

(Research Article)

The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment in the Effect of Work Ethics and Employee Engagement on Employee Performance

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between work ethics, work engagement, and employee performance. The research was conducted at the Central Java Regional Office of the Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Agency, involving a population of 256 employees. A purposive sampling technique was applied, resulting in 156 valid respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with the SmartPLS 3 software. The results of the analysis indicate that work ethics and work engagement have a positive and significant influence on organizational commitment. In addition, work ethics, work engagement, and organizational commitment are proven to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Further mediation analysis using the Sobel test reveals that organizational commitment plays a significant mediating role in strengthening the effect of work ethics and work engagement on employee performance. These findings highlight the importance of fostering ethical behavior and employee engagement to enhance organizational commitment, which in turn contributes to improved employee performance and overall organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Employee; Organizational Commitment; Performance; Work Engagement; Work Ethics.

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1. Introduction

Human resources (HR) represent a vital organizational asset and serve as a key driver for achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Noe et al., 2017). High-quality human resources not only perform operational functions but also shape an organizational culture that promotes innovation, high performance, and adaptability to change. Effective HR management enables organizations to manage talent, develop employee skills, and foster motivation to ensure optimal contributions (Noe et al., 2017; Dessler, 2017). Therefore, employee performance becomes a critical element in accomplishing organizational goals.

Work ethics and work engagement are two major factors influencing employee performance. Work ethics encompassing responsibility, honesty, and dedication have been shown to enhance work quality, strengthen discipline, and increase employee commitment (Ferine et al., 2021; Jufrizen & Erika, 2021). Meanwhile, work engagement reflects the degree of emotional involvement and commitment employees have toward their job, which positively affects performance outcomes (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Suparman, 2024). However, empirical findings regarding the effects of these variables remain inconsistent. Some studies report significant positive effects, whereas others indicate non-significant relationships (Mubarok & Darmawan, 2019; Aflah et al., 2021; Wardiansyah & Kurniawati, 2024). These

inconsistencies highlight the need for further research using a more comprehensive analytical approach.

Furthermore, to address these research gaps, organizational commitment is incorporated as a mediating variable. Organizational commitment reflects an individual's loyalty and psychological attachment to the organization, including the desire to remain, contribute, and internalize organizational values (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Prior studies by Intan et al. (2024) and Suprpto and Soliha (2023) indicate that organizational commitment can mediate the influence of work ethics and work engagement on employee performance. Organizations can strengthen commitment by promoting value alignment, providing recognition, and ensuring a supportive work environment, thereby enhancing overall performance (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2015). Accordingly, strong work ethics and high work engagement foster higher organizational commitment, which in turn drives sustainable improvements in employee performance.

This study focuses on employees of the Central Java Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Center, an institution that plays a vital role in maintaining the smooth and safe trade of animals, fish, and plants in the region. Recent organizational phenomena reveal performance gaps, particularly declines in export certification and public satisfaction levels, indicating the need for a comprehensive evaluation of employee performance. These conditions suggest that employee performance has not yet reached an optimal level, thus underscoring the importance of examining the influence of work ethics and work engagement mediated by organizational commitment on performance. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the effects of work ethics and work engagement on employee performance and to examine the mediating role of organizational commitment. The findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for improving performance at Central Java Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Center effectively and sustainably.

2. Literature Review

Work Ethics

Work ethics represent a set of moral values such as responsibility, integrity, discipline, and a commitment to quality that shape an individual's professional behavior in the workplace (Bataineh, 2020; Harris, 2020; Robbins & Judge, 2022). These ethical values enhance motivation, improve work quality, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and foster a productive and harmonious work environment (Mubarak et al., 2020; Choi & Kim, 2023). Empirical studies demonstrate that work ethics significantly contribute to improving employee performance across various sectors, including industry, education, and public services (Ferine et al., 2021; Jufrizen & Erika, 2021; Marbun & Purba, 2021; Mubarak & Darmawan, 2019). Core values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility also help reduce workplace conflict, increase operational efficiency, and support the achievement of organizational vision and mission (Robbins & Judge, 2022; Choi & Kim, 2023). Therefore, strengthening work ethics serves as a key strategic approach to enhancing individual performance and ensuring the overall success of the organization.

Work Engagement

Work engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and physical involvement of employees in their work and organization, characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and a strong sense of belonging (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Engagement encompasses full attention to tasks (cognitive), energy and perseverance while working (physical), and loyalty to the organization (affective commitment), and is influenced by factors such as fairness, recognition, and opportunities for development (Shuck & Reio, 2014). Engaged employees tend to demonstrate higher performance, stronger productivity, and loyalty toward the achievement of organizational goals (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Harter et al., 2002). Numerous studies have confirmed the positive influence of work engagement on performance improvement across various sectors, including MSMEs and large organizations (Ambarwati et al., 2023; Anass et al., 2024; Arifin, 2024; Maryati et al., 2024; Nabilla et al., 2023), establishing employee engagement as a strategic factor in human resource development and organizational success.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the emotional, moral, and rational attachment of employees to their organization, reflected in loyalty, value congruence, and a strong desire to contribute optimally. According to Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, organizational commitment comprises affective commitment (emotional attachment),

normative commitment (moral obligation), and continuance commitment (rational consideration of costs associated with leaving the organization). High levels of commitment encourage employees to be more productive, loyal, and display positive work behaviors toward the organization (Luthans, 2018; Riketta & Van Dick, 2021). Factors such as trust in leadership, organizational culture, fairness, and opportunities for development are essential in strengthening employee commitment (Cohen, 2016; Robbins & Judge, 2019). Numerous studies have also demonstrated that organizational commitment plays a significant role in enhancing both individual and team performance (Hendri, 2019; Setiawan et al., 2021), making it a key determinant of organizational effectiveness.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the degree to which individuals achieve work objectives based on organizational standards, reflecting effectiveness, efficiency, work quality, and overall contribution to organizational goals (Noe et al., 2020; Dessler, 2017). Robbins and Judge (2022) emphasize the importance of adaptability and meeting role expectations, while Armstrong (2021) defines performance as the result of an interaction between an individual's abilities, motivation, and opportunities to perform. In addition, work behavior and motivation are identified as key elements influencing productivity and performance outcomes (Mathis & Jackson, 2022). Therefore, employee performance serves as a strategic indicator of the value that individuals bring to organizational success, making it essential for assessing overall organizational effectiveness and competitiveness.

Hypothesis Development

The Influence of Work Ethics on Organizational Commitment

Work ethics refer to the moral values and principles such as honesty, integrity, discipline, and responsibility that guide employees' behavior within an organization (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Strong work ethics enhance employee morale and strengthen the alignment between individual and organizational values, which in turn fosters greater organizational commitment (Armstrong, 2014). Empirical findings by Caniago and Mustoko (2020) and Prayogi et al. (2023) demonstrate that employees who uphold ethical standards tend to show higher commitment and contribute more effectively to organizational goals. Similarly, Suryani and Triyono (2022) and Hadi et al. (2023) confirm that work ethics positively influence organizational commitment and promote organizational citizenship behavior.

H1: Work ethics have a positive influence on organizational commitment.

The Influence of Work Engagement on Organizational Commitment

Work engagement refers to the degree of emotional involvement employees have toward their organization, which makes them feel valued, responsible, and psychologically connected to their work (Saks, 2006). Employees with high engagement levels tend to be more loyal, motivated, and productive, ultimately strengthening their organizational commitment (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Empirical studies by Hidayat et al. (2024), Hasaniyah et al. (2022), and Jiatong et al. (2022) demonstrate that work engagement enhances employees' affective commitment. Furthermore, Bodiseowei and Odiri (2023) confirm a positive correlation between work engagement and commitment across various organizational contexts.

H2: Work engagement has a positive influence on organizational commitment.

The Influence of Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance

Organizational commitment reflects employees' emotional, moral, and rational attachment to their organization, which includes affective, normative, and continuance dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with strong commitment are more motivated to contribute optimally and remain with the organization, leading to improved individual and team performance (Meyer & Allen, 1997). A consistent body of literature including studies by Hendri (2019), Pinho et al. (2014), and Setiawan et al. (2021) shows that organizational commitment positively influences employee performance.

H3: Organizational commitment has a positive influence on employee performance.

The Influence of Work Ethics on Employee Performance

Work ethics enhance performance by shaping professional attitudes, responsibility, integrity, and quality-driven behavior. Empirical findings by Caniago and Mustoko (2020), Prayogi et al. (2023), Bataineh (2020), and Ferine et al. (2021) indicate that strong work ethics significantly improve productivity and work quality. A robust ethical culture also plays a critical role in ensuring optimal performance, even under challenging circumstances such as during the pandemic.

H4: Work ethics have a positive influence on employee performance.

The Influence of Work Engagement on Employee Performance

Work engagement measures the extent to which employees are emotionally and psychologically involved in their work. Highly engaged employees typically demonstrate greater productivity, higher motivation, and stronger performance outcomes (Harter et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Recent studies by Ambarwati et al. (2023), Anass et al. (2024), and Arifin (2024) consistently confirm that work engagement significantly enhances employee performance. Therefore, work engagement serves as a key driver of work effectiveness and improved organizational results.

H5: Work engagement has a positive influence on employee performance.

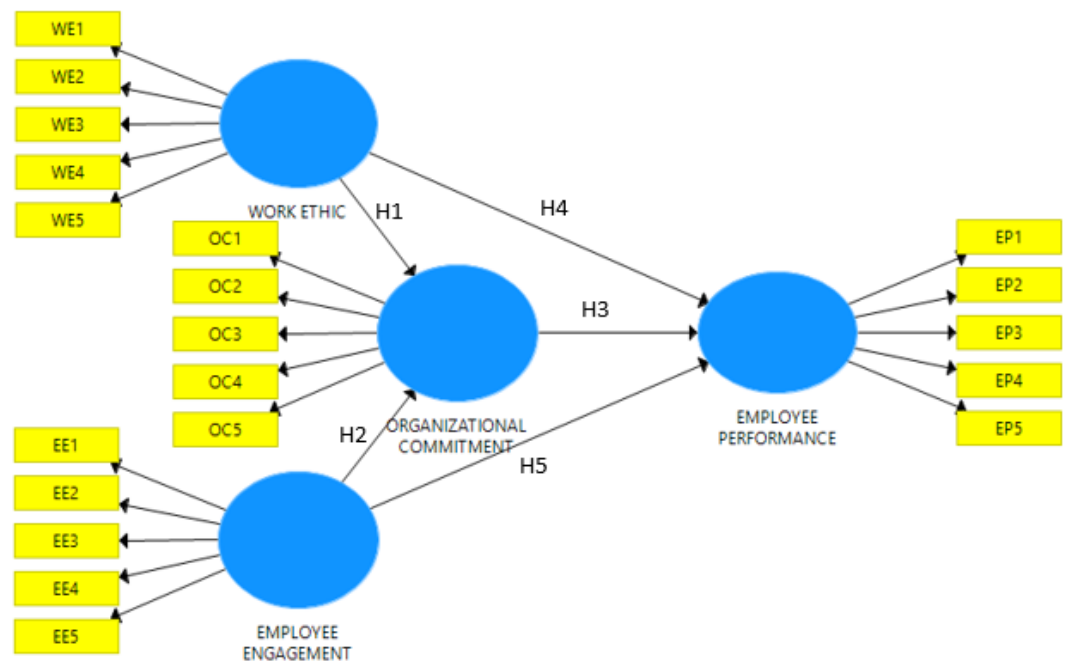


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methode

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research method to analyze the influence of work ethics and work engagement on employee performance at the Central Java Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Center, with organizational commitment serving as the mediating variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). From a total population of 256 employees, 156 respondents were selected using purposive judgment sampling, specifically targeting technical functional officers who had completed the Karantina Training Center (TC) program to ensure relevant technical competence and experience.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms through WhatsApp and email to facilitate ease of access and increase respondent participation.

Research instrument and measurements

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and included demographic information such as gender, age, education level, and tenure. The research instruments were adapted from established studies. Work ethics were measured through five constructs: dedication, fairness, obligation, personal and social

growth, and the importance of work (Udin et al., 2022). Work engagement was assessed using five indicators: relationship with supervisors, self-development, involvement in decision-making, physical and mental well-being, and recognition (Wardiansyah et al., 2024). Organizational commitment was measured using four indicators: acceptance of organizational goals and values, willingness to work hard, and loyalty (Hendri, 2019). Employee performance was measured using five indicators derived from Law No. 20 of 2023, namely work quality, strategic thinking, trustworthiness, teamwork, and communication. A pre-test involving 30 respondents was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire was ready for use without requiring significant revisions.

Data Analysis

This study employs Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), considering that it is a comprehensive multivariate approach capable of simultaneously testing all relationships among constructs in the conceptual model, including both the measurement and structural components (Hair et al., 2019). SEM-PLS consists of two sub-models: the measurement model and the structural model (Hair et al., 2019). The measurement model includes the evaluation of outer loadings, with a recommended cut-off value of 0.60 or higher, and the average variance extracted (AVE), which is considered valid and acceptable when it reaches 0.50 or more (Hair et al., 2019). Reliability assessment refers to composite reliability, with a recommended minimum value of 0.70 and a maximum of 0.90 to ensure data reliability (Hair et al., 2019). The measurement model evaluates the reliability and validity of reflective constructs, whereas the structural model examines the R^2 coefficients and path coefficients (Hair et al., 2019).

4. Result And Discussion

Measurement Model

First, the measurement model assesses the reliability and validity of the constructs. The table below presents the outer loading values for all items, each exceeding the recommended cut-off value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). The results indicate that all composite reliability and AVE values are above the minimum thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, demonstrating that the constructs meet the criteria for reliability and convergent validity (see Table 1) (Hair et al., 2017). Furthermore, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which shows that all latent variables have higher square-root AVE values than their correlations with other constructs (see Table 2) (Fornell & Larcker, 1987). Based on these criteria, the measurement model is deemed acceptable.

Table 1. Loading, Composite Reliability, AVE

Construct/Item	Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Work Ethic		0,925	0,711
WE1 <- WE	0,778		
WE2 <- WE	0,823		
WE3 <- WE	0,905		
WE4 <- WE	0,809		
WE5 <- WE	0,894		
Employee Engagement		0,921	0,701
EE1 <- EE	0,772		
EE2 <- EE	0,755		
EE3 <- EE	0,829		
EE4 <- EE	0,937		
EE5 <- EE	0,889		
Organizational Commitment		0,891	0,673

OC1 <- OC	0,729		
OC2 <- OC	0,835		
OC3 <- OC	0,817		
OC4 <- OC	0,891		
Employee Performance		0,898	0,640
EP1 <- EP	0,764		
EP2 <- EP	0,858		
EP3 <- EP	0,714		
EP4 <- EP	0,875		
EP5 <- EP	0,777		

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

Structural Model

Before testing the structural model, the inner model was assessed using Goodness of Fit (GoF) analysis to determine whether the proposed model meets the criteria for validity and reliability and is suitable for further structural analysis (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). GoF is calculated based on the R^2 values derived from the average AVE and R^2 values (Hair et al., 2019). The GoF value is categorized as small (0.10–0.24), medium (0.25–0.35), and large (≥ 0.36) (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, the GoF value of the research model is $0.722 > 0.36$, which falls into the large category. This indicates that all aspects of the model's constituent variables have high quality and that the data fit well in explaining the hypothetical model (see Table 2).

Table 2 Goodness of Fit

Variable	AVE	R^2
Work Ethic	0,711	
Employee Engagement	0,701	
Organizational Commitment	0,673	0,674
Employee Performance	0,640	0,859
Average Score	0,681	0,767
AVE x R^2		0,522
GoF = $\sqrt{(AVE \times R^2)}$		0,722

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

Evaluasi inner model menggunakan interpretasi R^2 untuk mengukur akurasi. Variabel The inner model was evaluated using the interpretation of R^2 to measure its accuracy. The variables work ethic and employee engagement influence organizational commitment by 0.674 (67.4%). The variables organizational commitment, work ethic, and employee engagement influence employee performance by 0.859 (85.9%), while the remaining variance is affected by other factors (see Table 2).

The Goodness of Fit (GoF) of the structural model within the inner model was tested using the predictive relevance (Q^2) value. If the Q^2 value is greater than 0, the model is considered to have predictive relevance. The R^2 values for each endogenous variable in this study can be calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Q2 &= 1 - (1 - R1)(1 - R2) \\
 Q2 &= 1 - (1 - 0,674)(1 - 0,859) \\
 Q2 &= 1 - (0,326)(0,141) \\
 Q2 &= 1 - 0,046 \\
 Q2 &= 0,954 \text{ atau } 95,40\%
 \end{aligned}$$

The calculation above shows a predictive relevance value of $0.954 > 0$. This indicates that 95.4% of the variance in the employee performance variable (dependent variable) can be explained by the variables included in the model. Thus, the model can be considered to have strong predictive relevance.

The next discussion focuses on hypothesis testing. The results indicate that work ethic has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (0.552; p-value 0.000), supporting H1. Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (0.309; p-value 0.003), supporting H2. Organizational commitment has a positive and significant relationship with employee performance (0.210; p-value 0.006), supporting H3. Work ethic has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (0.535; p-value 0.000), supporting H4. Employee engagement also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (0.246; p-value 0.000), supporting H5 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

	Hypothesis	β	t-value	p-value	Result
	Work Ethic ->				
H1	Organizational Commitment	0,552	6,352	0,000	Accepted
	Employee Engagement				
H2	-> Organizational Commitment	0,309	3,020	0,003	Accepted
	Organizational				
H3	Commitment -> Employee Performance	0,210	2,804	0,006	Accepted
	Work Ethic -> Employee				
H4	Performance	0,535	6,272	0,000	Accepted
	Employee Engagement				
H5	-> Employee Performance	0,246	3,595	0,002	Accepted
Indirect					
	Work Ethic ->				
	Organizational				
	Commitment ->	0,116	2,184	0,030	Accepted
	Employee Performance				
	Employee Engagement				
	-> Organizational				
	Commitment ->	0,065	2,541	0,012	Accepted
	Employee Performance				

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

The results of the indirect effect testing show that work ethic influences employee performance through organizational commitment with a value of 0,116 and a p-value of 0,030. This indicates that organizational commitment successfully mediates the effect of work ethic on employee performance. Similarly, employee engagement influences employee performance through organizational commitment with a value of 0,065 and a p-value of 0,012. This demonstrates that organizational commitment effectively mediates the effect of employee engagement on employee performance.

5. Discussion

This discussion interprets the data analysis results to address the research hypotheses by linking statistical findings with theory and previous studies. The results indicate that work ethic and employee engagement have a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment, suggesting that the better the work ethic and the higher the engagement, the stronger the commitment of employees at Central Java Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Center. Organizational commitment is also shown to enhance employee performance, in line with prior findings. Moreover, work ethic and employee engagement have a direct positive effect on performance, confirming that both variables are key factors in driving employee outcomes.

Furthermore, the mediation test results indicate that organizational commitment strengthens the relationship between work ethic and employee engagement with performance. Work ethic and employee engagement have a significant indirect effect on performance through organizational commitment, highlighting its role as a meaningful mediator. Overall, these findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking the variables and underscore that improving work ethic, employee engagement, and organizational commitment is essential for enhancing employee performance at Central Java Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Center.

6. Managerial Implications

Based on the results of the analysis, work ethic and employee engagement have been proven to have a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment. Therefore, these two aspects should be continuously nurtured and enhanced by the management of the Central Java Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Center. In addition, organizational commitment, work ethic, and employee engagement also have a positive and significant impact on employee performance, indicating that optimizing these three factors is crucial for improving performance. Consequently, management needs to strengthen work ethic, enhance employee engagement, and build high organizational commitment to maximize employee performance.

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