



The Influence of Intrinsic Motivation and Democratic Leadership Style on Employees' Work Ethic: Evidence from the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency, Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
intrinsic motivation;
democratic leadership style;
work ethic;
human resource management;
Civil Service Police Unit.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style on employees' work ethic at the Civil Service Police Unit (SATPOL PP) of Central Tapanuli Regency. The study employed a quantitative approach with an associative research design. The population consisted of 302 employees, while 76 respondents were selected as the research sample using a sampling technique. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires, interviews, documentation, and literature review. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression with IBM SPSS Statistics version 21, including validity testing, reliability testing, classical assumption testing, partial (t-test), simultaneous (F-test), and coefficient of determination (R^2). The results indicate that intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employees' work ethic, with a t-value of 4.950 and a significance value of 0.000. Democratic leadership style also has a positive and significant effect on employees' work ethic, with a t-value of 3.479 and a significance value of 0.001. Simultaneously, intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style significantly influence employees' work ethic, with an F-value of 45.039 and a significance value of 0.000. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.552 indicates that intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style explain 55.2% of the variance in employees' work ethic, while the remaining 44.8% is influenced by other variables outside the research model. These findings imply that strengthening employees' intrinsic motivation and implementing a democratic leadership style are important strategies for improving employees' work ethic within public sector organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Human resources are recognized as a strategic asset that plays a fundamental role in determining an organization's ability to achieve its established objectives. In public sector organizations, the quality of human resources is not solely measured by employees' technical competencies but also by their commitment, responsibility, and work ethic in delivering public services. The performance of government institutions is highly dependent on employees' work behavior, as the effectiveness of public service delivery and organizational performance largely relies on the organization's capability to manage its human resources efficiently. Therefore, strengthening employees' work ethic has become an essential factor in promoting professional, accountable, and service-oriented public governance (Robbins & Judge, 2023).

Work ethic refers to a set of positive work behaviors characterized by commitment, responsibility, discipline, integrity, and enthusiasm in performing assigned duties. Employees with a high level of work ethic tend to demonstrate greater dedication, perform their responsibilities more effectively, and continuously strive to improve organizational performance. Conversely, a low level of work ethic may lead to reduced productivity, poor discipline, declining service quality, and lower organizational effectiveness. Consequently, work ethic has become one of the key indicators for improving the performance of public sector employees, particularly within government institutions responsible for law enforcement and public order, such as the Civil Service Police Unit (Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja—SATPOL PP) (Sinamo, 2011).

Previous studies have identified both internal and external factors influencing employees' work ethic. One of the most influential internal factors is intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive that encourages individuals to perform their work because of personal satisfaction, responsibility, achievement needs, and opportunities for self-development rather than external rewards. Employees possessing strong intrinsic motivation are generally more committed, creative, responsible, and willing to contribute voluntarily to organizational success. Previous empirical studies have consistently demonstrated

that intrinsic motivation positively affects various work-related outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee performance, and work ethic (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Herzberg, 1968).

Besides intrinsic motivation, leadership style represents an important external factor influencing employee behavior in the workplace. Democratic leadership emphasizes employee participation in decision-making processes, open communication, delegation of authority, and respect for employees' opinions and competencies. Such a leadership approach creates a supportive organizational climate, enhances employees' sense of belonging, and encourages greater responsibility and work engagement. Previous studies have also confirmed that democratic leadership positively contributes to employee motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work performance (Yukl, 2020).

The Civil Service Police Unit (SATPOL PP) of Central Tapanuli Regency is a regional government institution responsible for enforcing local regulations, maintaining public order, and protecting the community. These responsibilities require employees to possess a strong work ethic to ensure effective public service delivery. However, preliminary observations indicate that employees' work ethic has not yet reached an optimal level. This condition is reflected in the relatively low percentage of employees applying for rank promotion (65%), low attendance rates (50%), insufficient responsibility in carrying out assigned duties (45%), and limited participation in education and training programs (40%). Furthermore, organizational leaders have not fully implemented a democratic leadership style, resulting in limited employee participation in providing suggestions, constructive criticism, and organizational feedback. These conditions may weaken employees' intrinsic motivation and consequently reduce their overall work ethic within the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency.

Although numerous studies have examined the relationships among motivation, leadership, and various organizational outcomes such as employee performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and work engagement, empirical research specifically investigating the effects of intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style on employees' work ethic within regional government institutions remains limited. Moreover, most previous studies have primarily focused on employee performance as the dependent variable, while work ethic has received comparatively less scholarly attention, particularly within public law enforcement organizations. This research therefore seeks to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence regarding the determinants of employees' work ethic in the public sector, particularly within the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to examine the influence of intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style on employees' work ethic at the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of human resource management literature in the public sector and provide practical recommendations for organizational leaders in formulating policies that strengthen intrinsic motivation, promote democratic leadership practices, and ultimately improve employees' work ethic.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using an associative research design to examine the effects of intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style on employees' work ethic at the Civil Service Police Unit (Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja—SATPOL PP) of Central Tapanuli Regency. The research was conducted at the SATPOL PP Office of Central Tapanuli Regency, located on Sinta M. Pohan Street, Central Tapanuli Regency, Indonesia, between May and September 2023.

The study population consisted of 302 employees of the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency. The sample was selected using a proportional sampling technique, following Arikunto's sampling guideline, which recommends selecting 25% of the population when the population exceeds 100 individuals. Accordingly, 76 respondents were included in this study. The selected respondents were considered representative of the population and provided sufficient information regarding intrinsic motivation, democratic leadership style, and employees' work ethic.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, documentation, and a literature review. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Intrinsic motivation was measured using five indicators: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement. Democratic leadership style was assessed based on four indicators: delegation of responsibility, employee participation, decision-making, and empathy. Meanwhile, employees'

work ethic was measured using ten indicators, namely honesty, sincerity, fairness, consistency, promptness, time discipline, excellent performance, integrity, effectiveness, and teamwork.

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 21. Prior to hypothesis testing, the research instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability tests, while the classical assumption tests included normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity analyses. Hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis to determine the effects of intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style on employees' work ethic. The significance of the regression model was evaluated using the partial t-test, simultaneous F-test, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the effects of intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style on employees' work ethic at the Civil Service Police Unit (Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja—SATPOL PP) of Central Tapanuli Regency. The regression results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variables	Regression Coefficient (B)	t-value	Sig.
Constant	7.271	—	—
Intrinsic Motivation	0.452	4.950	0.000
Democratic Leadership Style	0.363	3.479	0.001

Based on the regression analysis, the estimated regression equation is expressed as follows:

$$Y = 7.271 + 0.452X_1 + 0.363X_2$$

The regression equation indicates that both independent variables have positive regression coefficients. This finding implies that higher levels of intrinsic motivation and better implementation of a democratic leadership style are associated with higher levels of employees' work ethic.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 2. Coefficient of Determination

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.743	0.552	0.540

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.552$) indicates that intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style jointly explain 55.2% of the variance in employees' work ethic. The remaining 44.8% is attributable to other variables not included in the research model, such as organizational culture, job satisfaction, work environment, compensation, and individual characteristics.

Partial Hypothesis Testing (t-test)

The regression analysis reveals that intrinsic motivation has a t-value of 4.950 with a significance level of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, intrinsic motivation has a positive and statistically significant effect on employees' work ethic.

Similarly, democratic leadership style yields a t-value of 3.479 with a significance level of 0.001, indicating a positive and statistically significant influence on employees' work ethic. These findings support the proposed hypotheses that both independent variables individually contribute to improving employees' work ethic.

Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing (F-test)

Table 3. Results of the Simultaneous Hypothesis Test

F-value	Sig.
45.039	0.000

The simultaneous hypothesis test produced an F-value of 45.039 with a significance level of 0.000, indicating that intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style simultaneously exert a positive and statistically significant influence on employees' work ethic at the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency.

Discussion

The Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on Employees' Work Ethic

The findings demonstrate that intrinsic motivation has a positive and statistically significant effect on employees' work ethic. The regression coefficient of 0.452 indicates that intrinsic motivation contributes more substantially to improving employees' work ethic than democratic leadership style. This result suggests that employees who possess stronger internal drives for achievement, recognition, responsibility, and self-development tend to exhibit higher levels of commitment, discipline, and dedication in performing their organizational duties.

These findings are consistent with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which emphasizes that intrinsic motivators—such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for personal growth—are the primary determinants of positive work behavior (Herzberg, 1968). Furthermore, the results support the Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), which argues that employees who are internally motivated are more likely to demonstrate greater engagement, persistence, and commitment toward organizational objectives.

The present findings also corroborate previous empirical studies, including that of Samsidar (2022), which reported that employee motivation significantly improves organizational performance. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on employee performance, the current research extends the literature by demonstrating that intrinsic motivation also plays a significant role in strengthening employees' work ethic within public sector organizations.

The Effect of Democratic Leadership Style on Employees' Work Ethic

The results indicate that democratic leadership style positively and significantly influences employees' work ethic. The regression coefficient of 0.363 suggests that greater implementation of democratic leadership practices leads to stronger work ethic among employees. Leaders who encourage employee participation in decision-making, value employees' opinions, and maintain open communication create a supportive organizational climate that enhances employees' commitment and responsibility.

This finding reinforces the argument that democratic leadership improves employee engagement, trust, and organizational commitment, all of which contribute to positive workplace behavior. Employees who perceive fairness and participation in organizational processes are more likely to develop stronger ownership of their responsibilities and demonstrate higher levels of work ethic.

The results are also consistent with the findings of Samsidar (2022), who reported that democratic leadership positively affects employee performance. The present study further expands this evidence by confirming that democratic leadership contributes not only to performance but also to employees' work ethic within public institutions.

The Combined Effect of Intrinsic Motivation and Democratic Leadership Style on Employees' Work Ethic

The simultaneous regression analysis confirms that intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style jointly have a positive and statistically significant influence on employees' work ethic. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 55.2\%$) indicates that these two variables explain more than half of the observed variation in employees' work ethic.

This finding suggests that employees' work ethic is shaped by both internal psychological factors and external organizational factors. Intrinsic motivation encourages employees to perform their duties because of personal satisfaction and professional responsibility, whereas democratic leadership creates a supportive organizational environment that fosters participation, trust, and commitment. The interaction between these two factors provides a strong foundation for developing positive work behavior within public organizations.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that organizational leaders at the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency should strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation by providing greater opportunities for career development, recognizing outstanding performance, and assigning responsibilities according to employees' competencies. Simultaneously, adopting a participative and democratic leadership approach that emphasizes transparency, open communication, and employee involvement in decision-making can further enhance employees' work ethic and contribute to achieving organizational goals more effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that intrinsic motivation has a positive and statistically significant effect on employees' work ethic at the Civil Service Police Unit (Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja—SATPOL PP) of Central Tapanuli Regency. Employees who possess stronger intrinsic motivation, reflected in their desire for achievement, recognition, responsibility, and self-development, tend to demonstrate a higher level of commitment, discipline, and dedication in performing their duties. Furthermore, democratic leadership style also exerts a positive and significant influence on employees' work ethic. Leadership practices that encourage employee participation in decision-making, promote open communication, and foster collaboration have been shown to strengthen employees' work attitudes and organizational commitment. Simultaneously, intrinsic motivation and democratic leadership style significantly influence employees' work ethic, explaining 55.2% of the observed variance, while the remaining 44.8% is attributable to other factors beyond the scope of this study. These findings suggest that improving employees' work ethic requires a balanced integration of internal motivational factors and participative leadership practices. Therefore, organizational leaders at the Civil Service Police Unit of Central Tapanuli Regency are encouraged to formulate human resource policies that enhance employees' intrinsic motivation through competency development opportunities, performance recognition, and appropriate delegation of responsibilities, while simultaneously implementing democratic leadership practices that emphasize participation, transparency, and open communication to improve public service quality and organizational effectiveness.

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