through work motivation as an intermediary factor. Employees with a high work ethic tend to have discipline, a sense of responsibility, and a strong spirit of cooperation, so it has a positive impact on productivity. However, the relationship between work motivation and performance actually shows a negative direction, which indicates that high motivation is not always directly proportional to work results if it is not balanced with adequate system support and working conditions. These findings indicate that the synergy between individual factors and organizational support is key to achieving optimal performance.

Based on these results, the school management is advised to balance strengthening work ethic with increasing employee motivation through sustainable policies, such as awarding, professional training, and the creation of a comfortable and open work environment. SMA YPK Merauke also needs to make the values of work ethic part of the organizational culture and conduct regular evaluations of employee performance. Follow-up research is recommended to add other variables, such as leadership style, organizational culture, or job satisfaction, and use a mixed approach to make the research results more comprehensive and relevant to the broader context of educational institutions.

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