

THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPETENCIES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE WITH WORK ETHIC AS A MODERATING VARIABLE AT THE DAIRI PANWASLU OFFICE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of individual characteristics and competencies on employee performance, with work ethic as a moderation variable, at the Dairi Regency Panwaslu Office. This study used an associative quantitative approach with a saturated sample technique on 35 employees. Data was collected through questionnaire deployment and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the help of SmartPLS software version 3.3.3. The results showed that individual characteristics did not have a significant effect on employee performance (T-Statistic = 0.452 < 1.96; P-Value = 0.654), while competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (T-Statistic = 3.128 > 1.96; P-Value = 0.004). Work ethic was also found to have no significant effect directly on employee performance (T-Statistic = 0.385 < 1.96; P-Value = 0.703), and did not moderate the relationship between individual characteristics and employee performance (T-Statistic = 1,300 < 1.96; P-Value = 0.202), as well as the relationship between competence and employee performance (T-Statistic = 1.053 < 1.96; P-value = 0.299). These findings show that competence is the most dominant factor in influencing employee performance, while work ethic does not strengthen the influence of individual characteristics or competencies on employee performance. Therefore, it is recommended that organizations focus efforts on improving employee competencies through technical training, regulatory understanding, and professional development programs. Further research can add other variables such as organizational culture, reward system, or leadership style to explain the variation in employee performance more comprehensively.

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a crucial factor that determines the success of an organization, including public institutions such as the General Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) of Dairi Regency. As an institution that plays a strategic role in supervising the election process, Panwaslu is required to ensure that all stages of the general election take place in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and democratic principles. This responsibility can only be realized if employees show optimal performance, both in terms of work quality, work quantity, punctuality, accuracy, and responsibility in carrying out tasks. Therefore, the study of factors that affect employee performance is very relevant and important to be carried out.

One of the main factors that is believed to affect employee performance is individual characteristics. Individual characteristics refer to personal attributes that distinguish a person from other individuals, including personality, abilities, values, attitudes, motivation, and work experience (Simatupang et al., 2021; Mulia & Bibi, 2019). These characteristics shape the way individuals think, interact, and behave in the work environment (Amalia et al., 2019). In the context of Panwaslu, differences in intelligence, discipline, responsibility, motivation, and work experience greatly affect the way employees carry out supervisory roles during the election process. Employees who have individual characteristics that are in accordance with job demands tend to show better performance compared to employees whose characteristics are less aligned (Chinanti & Siswati, 2020; Indrawan, 2021). On the contrary, weak individual characteristics can hinder work effectiveness and the achievement of organizational goals (Jaya, 2017).

In addition to individual characteristics, competence is another important factor that determines employee performance. Competencies include a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal attributes that enable individuals to carry out tasks effectively and achieve superior performance (Trilestari, 2019; Fadillah, 2022; Ilham, 2024). In public organizations such as the Dairi Regency Panwaslu, employees are required to have technical competencies related to election regulations, investigative skills, administrative accuracy, analytical skills, communication skills, decision-making skills, and problem solving (Sumendap et al., 2015; Marhamah et al., 2024). Without adequate competence, employees will have difficulty carrying out supervisory tasks effectively, even though they have positive individual characteristics (Rahadi, 2021).

Competencies can be developed through education, training, and organizational coaching. Continuous technical and administrative training allows employees to gain a comprehensive understanding of election regulations, violation handling mechanisms, and documentation techniques in the field (Tjahyanti & Chairunisa, 2021). Competent employees tend to be able to complete tasks on time, produce accurate and consistent reports, and identify problems in the field objectively (Mesra, 2021; Ilham, 2024). Thus, competence is the main foundation for employees to optimize their potential and maintain

professionalism standards, especially in work environments that demand a high level of precision such as election supervision (Putro & Arfiany, 2020).

However, individual characteristics and competencies do not always directly result in high performance (Jatmiko & Astuti, 2021). In practice, there are other factors that can strengthen or weaken the relationship. One of the factors that plays an important role is work ethic. Work ethic is a set of attitudes, beliefs, and values that shape an individual's outlook on work, which is reflected in discipline, responsibility, honesty, dedication, perseverance, and commitment (Sani, 2019; Putri Nur Syiva et al., 2023). According to Sutrisno (2016), work ethic reflects a mental attitude that views work as something meaningful and valuable (Zulher, 2020). Individuals with a high work ethic view work not as just an obligation, but as a moral and social responsibility, even as a form of community service (Dolonseda & Watung, 2020).

A high work ethic encourages employees to maximize their competencies and optimally actualize individual characteristics to achieve superior performance (Hasing & Sulkarnain, 2019). For example, employees who have good analytical skills or technical skills will not make maximum contributions if they are not supported by perseverance, discipline, and strong commitment (Saragih & Siagian, 2020). Therefore, work ethic serves as a moderation variable that can strengthen the influence of individual characteristics and competencies on employee performance. On the other hand, low work ethic can lead to apathy, weak motivation, and decreased performance quality (Sani, 2019).

In the context of the Dairi Regency Panwaslu, employees are faced with complex job challenges, such as tight deadlines, political pressure, potential conflicts of interest, and demands to maintain independence and professionalism during the election process. These conditions not only require individual abilities and strong technical competence, but also a high work ethic to maintain institutional integrity. Therefore, understanding the interaction between individual characteristics, competencies, and work ethic in influencing employee performance is very important as a basis for managerial decision-making.

Various previous studies have shown that employee performance in public organizations is influenced by individual internal factors and organizational contextual factors. Afandi (2018) emphasized that individual characteristics are the main determinants of performance, while Mangkunegara (2017) highlighted the important role of work ethic in encouraging high productivity. However, empirical studies that examine simultaneously the influence of individual characteristics, competencies, and work ethic—especially the role of work ethic moderation—on election supervisory institutions are still relatively limited, especially at the regional level such as Dairi Regency.

Based on this description, this research is considered relevant and important to be carried out. The analysis of the influence of individual characteristics and competencies on employee performance with work ethic as a moderation variable is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that support the achievement of optimal performance in the Panwaslu environment. In addition, the results of this study are

expected to provide practical recommendations in an effort to improve employee performance through the development of positive individual characteristics, increased competence, and strengthening work ethic, so that the Dairi Regency Panwaslu can carry out its supervisory functions more effectively, professionally, and with integrity.

METHOD

This study uses an associative quantitative research approach, which aims to examine the relationship between two or more variables (Sugiyono, 2018). The goal of this approach is to identify and analyze the causal relationships between the variables studied. In this study, individual characteristics (X1) and competence (X2) acted as exogenous variables, employee performance (Y) as endogenous variables, and work ethic (Z) as moderation variables. The research was carried out at the Dairi Regency Panwaslu Office which is located at Jalan Ahmad Yani No. 53, Batang Beruh, Sidikalang District, Dairi Regency, North Sumatra 22212. The data collection process was carried out for two months, from November 2025 to December 2025.

The population in this study is all employees who work at the Dairi Regency Panwaslu Office. According to Sugiyono (2017), population is a generalized area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain characteristics that are determined by researchers to be studied and then conclusions are drawn. In this study, the population is 35 employees, all of whom have the status of State Civil Apparatus (ASN). Given the relatively small population, this study uses a saturated sampling technique (census), where all members of the population are used as research respondents. Thus, the number of samples in this study is equal to the number of population, which is as many as 35 employees.

The operational definition is compiled to clarify the meaning of each research variable. Individual characteristics (X1) are defined as the personal traits, values, attitudes, and personalities that shape the way individuals think, interact, and behave in the workplace (Simatupang et al., 2021). This variable is measured through five indicators, namely ability, needs, beliefs, work experience, and expectations (Sari, 2023). Competency (X2) is defined as a comprehensive ability that includes individual knowledge, skills, attitudes, and characteristics that enable employees to carry out tasks effectively and achieve performance standards (Fadillah, 2022). Competence is measured through five indicators, namely personal characteristics, self-concept, knowledge, skills, and work motivation (Fadillah, 2022). Work ethic (Z) is defined as a set of positive behaviors rooted in basic beliefs and total commitment to a certain work paradigm (Putri Nur Syiva et al., 2023), which are measured through four indicators, namely respect for time, toughness and tenacity, desire to be independent, and adaptability (Fadila Nurjayanti, 2021). Employee performance (Y) refers to the level of effectiveness and efficiency of employees in carrying out their duties and responsibilities (Afandi, 2018), which is measured using nine indicators, namely the quantity of work results, the quality of work results, the efficiency

of task implementation, work discipline, initiative, precision, leadership, honesty, and creativity (Afandi, 2018).

The data analysis technique used in this study is quantitative data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). The analysis was carried out with the help of SmartPLS software version 3.3.3. The SEM-PLS method was chosen because it is suitable for complex models with relatively small sample sizes and does not require strict data normality assumptions.

Evaluation of measurement models (outer models) includes testing validity and reliability. The validity test aims to find out whether the questionnaire items are able to measure the construct in question correctly. A questionnaire is declared valid if the question items are able to measure the concepts being studied (Abdi Sugiarto, Yohanes Kamakaula, & Periansya, 2024). Reliability tests are performed to assess the consistency and stability of the measurement instrument. Reliability is measured using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values. According to Sekaran (2014), a construct is declared reliable if Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are greater than 0.70.

An evaluation of the structural model (inner model) was carried out to test the relationship between exogenous and endogenous constructs according to the proposed hypothesis (Hair et al., 2017). The inner model assessment was carried out using the bootstrapping method on SmartPLS. The model evaluation includes the determination coefficient (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), t-statistics value, path coefficient, and model fit (model fit). The R^2 value is used to assess the ability of independent variables to explain dependent variables, with a value range between 0 to 1 (Ghozali, 2016). Predictive relevance (Q^2) was tested using the Stone–Geisser method, where a Q^2 value greater than zero indicates that the model has good predictive relevance (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Hypothesis testing was carried out based on t-statistics values obtained from the bootstrapping process. The hypothesis is stated to be accepted when the t-statistical value is greater than 1.96 at a significance level of 5% (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). The path coefficient is used to determine the direction of the relationship between variables, where a positive value indicates a positive relationship and a negative value indicates a negative relationship. Furthermore, the suitability of the model is assessed using the Normed Fit Index (NFI), where a value close to 1 indicates a better level of model suitability (Ghozali, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Convergent Validity Test Results

The convergent validity of the measurement model with reflective indicators is assessed based on the relationship between the indicator score and the latent construct score. An indicator is declared valid if it has an outer loading value greater than 0.70. However, in studies that are still in the development stage, an outer loading value between

0.50 to 0.60 is still acceptable. Based on the results of the output of outer loading, all indicators in this study show a loading value above the required minimum limit. The outer loading value of each indicator is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Outer Loading Value

Indicator	Outer Loading	Remarks
Individual Characteristics (X1)		
KIn1	0.810	Valid
KIn2	0.827	Valid
KIn3	0.812	Valid
KIn4	0.882	Valid
KIn5	0.831	Valid
Competencies (X2)		
KO1	0.820	Valid
KO2	0.886	Valid
KO3	0.888	Valid
KO4	0.770	Valid
KO5	0.818	Valid
Work Ethic (Z)		
EK1	0.780	Valid
EK2	0.886	Valid
EK3	0.816	Valid
EK4	0.876	Valid
Employee Performance (Y)		
KP1	0.884	Valid
KP2	0.858	Valid
KP3	0.760	Valid
KP4	0.822	Valid
FP5	0.830	Valid
KP6	0.835	Valid

KP7	0.728	Valid
FP8	0.811	Valid
KP9	0.890	Valid

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Based on Table 1, all indicators in each research variable have an outer loading value above 0.70. This shows that each indicator is able to adequately reflect the latent construct it measures and thus has met the criteria of convergent validity. The Individual Characteristics variable (X1) has an outer loading value between 0.810 to 0.882 which indicates a strong contribution of the indicator. The Competency variable (X2) also shows a high outer loading value, which is between 0.770 to 0.888. Similarly, the Work Ethic variable (Z) has an outer loading value ranging from 0.780 to 0.886, while the Employee Performance indicator (Y) is in the range of 0.728 to 0.890. Thus, all indicators are declared valid and worthy of further analysis.

Results of the Discriminant Validity Test

Discriminant validity aims to ensure that each reflective indicator measures the construct in question more strongly than the other construct. This test is carried out by looking at the cross loading value. The results of the discriminant validity test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Discriminating Validity (Cross Loading)

Indicator	X1	X2	Z	Y
KIn1	0.840	0.830	0.780	0.756
KIn2	0.827	0.801	0.821	0.767
KIn3	0.819	0.769	0.816	0.705
KIn4	0.882	0.681	0.872	0.635
KIn5	0.831	0.613	0.731	0.603
KO1	0.725	0.820	0.704	0.707
KO2	0.906	0.986	0.900	0.786
KO3	0.790	0.888	0.788	0.822
KO4	0.616	0.770	0.643	0.711
KO5	0.679	0.818	0.679	0.776
EK1	0.810	0.830	0.880	0.756
EK2	0.816	0.770	0.886	0.754

EK3	0.812	0.769	0.816	0.705
EK4	0.857	0.614	0.876	0.587
KP1	0.707	0.780	0.703	0.884
KP2	0.710	0.774	0.709	0.858
KP3	0.657	0.699	0.651	0.760
KP4	0.790	0.788	0.788	0.822
FP5	0.653	0.713	0.632	0.830
KP6	0.730	0.826	0.739	0.835
KP7	0.563	0.628	0.545	0.728
FP8	0.616	0.770	0.643	0.811
KP9	0.755	0.776	0.773	0.890

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The test results show that each indicator has the highest loading value on the construct it is measuring compared to the other constructs. Thus, all indicators have met the criteria for discriminant validity.

Composite Reliability Test Results

The construct reliability test was carried out using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values. A construct is declared reliable if the value of Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.70. The results of the reliability test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Individual Characteristics (X1)	0.931	0.947	0.781
Competencies (X2)	0.918	0.936	0.745
Work Ethic (Z)	0.902	0.932	0.776
Employee Performance (Y)	0.945	0.954	0.699

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The entire construct meets the criteria of convergent reliability and validity, as demonstrated by the high values of Composite Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, and AVE.

Evaluation of Structural Models (Inner Model)

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to measure the extent to which independent variables are able to explain the variation of dependent variables. The results of the R^2 test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 R Square Results

Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Employee Performance (Y)	0.887	0.867
Work Ethic (Z)	0.982	0.981

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The Adjusted R^2 value for the Employee Performance variable is 0.867, which indicates that 86.7% of employee performance variations can be explained by Individual Characteristics, Competencies, and Work Ethic. Meanwhile, 98.1% of the variation in Work Ethic is explained by Individual Characteristics and Competencies, which shows the clear power of a very strong model.

Goodness of Fit Test

Model suitability was evaluated using the Normed Fit Index (NFI). The test results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Model Fit

Match Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.115	0.115
d_ ULS	3.647	3.651
d_ G	2.405	2.405
Chi-Square	770.511	770.511
NFI	0.802	0.802

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

An NFI value of 0.802 indicates that the research model has an acceptable fit.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing was carried out by looking at T-Statistics and P-Values values. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationships	T-Statistics	P-Values	Verdict
H1	$X1 \rightarrow Y$	0.452	0.654	Rejected
H2	$X2 \rightarrow Y$	3.128	0.004	Accepted
H3	$Z \rightarrow Y$	0.385	0.703	Rejected
H4	$X1 \times Z \rightarrow Y$	1.300	0.202	Rejected
H5	$X2 \times Z \rightarrow Y$	1.053	0.299	Rejected

The results of the study showed that competence had a positive and significant effect on employee performance, **while** individual characteristics and work ethic did not have a significant effect directly on employee performance. In addition, work ethic is not able to moderate the influence of individual characteristics and competencies on employee performance.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that individual characteristics did not have a significant effect on the performance of Dairi Regency Panwaslu employees. This can be seen from the T-statistical value of $0.452 < 1.96$ with a P-Value of $0.654 > 0.05$, so that the first hypothesis (H1) was declared rejected. These findings indicate that individual characteristics such as personality, attitudes, and personal values possessed by employees have not been directly able to improve employee performance. This condition can be caused by the characteristics of work in the Panwaslu environment which is very tied to regulations and formal procedures, so that performance is more determined by compliance with the rules than by differences in individual character. Thus, even if employees have good individual characteristics, this is not necessarily reflected in performance improvement if it is not supported by other more dominant factors.

In contrast to individual characteristics, competence has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This is shown by the T-statistical value of $3.128 > 1.96$ with a P-Value of $0.004 < 0.05$, so that the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted. These findings show that the knowledge, skills, and technical abilities possessed by Panwaslu employees, especially related to understanding election regulations, supervision procedures, and administrative capabilities, play an important role in improving performance. Competent employees tend to be able to carry out their duties effectively, accurately, and responsibly. These results are in line with the views of Sumendap et al. (2015) and Rahadi (2021) who affirm that competence is a key factor in improving the performance of public sector employees.

Furthermore, the test results showed that work ethic did not have a significant effect on employee performance. This is evidenced by a T-statistic value of $0.385 < 1.96$ and a P-Value of $0.703 > 0.05$, so that the third hypothesis (H3) is rejected. These findings indicate

that work attitudes such as discipline, hard work, and dedication that employees have are not strong enough to drive direct performance improvement. One of the possible causes is the existence of strict work standards and supervision systems within the Panwaslu, so that employee performance is more influenced by technical competence than personal work attitudes.

The results of the moderation test showed that work ethic was not able to moderate the influence of individual characteristics on employee performance. This can be seen from the T-statistical value of $1,300 < 1.96$ with a P-Value of $0.202 > 0.05$, so that the fourth hypothesis (H4) was rejected. These findings suggest that work ethic does not strengthen the relationship between individual characteristics and performance. In other words, even if employees have good individual characteristics and a high work ethic, the combination of the two is not enough to significantly improve performance. Other factors such as work systems, division of tasks, and organizational policies are likely to play a more dominant role.

In addition, work ethic is also not able to moderate the influence of competence on employee performance. This is shown by the T-statistical value of $1.053 < 1.96$ with a P-Value of $0.299 > 0.05$, so that the fifth hypothesis (H5) is rejected. These findings indicate that competence remains the main factor that affects employee performance without being significantly influenced by the level of work ethic. Employees who have high competence are still able to show good performance even though the variation in work ethic does not provide meaningful reinforcement.

In terms of model feasibility, Goodness of Fit showed quite good results, with an NFI value of 0.802 which is greater than the SRMR of 0.115. This shows that the research model has an adequate level of suitability and is feasible to test the research hypothesis. Thus, the relationship between individual characteristics, competence, work ethic, and employee performance can be explained quite well by the model built in this study.

The results of this study confirm that competence is the most dominant factor in improving the performance of Dairi Regency Panwaslu employees, while individual characteristics and work ethic, both directly and as a moderation variable, have not shown a significant influence. These findings provide practical implications that organizations need to focus more attention on improving employee competencies through technical training, regulatory deepening, and professional capability development. In addition, this study opens up opportunities for future research to include other variables such as organizational culture, reward systems, or leadership styles that may be better able to explain variations in employee performance more comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion that have been described in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Individual characteristics do not have a significant effect on employee performance. This is evidenced by the T-Statistics value of $0.452 < 1.96$ and P-Values of $0.654 > 0.05$. These findings show that the differences in individual characteristics of Dairi Regency PANWASLU employees have not been able to directly improve employee performance.
2. Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. The test results showed a T-Statistics value of $3.128 > 1.96$ and a P-Values of $0.004 < 0.05$. Thus, increasing employee knowledge, skills, and employability has been proven to make a real contribution to improving employee performance.
3. Work ethic does not have a significant effect on employee performance. This is shown by the T-Statistics value of $0.385 < 1.96$ and the P-Values of $0.703 > 0.05$. These findings indicate that the work ethic of employees has not been able to have a direct influence on the performance of PANWASLU employees in Dairi Regency.
4. Work ethic is not able to moderate the influence of individual characteristics on employee performance. The results of the moderation test showed a T-Statistics value of $1,300 < 1.96$ and a P-Value of $0.202 > 0.05$. Thus, work ethic has not played a role as a variable that strengthens the relationship between individual characteristics and employee performance.
5. Work ethic is also not able to moderate the influence of competence on employee performance. This is evidenced by the T-Statistics value of $1.053 < 1.96$ and the P-Values of $0.299 > 0.05$. These results show that the influence of competence on employee performance is direct and does not depend on the level of work ethic.

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