

Mediating Role of Work Motivation in the Relationship Between Work Culture and Employee Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of work culture on employee performance and assess the mediating role of work motivation in the Civil Service (ASN) of the North Gorontalo Regency Government. The method used is a quantitative approach through a survey of 120 respondents using stratified random sampling. Data analysis was performed using PLS-SEM with 5,000 subsample bootstrapping and Sobel's test to examine indirect effects. The results showed that work culture had a positive and significant effect on work motivation ($t = 2.69$; $p = 0.007$) and employee performance ($t = 4.79$; $p = 0.000$). Work motivation also has a significant effect on employee performance ($t = 7.04$; $p = 0.000$). Mediation testing shows that work motivation partially mediates the relationship between work culture and employee performance, with a z-Sobel value of 2.79 and $p = 0.005$. These results prove that work culture not only directly affects performance but also increases work motivation. This study confirms that strengthening work culture and developing motivation are key strategies in improving civil servant performance and provides an empirical basis for local governments to design more effective policies for improving bureaucratic performance.

Keywords: Work Culture, Work Motivation, Employee Performance.

I. Introduction

The development of a nation is strongly influenced by the professionalism of its bureaucracy and the competence of its human resources (HR). In the context of Indonesia, bureaucratic reform has become an urgent necessity to realize public services that are effective, efficient, and uphold integrity. Through the core values of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) known as "BerAKHLAK" service-oriented, accountable, competent, harmonious, loyal, adaptive, and collaborative, the government seeks to strengthen the character of civil servants so that they can serve as the driving force of bureaucratic transformation toward higher-quality public services. These values are expected to guide the behavior of ASN in carrying out governmental and developmental functions. In an era of globalization characterized by rapid technological advancement and dynamic competition, organizations are required to have resilient and adaptive human resources. HR does not merely function as implementers of policy but also as drivers of innovation and change. (Maulyan, 2019) Explains that humans, as resources, possess the ability to think, feel, and act, enabling organizations to achieve their goals. Therefore, human resource management plays an essential role in regulating work relations so that employees can work effectively and efficiently, as well as in optimizing individual potential to ensure maximum contribution to organizational performance (Afandi, 2018).



Employee performance is a key indicator of organizational effectiveness, especially in the public sector, which bears responsibility for service delivery to society. Performance reflects the extent to which employees are able to produce outputs that are high-quality and well-targeted (Patras et al., 2019). According to Lutfiyah et al. (2020), performance is not only assessed by final results but also by discipline, responsibility, and integrity in carrying out duties. In public bureaucracy, employee performance serves as a measure of government accountability in providing services (Mangkunegara, 2020). Low ASN performance may be reflected in behaviors such as tardiness, negligence, and lack of innovation (Rudianto, 2019). Law No. 5 of 2014 on the State Civil Apparatus emphasizes that civil servants must work based on the principles of professionalism, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency. Edison et al. (2016) further state that performance is influenced by ability and motivation, both of which must be managed in balance to achieve optimal results.

Performance issues among ASN remain a challenge in various regions, including North Gorontalo Regency. Established under Law No. 11 of 2007, the regency consists of 44 Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) responsible for providing public services. However, the 2024 LPPD report shows that ASN performance, particularly in the aspects of quality, quantity, and timeliness, has yet to reach optimal levels. In terms of quality, the Public Satisfaction Index (IKM) shows fluctuations and has not consistently met targeted benchmarks. Although the index reached 3.93 ("Very Good") in the third quarter of 2025, it experienced a decline in 2024, indicating that public services have not fully met community expectations. Furthermore, the low level of innovation and creativity among ASN has hindered service effectiveness. From the quantitative aspect, ASN performance has not been able to meet the expected output targets. Unequal distribution of workloads has resulted in some employees being overburdened while others have comparatively lighter workloads. This imbalance affects organizational productivity. Such conditions can be observed in the 2024 Minimum Service Standards (SPM) achievements of North Gorontalo Regency, which remain below the provincial average and are categorized as "incomplete," despite improvement efforts such as the issuance of Regent Regulation No. 24 of 2024 in the health sector.

In terms of timeliness, issues such as tardiness, unauthorized absences, and delays in task completion persist among ASN. These behavioral patterns indicate weak implementation of professional values within the bureaucratic work culture, hindering service effectiveness and undermining public trust in local government. One factor influencing ASN performance is work culture. Work culture represents the values, norms, and habits that shape employee behavior within an organization. (Nawawi, 2001). Schein (2010) Describes work culture as a shared system of meaning that guides members of an organization in acting and adapting to change. A positive work culture characterized by discipline, collaboration, and innovation can create a conducive work environment and enhance the effectiveness of public organizations. (Handayani et al., 2022). Studies by Silvia et al. (2019) and Simbolon (2017) Indicate that work culture has a positive effect on performance, although Soelton (2018) reported differing results.

These inconsistencies highlight the potential role of work motivation as a mediating variable. According to Herzberg (2015) Motivation comprises two factors: motivation factors (recognition, responsibility, achievement) and hygiene factors (compensation, work environment, social relations). Motivation serves as an internal drive that directs employee behavior toward achieving organizational goals (Sugiono et al., 2021). Maulidyar & Siharis (2022) Suggest that a positive work culture can strengthen motivation by fostering enthusiasm, responsibility, and cooperation. Baktiar et al. (2024) Found that motivation mediates the relationship between work culture and performance by increasing productivity and efficiency, although other studies Suparman (2024) Showed contradictory findings. These variations suggest that the relationship among the three variables is contextual and warrants further investigation, particularly within the public bureaucracy. Based on the above explanation, it is evident that ASN performance in North Gorontalo Regency still faces various challenges influenced by work culture and suboptimal motivation levels. Therefore, this study aims to examine the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between work culture and employee performance. This research is entitled: "Mediating Role of Work Motivation in the Relationship Between Work Culture and Employee Performance in North Gorontalo Regency."

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Integrative Behavior Theory

Behavior is an observable action or activity performed by individuals in response to external stimuli, including various conditions within the organizational environment. In organizational settings, individual behavior emerges from the interaction between personal characteristics and organizational characteristics, both of which are shaped by diverse environmental conditions. According to (Robbins & Judge, 2009) Variations in individual behavior are influenced by several key factors, such as abilities, values and attitudes, personality, emotions, and biographical characteristics. These factors collectively determine how individuals perceive their work environment, interpret organizational expectations, and respond to situational demands. As a result, individual behavior produces various outcomes for the organization, which may be positive, such as increased productivity, high job satisfaction, and strong performance, or negative, including absenteeism, turnover, and reduced commitment.

Understanding behavior in organizational contexts requires examining not only internal psychological processes but also the broader social and structural elements that shape how employees act and interact. One influential framework that helps explain these dynamics is the Integrative Model of Organizational Behavior proposed by Colquitt et al. (2011). This model conceptualizes behavior as a multi-level construct influenced by a series of interconnected mechanisms. At the individual level, outcomes such as job performance and organizational commitment arise from individual mechanisms that include job satisfaction, stress, motivation, trust, justice, ethics, learning, and decision-making. These mechanisms represent internal cognitive and emotional processes that guide how employees feel about their jobs, regulate their effort, and make choices in the workplace.

The model also emphasizes the role of organizational mechanisms such as organizational culture and structure, which create the contextual environment in which individuals behave. Organizational culture shapes shared values, norms, and expectations, while organizational structure determines roles, responsibilities, and formal patterns of interaction. Together, these mechanisms provide the foundation for how employees interpret organizational practices and understand their place within the organization. Furthermore, group mechanisms also play a critical role in shaping behavior. These include leadership styles and behaviors, power dynamics, negotiation processes, communication patterns, and group characteristics such as diversity and cohesion. Group-level influences determine how employees interact with supervisors and colleagues, how conflicts are resolved, and how collective decisions are made. These social processes can either support or hinder individual motivation, satisfaction, and ultimately performance.

Finally, the Integrative Model highlights that individual characteristics such as personality traits, abilities, and cultural values serve as fundamental drivers that shape how individuals respond to both group and organizational mechanisms. Ability influences task performance, personality shapes interpersonal interactions, and cultural values guide attitudes toward authority, cooperation, and achievement. Consequently, cultural values do not exert influence on performance solely through direct pathways. Instead, their effect is often strengthened when mediated by individual mechanisms such as work motivation. Employees whose cultural values align with organizational expectations tend to exhibit stronger intrinsic motivation, which in turn enhances their likelihood of displaying high performance and greater organizational commitment.

There are four indicators of individual behavior. (Inayatuddiniyah, 2019):

- a. Biographical characteristics: personal characteristics consisting of age, gender, number of dependents, and marital status.
- b. Ability: the capacity of an individual to perform specific tasks or activities.
- c. Learning: behavioral changes that occur as a result of experience and training, and can take place at any time.

- d. Personality: Personality is shaped by both heredity and environment. It depends on the culture in which a person is raised, early conditioning, family, friends, social groups, and other influences experienced throughout life.

2.2. Affective Events Theory

Affective Events Theory (AET) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how emotional experiences in the workplace shape employees' attitudes and behaviors. At its core, AET posits that workplace events, both positive and negative, trigger affective reactions that subsequently influence a range of work-related outcomes. Affect refers to the feelings or emotional states generated by an attitude object and represents the subjective experiences individuals associate with specific work events. These emotional reactions are not trivial; instead, they serve as critical determinants of job satisfaction, decision-making, and performance. (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). AET differentiates work behavior into two primary categories. The first is affect-driven behavior, which emerges directly from emotional experiences without the mediating influence of deliberate cognitive evaluations. These behaviors often occur spontaneously and are shaped by affective states such as anger, enthusiasm, excitement, or frustration. Affect-driven behaviors may involve adaptive responses, such as seeking support when feeling stressed, or maladaptive actions, such as withdrawing when experiencing negative emotion.

The second category is judgment-driven behavior, which results from more intentional and cognitive decision-making processes. These behaviors occur when individuals evaluate their jobs, experiences, and work environment before acting. In this case, affect contributes indirectly by shaping job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or perceptions of fairness, which then inform decisions such as staying with or leaving a job, increasing work effort, or adhering to organizational rules. AET begins with the recognition that emotions arise as responses to specific events within the work environment. The work environment itself comprises a variety of factors, such as job design, autonomy levels, emotional labor demands, workload, interpersonal relationships, and organizational climate. These elements influence the frequency and intensity of workplace events ranging from interpersonal conflicts and criticism to recognition, praise, or opportunities for achievement. Workplace events trigger immediate emotional reactions, and these reactions may differ significantly among individuals. Personality traits such as neuroticism, affective disposition, or extraversion shape how strongly employees react to events. Likewise, an individual's mood at a given moment influences the emotional impact of an event, often amplifying or attenuating emotional responses. For example, an employee in a positive mood may interpret a challenging task as an opportunity, whereas someone in a negative mood may perceive it as stressful or burdensome. According to (Wahyuni et al., 2022):

- a. An emotional episode is essentially a series of emotional experiences triggered by a single event and contains elements of emotions and mood cycles.
- b. Emotions experienced at a given moment influence job satisfaction along with the emotional background.
- c. Because moods and emotions fluctuate over time, their influence on performance also fluctuates.
- d. Emotion-driven behaviors are typically short-lived and variable.
- e. Because emotions tend to be inconsistent with the behaviors required to perform a job, they often hurt job performance.

2.3. Research Variables

a. Work Culture

Work culture refers to a set of values, norms, and habits that develop and are repeatedly practiced by employees within an organization, serving as guidelines for behaving and acting while carrying out their duties. Ali et al. (2022) define work culture as continuous habits performed by employees, which, when

implemented effectively, contribute significantly to improving performance and achieving organizational goals. Similarly, Anggada Abim Pramudya et al. (2023) explain that work culture encompasses life philosophies, values, and habits that drive groups and are reflected in employees' real actions. Jubaedah et al. (2021) add that work culture represents a pattern of basic assumptions learned and passed down within an organization to address internal and external challenges, serving as a reference for thinking and acting. Conceptually, work culture is not only formed by the organization's formal structure but is also influenced by psychological and social aspects, including values and beliefs, social norms, work ethics, and family dynamics that shape employees' internal motivation (Siddiqi & Jamal, 2024). A strong work culture fosters positive behaviors such as discipline, responsibility, collaboration, and professionalism, thereby contributing to improved individual and organizational performance.

Work culture holds a strategic function within an organization. First, it serves as a behavioral guideline that directs employees' actions to align with organizational standards. (Anggada Abim Pramudya et al., 2023) Second, work culture enhances productivity by creating a conducive, disciplined, and quality-oriented work environment. Third, it builds employee loyalty and integrity through the internalization of organizational values, fostering emotional and moral attachment. In addition, work culture becomes an organizational identity that distinguishes one institution from another and functions as a social control mechanism both formally and informally through the implementation of shared norms and values. The formation of work culture is influenced by several key factors. Ali et al. (2022) Emphasize that leadership is the most dominant factor because leaders serve as role models and guides of organizational values. Moreover, work culture is strengthened by the organization's ability to adapt to change and innovation, the presence of a fair reward and sanction system, individual awareness and responsibility, and effective communication among employees. These factors create interactions that foster a productive, adaptive, and harmonious work culture.

The measurement of work culture can be carried out through several behavioral indicators observable in employees' daily activities. Jubaedah et al. (2021) Propose indicators such as work discipline (punctuality and adherence to rules), responsibility in completing tasks, compliance with work norms, and work initiative. Ali et al. (2022) Highlight indicators related to completing tasks on time and meeting targets. In addition, underline the importance of teamwork, effective communication, professionalism, and employees' commitment to organizational values. In the context of Indonesian Civil Servants (ASN), work culture indicators refer to the core values of BerAKHLAK, which include Service-Oriented, Accountable, Competent, Harmonious, Loyal, Adaptive, and Collaborative, as stipulated by the National Civil Service Agency (BKN). These values are designed to strengthen a professional, high-integrity, and responsive bureaucratic culture.

b. Work Motivation

Work motivation is a psychological process that drives, directs, and sustains an individual's behavior in achieving organizational goals. Kreitner (1992) views motivation as an internal force that encourages a person to act, while Pinder (1998), in Blanchard et al. (2009), emphasizes that motivation is energy arising from within or outside the individual that determines the direction, intensity, and duration of work behavior. Work motivation is also understood as a condition that influences an individual's attention, effort, and persistence in performing tasks. (Mangkunegara, 2020). Thus, work motivation plays a crucial role in ensuring that employees have the drive to initiate, maintain, and complete work activities optimally. Work motivation may originate from intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation arises when individuals engage in their work because they find it meaningful, interesting, and internally satisfying (Gagné et al., 2010). In contrast, extrinsic motivation emerges due to instrumental incentives such as rewards, recognition, or promotion. Extrinsic motivation tends to have a short-term impact, whereas intrinsic motivation is associated with long-term satisfaction, self-development, and psychological well-being (Ana et al., 2024). In organizational settings, both forms of motivation are essential as they influence employees' behaviors and performance.

Various types of work motivation have been described by scholars, including intrinsic, extrinsic, positive, negative, personal, and social motivation (Amalia et al., 2025). Intrinsic motivation is linked to internal

drives such as a sense of responsibility and the desire to develop competence. Extrinsic motivation is influenced by rewards, professional relationships, or promotion opportunities. Positive motivation arises from expectations of reward, whereas negative motivation stems from the desire to avoid punishment or adverse consequences. Furthermore, personal motivation relates to the need to be recognized and valued, while social motivation is driven by the desire to build good interpersonal relationships and contribute to the surrounding environment. Work motivation is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include basic survival needs, desires for possession, the need for recognition, and the drive for power. (Sutrisno, 2019). External factors include working conditions, fair compensation, leadership capable of providing direction, job security, status, responsibility, and flexible organizational regulations. These factors interact to shape an employee's level of motivation.

Indicators of work motivation can be observed through responsibility in performing tasks, the drive to achieve, opportunities for development, recognition for performance, and the alignment between job demands and challenges. (Yusuff, 2023). Jobs requiring creativity, problem-solving, and personal initiative tend to enhance intrinsic motivation. Vallerand (2000) adds that motivation can be assessed based on levels of behavioral regulation, ranging from amotivation to intrinsic motivation, which reflect the degree of individual involvement and awareness in their work. Work motivation brings various benefits to organizations, including increased productivity, job satisfaction, employee engagement, and a sense of value toward assigned tasks (Zairil et al., 2024). Motivated employees tend to work harder, demonstrate higher loyalty, and contribute more effectively to organizational goal achievement. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of work motivation is essential for organizations in designing sustainable strategies to improve employee performance.

c. Employee Performance

Employee performance is one of the key elements in achieving organizational goals because it reflects an individual's work accomplishments in terms of both quality and quantity. Harsono (2024) State that performance is a person's achievement in a particular field, manifested through the effective and efficient execution of tasks. Similarly, Inriyani et al. (2025) Defines performance as the work results achieved by employees in accordance with their duties and responsibilities. In an organizational context, high performance is not only influenced by motivation and ability but also requires a supportive work environment. Sinambela (2018) emphasizes that motivation and ability alone are insufficient to ensure optimal performance without conducive working conditions. A similar viewpoint is presented by Masruddin et al. (2025), who define performance as the work results of individuals or groups carried out within their authority and responsibilities to achieve organizational goals without violating norms, laws, or ethics. From another perspective, Nabawi (2019) underscores that performance is the result of task execution aimed at achieving targets, while Darmadi (2019) notes that high-performing employees can complete tasks effectively and on time. Therefore, employee performance plays a strategic role in enhancing organizational competitiveness, especially in dynamic business or bureaucratic environments (Bachri, 2018).

Employee performance is influenced by various interacting factors. Gibson, as cited in Tsauri (2021), categorizes determinants of performance into three main aspects: individual factors, organizational factors, and psychological factors. Individual factors include skills, abilities, background, and demographic characteristics, while organizational factors encompass leadership, structure, resources, rewards, and job design. Psychological factors comprise perception, attitudes, personality, experience, and motivation, all of which shape employees' work behavior. Kasmir (2016), in Jufrizen (2021), adds that performance is influenced by ability, knowledge, personality, motivation, leadership, work culture, work environment, job satisfaction, commitment, and discipline. Meanwhile, Munasib (2020) shows that compensation, work discipline, and workload are also significant factors shaping employee performance. These factors highlight that performance does not depend solely on personal competencies but is also affected by work systems, organizational dynamics, and psychological conditions.

Employee performance can be assessed using various methods. Traditional methods evaluate past performance through ranking, graphic rating scales, critical incident reports, and narrative essays (Shaout & Yousif, 2014). Modern methods were later developed to obtain more objective and comprehensive evaluations, such as Management by Objectives (MBO), Behavior Anchored Rating Scales (BARS), Human Resource Accounting (HRA), assessment centers, and 360–720 degree feedback. Aguinis (2021) asserts that performance appraisal must uphold principles of objectivity, fairness, transparency, relevance, and development orientation, ensuring that the evaluation process functions not only as a measurement tool but also as a means to support continuous performance improvement. Modern appraisal approaches also emphasize the importance of employees' contributions to organizational goals and the consistency of work behavior over time.

Indicators of employee performance can be identified through several key dimensions. Mangkunegara (2013) notes that quality, quantity, and timeliness are essential elements in evaluating employee performance. The quality dimension includes accuracy, neatness, and conformity of work outcomes to organizational standards, demonstrating an employee's ability to produce precise and consistent output (Hidayat & Prasetyo, 2020). The quantity dimension relates to the amount of output produced within a specific time frame and serves as a measure of effectiveness in results-oriented organizations (Suryani & Kurniawan, 2021). Additionally, task understanding is an important indicator because it ensures that work is carried out according to job descriptions and helps prevent errors or role ambiguity (Fauziah & Widodo, 2019). Responsibility reflects employees' commitment and reliability in completing tasks independently, on time, and with integrity (Lestari & Nurhidayat, 2020). Reinforcing this, Albert Budiyanto (2021) explains that work quality, work quantity, and teamwork are primary indicators of performance. Teamwork reflects employees' ability to collaborate with colleagues and supervisors to achieve shared goals, as emphasized by Sihotang & Saputra (2024), who argue that organizational achievement depends on the collective output of individuals and teams. Overall, the dimensions of quality, quantity, teamwork, task understanding, and responsibility form a comprehensive framework for assessing employee performance from both technical and behavioral perspectives.

Based on the theory and the results of previous research that have been described, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

- H1: Work Culture (X) has an influence on Employee Performance (Y) in the Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) within the Local Government of North Gorontalo Regency.*
- H2: Work Culture (X) has an influence on Employee Work Motivation (Z1) in the Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) within the Local Government of North Gorontalo Regency.*
- H3: Work Motivation (Z1) has an influence on Employee Performance (Y) in the Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) within the Local Government of North Gorontalo Regency.*
- H4: Work Culture (X) has an influence on Employee Performance (Y) in the Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) within the Local Government of North Gorontalo Regency through Work Motivation (Z1).*

III. Research Method

This study focuses on Civil Servants (ASN) within the Local Government of North Gorontalo Regency, located at Jl. Kusnodanupojo, Blok Plan Complex, Molingkapoto Village, Kwandang District, with the research conducted from August to September 2025. The selection of ASN in the North Gorontalo Regency Government as the research object is based on their strategic role in implementing governmental functions, public services, and regional development. ASN are considered essential elements in supporting the effectiveness of the implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) and improving the quality of bureaucratic performance in North Gorontalo Regency. The type of research employed is a survey using a

structured questionnaire distributed to respondents, both directly and online through Google Forms, to accelerate data collection and reduce operational costs. The research method used is a quantitative approach, focusing on numerical data analyzed through statistical techniques such as hypothesis testing and structural equation modeling to examine the relationships among variables based on existing theory. According to Creswell (2021) and Huda et al. (2025), quantitative research is grounded in theory testing through objective measurement of variables using numerical data that are statistically analyzed to evaluate the validity of the theory. The objects of this study consist of three variables: Work Culture (X) as the independent variable, Work Motivation (Z) as the mediating (intervening) variable, and Employee Performance (Y) as the dependent variable.

Operationalization of variables was then conducted to transform theoretical concepts into empirically measurable variables. The independent variable, Work Culture (X), is defined as a system of values and norms applied to civil servants to serve as behavioral guidelines in performing their duties and providing public services. This includes values such as service orientation, accountability, competence, harmony, loyalty, adaptability, and collaboration. The mediating variable, Work Motivation (Z), refers to internal drivers that stimulate employees to work more diligently and effectively in achieving organizational goals. The dependent variable, Employee Performance (Y), is interpreted as the work outcomes achieved by an employee according to their responsibilities and authority, with attention to quality, quantity, and timeliness. The research instrument uses a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions of statements related to the research variables. The Likert scale is used to assess attitudes, opinions, and individual perceptions regarding social phenomena (Sugiyono, 2010), with each item offering five response alternatives: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1), allowing the researcher to conduct quantitative analysis of respondents' answers.

The population in this study consists of all ASN within the North Gorontalo Regency Government who are responsible for implementing Minimum Service Standards (SPM) across six Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD): the Health Office, Education Office, Social Affairs Office, Public Works and Spatial Planning Office, Housing, Settlement Areas and Land Affairs Office, and the Civil Service Police Unit and Fire Department. The total population comprises 173 employees. These six OPD were chosen because they are directly involved in public service delivery and represent the characteristics of ASN in North Gorontalo Regency. The sample was determined using a probability sampling technique with the stratified random sampling method, as the study population has a hierarchical structure based on ASN positions. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, producing a total sample of 120 respondents, proportionally divided into 4 respondents from Echelon II, 18 respondents from Echelon III, and 98 respondents from Functional Positions.

The type of data used in this research is quantitative data, with data sources consisting of primary data obtained directly from questionnaire distribution to ASN in the six selected OPD, and secondary data derived from various sources such as official documents of the North Gorontalo Regency Government, personnel data from the Regional Personnel and Human Resources Agency (BKPP), the 2024 LPPD performance reports, and publications related to the 2024 SPM achievement index from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The data collection technique used is a cross-sectional survey, meaning data were collected at one point in time without the researcher's intervention in respondents' conditions. Questionnaires were distributed both directly and online to ensure accurate and representative data collection.

The data analysis method in this study consists of descriptive and inferential analyses. Descriptive analysis is used to describe respondents' perceptions of the research variables through frequency distributions, means, and percentage responses. Inferential analysis is conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the SmartPLS software, as PLS-SEM can analyze relationships among latent variables, both directly and indirectly (mediation), even when the data do not meet normality assumptions or when the sample size is relatively small. Evaluation of the model in PLS-SEM is carried out through two stages: the outer model evaluation to assess construct validity and reliability using criteria such as loading factors, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's

Alpha, where an instrument is considered valid if the loading factor exceeds 0.70 and reliable if Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha exceed 0.60; and the inner model evaluation to examine relationships among latent variables by assessing R-square values, effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and significance testing using the bootstrapping procedure (5,000 resamples). The R-square value indicates the model's predictive strength on endogenous variables, while f^2 and Q^2 measure the magnitude of effects and predictive capability. Furthermore, the Sobel test is conducted to examine the mediating effect of Work Motivation (Z) on the relationship between Work Culture (X) and Employee Performance (Y), by determining whether the indirect effect is significant by comparing the z-value with the critical value (1.96) or using a p-value ≤ 0.05 as the significance threshold.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Testing of Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing and the analysis of both direct and indirect path coefficients among the variables of work culture (X), work motivation (Z), and employee performance (Y) were conducted using Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis with the SmartPLS software. This analytical procedure is grounded in the fundamental principles of structural equation modeling (SEM) as outlined by Hair et al. (2019), which emphasize the estimation of causal relationships between latent constructs through the assessment of path coefficients. In this study, PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive-oriented research, its ability to handle complex research models, and its robustness when dealing with relatively small sample sizes and non-normally distributed data. The evaluation process involved estimating the structural model to determine the magnitude and significance of the hypothesized paths, followed by bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to test the stability of the coefficient estimates and assess statistical significance. Furthermore, the Sobel test was employed to verify the mediating role of work motivation, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of how work culture exerts both direct effects on employee performance and indirect effects through motivational mechanisms. Through this integrated approach, the analysis provides empirical evidence regarding the strength and significance of each relationship within the proposed model, ensuring the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn.

The results of the structural model evaluation indicate that work culture exerts a positive and significant influence on work motivation ($t = 2.69, p = 0.007$), suggesting that stronger organizational cultural values are associated with higher levels of employee motivation. Furthermore, work motivation demonstrates a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($t = 7.04, p = 0.000$), implying that motivated employees are more likely to exhibit improved performance outcomes. In addition, work culture itself has a direct positive and significant impact on employee performance ($t = 4.79, p = 0.000$), reinforcing the notion that a supportive and well-implemented work culture contributes directly to enhancing employee productivity and effectiveness. The analysis of the indirect effect reveals that work motivation serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between work culture and employee performance, as evidenced by the Sobel test value of $z = 2.79$ with a significance level of $p = 0.005 < 0.05$. This indicates partial mediation, meaning that while work culture directly influences employee performance, a portion of its effect is also transmitted through the mechanism of work motivation.

Table 1. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Measurement	t-statistics	p-value	Test Result	Hypothesis Testing
Work Culture → Work Motivation	2,69	0,007	Sig	Diterima
Work Motivation → Employee Performance	7,04	0	Sig	Diterima
Work Culture → Employee Performance	4,79	0	Sig	Diterima
Work Culture → Work Motivation → Employee Performance (Mediation)	Sobel= 2,79	0,005	Sig	Diterima

4.2. Interpretation of Hypothesis Testing

a. The Influence of Work Culture on Employee Performance

The test results show a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that work culture has a significant influence on employee performance. This finding is consistent with the organizational culture theory by Colquitte et al. (2011), which states that organizational culture shapes employees' attitudes, behaviors, and work orientation. In this context, the values of BerAKHLAK strengthen a productive and service-oriented work environment. Empirically, this result aligns with the studies of Adha et al. (2019), Indriani et al. (2019), Moron et al. (2023), and Hutajulu et al. (2021) All of which found that work culture has a significant positive impact on employee performance. This consistency reinforces the theoretical significance that work culture is a determining factor of bureaucratic performance in the public sector.

b. The Influence of Work Culture on Work Motivation

Work culture is proven to significantly influence work motivation, with a p-value of $0.007 < 0.05$. This finding is supported by the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which explains that motivation develops when organizations fulfill the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A strong work culture stimulates these aspects and therefore enhances intrinsic motivation. Previous studies by Giantari & Riana (2017), Sutoro et al. (2020), and Riyanto et al. (2021) Reported similar findings. Thus, the contribution of this study adds empirical evidence in the context of local government civil servants (ASN), an area still relatively limited in the national literature.

c. The Influence of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

Work motivation significantly influences employee performance (p-value = $0.000 < 0.05$). This result supports Herzberg's Motivation Theory (1959), which states that motivator factors—such as achievement, self-development, and responsibility play a crucial role in improving performance. The findings are consistent with those of Widodo et al. (2017), Adha et al. (2019), Adinda et al. (2023), and Wahyuni et al. (2022), all of which emphasize that motivation is a key driver of employee productivity. This indicates that enhancing motivation remains an essential strategy in bureaucratic reform.

d. Work Motivation Mediates the Effect of Work Culture on Employee Performance

The indirect effect of work culture on performance through work motivation is significant ($\beta = 0.150$; $p = 0.005 < 0.05$). The direct coefficient remains significant, indicating partial mediation. This means that work culture not only directly influences performance but also enhances motivation, which in turn strengthens employee performance. This finding expands the literature by providing new empirical evidence in the context of local government civil servants. The results are consistent with Giantari & Riana (2017), Sutoro et al. (2020), Hutajulu et al. (2021), Riyanto et al. (2021), and Maysaroh et al. (2024). This consistency suggests that the mediating role of work motivation is a stable phenomenon across various organizational contexts.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, work culture has a positive and significant effect on both work motivation ($p = 0.007$) and employee performance ($p = 0.000$) among civil servants in the Regional Government of North Gorontalo Regency. This indicates that the stronger the implementation of the #BerAKHLAK work culture, the higher the employees' motivation and performance. In addition, work motivation significantly influences employee performance ($p = 0.000$) and partially mediates the relationship between work culture and employee performance (Sobel $z = 2.79$; $p = 0.005$). Thus, work motivation serves as an important mechanism that explains part of the impact of work culture on performance enhancement.

These findings offer several implications. Theoretically, the results reinforce the Integrative Model of Organizational Behavior (Colquitt et al., 2011) and support the Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), both of which emphasize that a positive work environment fosters motivation and optimal performance. Practically, the findings guide the Regional Government of North Gorontalo Regency to enhance employee performance by strengthening the #BerAKHLAK culture and developing motivation-improvement programs such as recognition, competency development, and supportive work climates. Preventive measures—such as supervisor oversight, strict enforcement of ethical codes, and anonymous reporting mechanisms—are also necessary to reduce workplace deviant behavior. Methodologically, the use of SEM-PLS proved effective for examining mediation models with limited samples, although the reliance on self-report instruments may introduce response bias.

This study also has several limitations, including the restricted scope involving only six government agencies (OPD), which limits the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the study was unable to control external factors such as government policy and economic changes, and the cross-sectional survey design constrains the ability to capture dynamic changes in motivation and performance. Future research is therefore recommended to expand the study area, employ a mixed-method approach, and incorporate additional data collection techniques such as observations and in-depth interviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of work motivation and performance.

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