

## **WORK ETHIC AND TECHNICAL SKILL IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to produce a generalization of a phenomenon found during the research process by collecting various kinds of library source material. The variables used in this study are education, discipline (work ethic), and work (technical) ability to drive employee performance. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a literature study approach. The basic postulate (basic assumption) in this study is that higher education/training (as a hard skill competency) and discipline (as a soft skill competency) play a role in improving employee performance. This basic postulate or basic assumption is based on an empirical study of past research. The results of the study show the same symptoms where the level of education, discipline (work ethic as a manifestation of soft skills), and technical abilities (hard skills) can drive employee performance improvement.

**Keywords:** *Work Ethic, Employee Performance, HRM*

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### **1. Introduction**

Human Resources (HR) is one of the important factors in organizational development. Achieving the company's vision and mission is also very dependent on the ability of human resources to translate the company's strategy into operational work. HR capability in this case is measured by performance and productivity. The higher the productivity and performance of employees, the easier it is for a company or organization to achieve its vision and mission. The research conducted (Kelvin & Sulistio, 2018) revealed that there is a correlation between employee performance and the achievement of the company's mission. So, it will become a norm if the company always wants to increase the productivity of its employees' performance. However, not all these efforts went well. Some companies have problems in improving employee performance. Studies conducted (Noferdiman; Hadiyanto; Moehamin; Yuliusman, 2017) reveal that to improve employee performance in addition to increasing abilities or skills, it is also necessary to pay attention to increasing competitive advantage. On the other hand, the facts show that employees' work abilities will be easier to develop if employees have high soft skills. The provision of soft skills is related to employee behaviour in terms of discipline. The study conducted (Hendarman & Tjakraatmadja, 2012) found the phenomenon that employee discipline contributes to improving employee performance.

Discipline becomes a common behaviour when companies want to improve performance. Discipline is one of the drivers of performance which is also emphasized by (Yuliandi & Tahir, 2019) which also reveals that one of the keys to successful performance improvement is

discipline. Many previous literature studies have examined work discipline, motivation, salary income, competency on improving employee performance. However, studies related to problems from within the employees themselves have not been carried out much. One focus of the studies of several previous researchers was the level of education and experience. Employee education is one of the driving factors for employee performance. Employee literacy related to technical ability to complete work cannot be separated from work experience and education. The studies conducted (Asi & Cahyani, 2020; Dalimunthe & Muda, 2017; Hidayat, 2018) underlined that work experience takes a long time to develop into technical skills. However, with sufficient education and training, workers from fresh graduates can carry out technical workloads on par with experienced people. In other words, employees' technical abilities can be built through education and training. Meanwhile, empirical studies conducted (Adam, Juita, & Djalil, 2020; Selfi, Mujanah, & Candraningrat, n.d.) also revealed a correlation between education and training levels on improving employee performance.

Furthermore, this study has a basic postulate (basic assumption) that higher education/training (as hard skill competencies), and discipline (as soft skill competencies) play a role in improving employee performance. This basic postulate or basic assumption is based on an empirical study of past research.

This research is a preliminary study that will provide further research opportunities. As preliminary research, this research will review the extent to which the education level of workers is forged through formal and non-formal education, as well as their soft skill abilities to improve the employee's performance.

Implementation of employee performance improvement in a company is often constrained by the technical capabilities of the employees concerned. In addition to technical abilities, abilities in terms of soft skills are no less complicated. So that the company's efforts often become lame. This inequality occurs when companies do not or have not fully understood their needs. Improving employee performance cannot be done partially or one way. Research conducted (Ardi et al., 2020; Darman & Adha, 2021) proves that the need for performance improvement must be carried out in a comprehensive manner, and not in just one competency.

Based on the empirical studies above, this research is urgent to do a review of the application of employee performance improvement models. As a supporter of this research, a literature study was conducted from previous studies. The research conducted (Luisinha & Armanu, 2020) found that education and training conducted for employees is highly dependent on and mediated by the leadership style of an organization. This also affects the level of employee satisfaction, where satisfaction is related to employee emotion. However, things were somewhat different found by (Decramer, Smolders, & Vanderstraeten, 2013; Selfi et al., n.d.) where company culture greatly influences employee satisfaction and performance. A good corporate culture is able to motivate and discipline employees to improve their performance. The two studies also reinforce the basic assumption that work discipline as a manifestation of employee soft skills is also formed from a good corporate culture.

Several studies (Khan, Ahmad, Iqbal, & Haider, 2014; Oktafien & Santoso, 2021; Santoso, 2022) reveal that the level of education possessed by employees is far more important than other factors. This reinforces the basic assumption that the formal education obtained by previous employees is a competitive advantage possessed by employees. Employee literacy related to technical ability in completing work is transformed more quickly to those with higher education compared to those with secondary education. This is also corroborated by studies conducted by (Iksyaniyah, Hakim, & Listyadi, 2021; Sinaga, Lis, & Razimi, 2019) that higher education has a role in accelerating the transformation of knowledge in technical matters.

However, the study also found that workers who are more experienced will also more quickly absorb the transfer of technical knowledge.

The technical abilities possessed by workers must be forged persistently and consistently. In addition, the development of a continuous improvement model in the HRM aspect requires high discipline from employees. Discipline based on studies (Sitopu, Sitinjak, & Marpaung, 2021) found the fact that forging with a high discipline model has an influence on a good employee work ethic. In addition, the leadership model based on (Hartiti, Poddar, & Bhaumik, 2020) also found new facts, that employee discipline motivation arises from a leadership model that can set a good example.

Work discipline ultimately becomes one of the driving factors for improving performance. Discipline behaviour is basically a manifestation of employee motivation that has been built and structured for a long time. In addition, work discipline is also strongly influenced by the work environment, this is emphasized by (Nurmayanti & SAP, 2020; Septiawan & Heryanda, 2021) who found the fact that discipline is a mental character of employees that is built by a supportive environment. In other words, employee discipline cannot stand alone, there are environmental factors that become mediators for the growth and development of this attitude. Research conducted (Jufrizen, 2021; Maryani, Entang, & Tukiran, 2021) reveals that the work environment has a big role in fostering a sense of discipline. Even though a person has a high education, if the environment does not support the application of discipline, then a disciplined work ethic will have no meaning. This was revealed by (Adam et al., 2020) who found a fact that a work ethic with high work discipline is strongly influenced by the work environment, not on the educational background of employees.

This study will examine the extent to which employees' higher education, work ethic (discipline), and technical abilities of employees can encourage increased employee performance.

## **2. Research Method**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a literature study approach. Descriptive study in research is to collect as much data as possible supporting factors for research. Furthermore, (Arikunto, 2013) reveals in descriptive research the data collected is related to the research object, namely the level of education, work discipline behaviour, and technical abilities skills or technical abilities in supporting employee performance. Meanwhile, (Zed, 2004) explains that literature study is commonly used as a method used by researchers to answer a series of questions in research. The technique used in this study is a literature study by researching, understanding literary sources, or written sources that are relevant to the object being studied. The documents in this research originate from various studies contained in scientific publications. In detail, (Arikunto, 2013) explains that document sources in literature studies can come from journals, research reports, magazines or periodicals, books that have relevance to the object of research, sources (people), or other sources that are still relevant.

Meanwhile, the type of research used is library research. According to (Moelong, 2007; Zed, 2004), this type of research makes library data a theory to be studied and examined. The hypothesis obtained from the results of the study to obtain more objective results.

This study aims to produce a generalization of a phenomenon found during the research process by collecting various kinds of library source material. This generalization can ultimately be used as a recommendation for further research as a form of research development. This development refers to the original purpose of this research as preliminary research to carry out further research.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The study in this research is a preliminary research or preliminary research to draw a conclusion. The conclusion in this study is not a conclusion, but a recommendation that can be used as a hypothesis in further research. Based on the basic assumption that education, discipline, and work ability play a role in improving employee performance which is used as the basic postulate in this research, the generalization in this study found the following phenomena: Higher Education Influences Employee Productivity and Performance.

#### *Higher Education Influences Employee Productivity and Performance*

The general assumption of empirical studies suggests that the higher the employee's education, the higher the employee's work productivity. This assumption is based on a person's technical ability to perform and complete work.

Research conducted (Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020; Krishnaswamy, Hossain, Kavightha, & Nagaletchimee, 2019; Morris-Paxton, van Lingen, & Elkonin, 2019; Reilly, 2021) found the phenomenon that higher education is correlated with one's success. The success diction used in this study has a range of success in work and business. This research proves the assumption and hypothesis that the higher a person's education, the more successful a person is in his work and business.

This hypothesis is also proven by research (Castro, Scheede, & Zermeño, 2019; Gimmon, 2014; Kireeva, Slepenskova, Shipunova, & Iskandaryan, 2018) which found the fact that higher education is one of the competitive values of every employee. Higher education correlates with a person's technical ability to complete work. This ability is obtained when undergoing formal education. Formal education program in tertiary institutions is designed to respond to challenges in job competition. The results of empirical studies conducted in this study also show that 90% of successful companies are formed and built by people who are well educated. Table 1 below is the findings of researchers related to the level of education and business or job success.

**Table 1 Well Educated and Career**

Education Level	Graduate of		Position/Title
	Domestic	Overseas	
n/a	1%		Staff
Bachelor's degree	12%		Director/Middle Manager
Masters		82%	CEO; Founder; Co-Founder Business
Doctor/PhD		5	CEO
Sub-Total	13%	87%	
Total	100%		

*Source: processed data*

Based on Table 1 Well Educated and Career, the results of the observation on the level of education above show that most of the successful human resources come from well educated. Graduates from overseas education dominate the data above. This shows that forging foreign education is still the key to success in work and business. A survey conducted by (Indriartiningtias, Andi Rahadiyan, Subagyo, & Hartono, 2020) shows the fact that higher education, especially abroad, still dominates as a factor in the success of workers and businesses.

From the results of the various literature studies (research) above, the implications that can be drawn are that education is still the dominant factor in improving employee and business performance.

### ***Discipline (Work Ethic) Influences Employee Productivity and Performance***

One of the work ethics is discipline, where discipline becomes a work mentality which is reflected in each work pattern. Discipline is a manifestation of a person's mentality that has been forged for years. A study conducted by (Tight, 2020) explained that a work ethic shown through high work discipline is forged through education. In other words, the higher education of employees has an influence on the work ethic of employees, especially in terms of discipline.

Work discipline is also a process aid in completing work (B. M. D. Nguyen, Noguera, Adkins, & Teranishi, 2019). Discipline in the end builds a standard process in completing work so that productivity is maintained. Increased productivity in terms of value and quantity, is also built with a high work discipline. This is corroborated by research (Li, Ding, Ding, Hu, & Zhang, 2021) which found a new phenomenon that employee productivity and performance can be increased by building a work ethic and discipline. This also reinforces that high productivity is no longer influenced by how many workers complete it. More than that, productivity is a manifestation of work discipline.

A new phenomenon was also shown in research (Estrin, Mickiewicz, & Stephan, 2016) which revealed that the work ethic shown through work discipline accelerates career paths. This is shown from the empirical data of the 100 people studied, showing an average increase in the career of workers who have above average discipline.

**Table 2 Work Discipline & Career**

<b>Work Discipline</b>	<b>Position/Title</b>
<b>Outstanding</b>	Founder Business
<b>Exceed Expectation</b>	Director/Middle Manager
<b>Meet Expectation</b>	Chief
<b>Need Improvement</b>	Staff
<b>Unacceptable</b>	Staff

*Source: processed data*

Table 2 Work Discipline & Career above empirically shows that there is a correlation between work ethic and a person's career path. This strengthens and at the same time proves the basic assumption in this study that work discipline has an impact on one's productivity and career path. This also at the same time confirms that the work ethic shown by high discipline at work is a process towards success/high performance.

This research also simultaneously strengthens and confirms the assumptions made by (Alam, Gale, Brown, & Khan, 2010; Hurrell, 2016; P. T. Nguyen, Yandi, & Mahaputra, 2020) who found that work ethic as an employee's soft skills plays an important role in increasing productivity. In the end, this study draws the initial conclusion that the work ethic represented by employee work discipline can improve performance. This research also simultaneously provides a recommendation to company stakeholders that to improve company performance, employee performance must be improved through work discipline. Work discipline is built and shaped through a long process through the work culture formed by the company.



***Work Ability Affects Employee Productivity and Performance.***

This study also wants to measure the extent to which employees' work abilities (hard skills) influence employee performance. The study conducted (Lyu & Liu, 2021) underlines that the role of hard skills is needed to complete jobs that are technical in nature. The world of industry and business still needs workers in the technical sector. A person's technical ability is basically used to complete detailed work operationally. Soft Skills and Hard Skills are interrelated skills, but there is one side of the job that cannot be completed using only hard skills. Jobs with a high level of technical ability based on research (Bishop, 2017; Harianto & Agustina, 2016) can only be completed with high hard skills as well. Soft skills are in managerial areas that are strategic in nature, but not up to technical matters.

This research also confirms and proves the basic assumptions as well as draws the initial conclusion that a person's technical ability in completing work can improve employee performance. based on a literature review conducted in this study showed the following data:

**Table 3 Workability and Productivity**

<b>Research</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Result</b>
(Lyu & Liu, 2021)	Soft skills, hard skills: What matters most? Evidence from job postings	Sig +
(Hadiyanto, Noferdiman, Moehamin, & Yuliusman, 2017)	Assessing Students and Graduates Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness	Sig +
(Basir, 2011)	Soft Skill vs Hard Skill	Sig +
(Hendarman & Tjakraatmadja, 2012)	Relationship among Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Innovativeness of Knowledge Workers in the Knowledge Economy Era	
(Mahmudah, 2016)	Improving The Hard Skills and Soft Skills of Madrasah Teachers for Dealing ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)	Sig +
(Harianto & Agustina, 2016)	Correlation Between Soft Skills and Hard Skills (Achievement of High Competency) With Preparation to Be Teacher of Mechanical Engineering Education Students	Sig +

*Source: processed data*

Based on previous studies in Table 3 above, this study provides an initial generalization that one's work ability is a supporting factor for improving performance. This also confirms and proves the initial basic assumptions in this study. In the end, the three factors above, based on a literature review conducted by researchers, proved that all three influenced improving performance.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The results of the literature review in this study show the same symptoms where the level of education, discipline (work ethic as a manifestation of soft skills), and technical abilities (hard skills) can encourage increased employee performance.

1. This research in an empirical study found that a person's higher education becomes a milestone to make a quantum leap in one's career. This performance jump is influenced by someone's abilities that are forged through formal education.
2. Meanwhile, the work ethic is represented by work discipline as a driving force from the mental side of work. Work discipline is a tool that drives or motivates performance improvement. This study also found the fact that higher education and work discipline still require factors of technical ability to work. Technical skills in work are used to complete detailed work. Meanwhile, the forge of higher education coupled with a work discipline ethic is in a strategic work area.
3. This study also has limitations on the object used. The source of the study used mostly uses objects on overseas organizational culture. So that this research also provides space for other researchers to develop research from the point of view of the object of observation. This assumes that there is a gap between the object of research and western culture and eastern culture.

In the end, this research can draw the initial conclusion that higher education, discipline (as a work ethic), and work ability (from a technical standpoint) can improve employee performance.

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