Work Ethic in the Workplace: The Roles of Job Description, Work Discipline, and Compensation

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Abstract. This research investigates how job descriptions, work discipline, and compensation influence the work ethic of private-sector employees. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, the study sampled 99 private-sector workers across various provinces in Java, Indonesia. Due to the lack of a comprehensive sampling frame for this demographic, a convenience sampling technique was utilized. Primary data gathered via structured questionnaires underwent rigorous validity and reliability screening, alongside classical assumption checks. Subsequently, statistical modeling was executed through multiple linear regression utilizing the IBM SPSS Statistics application. Empirical findings reveal that job descriptions exert a significantly positive impact on work ethic, while work discipline and compensation demonstrate negligible effects. Concurrently, role documentation stood out as the sole predictor making a meaningful contribution to employee work ethic. These outcomes underscore how vital role clarity is to fostering a robust workforce ethos. Accordingly, enterprises should focus on creating, periodically reviewing, and transparently communicating job descriptions, ensuring personnel fully comprehend their obligations, authority, and performance metrics.

Keywords: Compensation; Job Description; Work Discipline; Work Ethic.

1 Introduction

Sustaining organizational competitiveness in the modern workplace requires the implementation of adaptive human resource management strategies. [1]. Within this setting, work ethic represents an essential indicator of workforce effectiveness because it contributes to the quality and productivity of employees' performance [2]. A clear understanding of job roles and responsibilities, as provided through well-defined job descriptions, contributes to lower role ambiguity and encourages positive work ethic among employees. [3]. Conversely, vague or overlapping job responsibilities may give rise to both internal and external conflicts within the organization [4]. This relationship can be explained by the Job Characteristics Theory, which argues that clearly structured job

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characteristics and task clarity strengthen intrinsic motivation and ultimately improve work outcomes [5].

In addition to job descriptions, work discipline and compensation are recognized as important organizational factors that influence employees' work ethic. Work discipline is reflected in the extent to which employees consistently follow the rules, standards, and procedures established by the organization [6]. When supported by effective organizational policies and a strong organizational culture, work discipline contributes to improved employee performance, stronger work ethic, and higher productivity [7]; [8]. while reducing non-compliance with organizational regulations and facilitating efficient organizational operations [9]. Higher levels of employee satisfaction, motivation, and individual productivity can be achieved when compensation systems are viewed as fair and appropriately structured [10]. Stronger intrinsic motivation and greater alignment with organizational strategic objectives are more likely to emerge when employees perceive the compensation system as fair [11]; [12].

The combination of intensive workloads and additional job responsibilities in the private sector can increase employees' vulnerability to psychological stress and burnout, particularly when organizational support is insufficient. At the global level, persistently low employee engagement underscores the importance of strengthening responsibility and discipline as fundamental components of work ethic [13]. In an era of rapid technological advancement, sustaining work behaviors characterized by commitment and discipline is essential to achieving long-term organizational success [14]; [15]. This issue becomes highly pronounced within private-sector enterprises, given that digitalization and rising market competition demand a greater focus on fostering a robust work ethic among personnel [16]; [17], underpinned by effective communication, interpersonal trust, and cooperation among organizational members [18]. Despite growing interest in this topic, empirical research investigating the combined effects of these variables in the private sector is still limited [18].

Evidence from previous empirical research remains inconclusive with respect to these variables. Several studies have demonstrated that clearly defined job descriptions contribute positively and significantly to employees' work ethic. [19]. Conversely, evidence from several studies suggests that the contribution of job descriptions to employee commitment is not statistically significant [20]. Similarly, work discipline has a positive influence on employee productivity, which is the foundation of work ethic [21]. But, has also been found insignificant toward work ethic [22]. Lastly, while fair compensation positively relates to work ethic [23]. other studies indicate it can have a negative and insignificant effect [24].

Empirical evidence regarding the influence of job description, work discipline, and compensation on work ethic remains inconclusive, as most prior studies have focused on limited organizational environments. [22]; [19]; [24]. In addition, studies examining these three variables simultaneously among private-sector employees in Indonesia remain relatively limited. To address the identified research gap, this study examines the relationships between job description, work discipline, compensation, and work ethic among private-sector employees.

Responding to the inconsistent findings reported in previous studies, this study examines the influence of job description, work discipline, and compensation on work

ethic among private-sector employees within a single empirical model. The findings are expected to enrich empirical evidence regarding the relative contribution of organizational factors to employees' work ethic while providing practical implications for organizations in managing job descriptions, work discipline, and compensation systems.

2 Literature Review

From the perspective of positive organizational ethics, work ethic is conceptualized as an individual's capacity to cultivate moral strengths that inspire virtuous behavior beyond mere compliance with formal rules and regulations [25]; [26]. Such moral commitment forms the basis of employees' work habits, organizational loyalty, and overall job performance [27]. Strong organizational commitment is reflected in employees' willingness to regard themselves as essential members of the organization, overlook minor concerns, and sustain their efforts toward achieving long-term organizational goals [28].

Employee duties, responsibilities, authority, and competency requirements are formally documented through a job description derived from job analysis. This role clarification contributes to reducing ambiguity and role conflict, thereby supporting employees' well-being and enhancing work effectiveness [29]. Furthermore, job design characteristics including task significance, cognitive demands, and patterns of coworker interaction play an important role in clarifying role boundaries and minimizing overlaps in job responsibilities [30]; [31].

Work discipline is regarded as a developmental management approach that seeks to improve employees' work behavior in order to achieve organizational objectives rather than to impose personal judgment or punishment [32]. Through corrective measures that emphasize learning, fairness, and respect, disciplinary practices create opportunities for employees to improve while fostering an orderly and mutually respectful work environment [33]; [34]. The effectiveness of disciplinary implementation is shaped by several organizational factors, including leadership, consistency in applying sanctions, fairness in reward systems, the quality of the work environment, and employee training [35]. As an integral component of organizational performance management, work discipline fulfills both preventive and corrective functions by promoting compliance through education and addressing misconduct through appropriate disciplinary actions [36].

Compensation refers to the full range of financial and non-financial rewards provided to employees in recognition of their contributions and sacrifices to the organization [37]. A fair compensation system is considered a key human resource strategy for attracting and retaining high-quality employees while enhancing job satisfaction and strengthening employee engagement [38]; [39]. Organizations may recognize employees' performance and contributions by offering a combination of direct financial compensation, indirect financial benefits, and non-financial forms of recognition. [40]; [41]. Fair and motivating compensation systems are more likely to be achieved when their

design is guided by labor market conditions, the organization's financial capability, employee productivity, and prevailing living costs [42].

2.1 Hypothesis Development

Clearly defined job descriptions establish detailed work standards, clarify employees' authority and responsibilities, and strengthen individual accountability within the organization [29]; [43]; [44]. Empirical evidence further indicates that role and goal clarity enhances employees' focus on their assigned tasks [3], provides practical guidance that improves productivity [45], and contributes positively to the development of work ethic [46]. From the perspective of the Job Characteristics Theory, reducing role ambiguity through well-defined job descriptions fosters a stronger sense of intrinsic responsibility, which in turn encourages more consistent work behavior.

H1: Job description positively influences work ethic.

Work discipline constitutes a fundamental mechanism for ensuring employees' compliance with organizational regulations and maintaining consistent work behavior in support of organizational objectives [47]; [48]; [49]. Empirical findings suggest that the effective implementation of work discipline contributes to stronger work ethic [50]. as key dimensions of work ethic, including responsibility and perseverance, are closely associated with individual discipline [51]. Furthermore, disciplinary practices that are reinforced by fair leadership, effective communication, and constructive performance evaluation are more likely to foster a stable and sustainable work ethic among employees [52]; [53]. These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting a positive and statistically significant relationship between work discipline and work ethic [54]; [55].

H2: Work discipline positively influences work ethic.

An equitable and appropriately designed compensation system serves not only as a reward for employees' contributions but also as an expression of organizational recognition that reinforces employees' commitment to their work [56]; [57]. Empirical evidence indicates that favorable perceptions of compensation significantly enhance employee motivation and work engagement [58]; [59]. Quantitative findings from previous studies further demonstrate that compensation accounts for approximately 26.7% of the variance in work ethic [60]. Consequently, well-formulated compensation policies can stimulate employees' enthusiasm and motivation, thereby promoting optimal performance at both the individual and organizational levels [61]; [62].

H3: Compensation positively influences work ethic.

3 Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among job description, work discipline, compensation, and work ethic among private-sector employees. The target population comprised private-sector employees from five provinces on the island of Java, Indonesia, namely the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Central Java, West Java, East Java, and the Special Capital

Region of Jakarta. Owing to the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame, a convenience sampling technique was adopted. The minimum required sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula for an unknown population with a 95% confidence level and a 10% margin of error, resulting in a requirement of at least 96 respondents. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire, yielding 99 valid responses, all of which were retained for subsequent statistical analyses.

The dataset was examined before hypothesis testing to assess data completeness and overall quality. Missing values were minimal and were handled using mean substitution to preserve the effective sample size. Internal consistency and item validity were evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Corrected Item–Total Correlation, respectively. The assumptions underlying multiple linear regression were then assessed through the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test with the Monte Carlo approach for normality, Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for multicollinearity, and the Glejser test for heteroscedasticity. Once these assumptions were satisfied, the proposed hypotheses were examined using multiple linear regression in IBM SPSS Statistics.

3.1 Measurement

All constructs were measured using previously validated instruments and assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Job Description was measured using a 20-item instrument adapted from a previously validated measurement scale [63]. The instrument captures the extent to which employees perceive clarity in job responsibilities, task identification, delegated authority, accountability, and the correspondence between job requirements and individual competencies.

Work Discipline was measured using a 10-item instrument adapted from a previously validated self-discipline scale [64]. Although the original instrument conceptualizes self-discipline as an individual's capacity for self-regulation, persistence, and resistance to procrastination, its application in the present study was contextualized to the workplace. Accordingly, the instrument was used to assess employees' discipline in performing work-related responsibilities, including readiness to initiate tasks, persistence in completing assigned work, avoidance of unnecessary delays, and consistency in executing planned activities.

Compensation was measured using a six-item instrument adapted from a previously validated scale [65]. The instrument assesses employees' perceptions of compensation practices, encompassing pay transparency, distributive fairness, performance-based rewards, external competitiveness, and the extent to which greater work effort is reflected in total compensation.

Work Ethic was measured using the 28-item Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile–Short Form (MWEP-SF) adapted from a previously validated instrument [66]. The scale comprises seven dimensions: wasted time, self-reliance, morality/ethics, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, and delay of gratification.

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 Demographic

The sample predominantly comprised early-career private-sector employees, with a mean age of 25.82 years (SD = 4.67; range = 18–44 years) and an average organizational tenure of 3.55 years (SD = 3.47; range = less than 1 to 25 years) (Table 1). This profile provides an appropriate empirical context for the present study because employees in the early stages of their careers are typically still developing role clarity, adapting to organizational norms, and forming perceptions of workplace policies and reward systems. Their work ethic may therefore be more responsive to organizational factors such as job description, work discipline, and compensation than that of more established employees. The sample was further characterized by a predominance of permanent employees, female employees, and unmarried respondents, while senior high school graduates and bachelor's degree holders constituted the largest educational groups. Taken together, these demographic characteristics offer a suitable basis for examining the organizational antecedents of work ethic within the Indonesian private-sector workforce.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	39	39.4
	Female	60	60.6
Employment Status	Permanent Employee	59	59.6
	Temporary Employee	40	40.4
Marital Status	Married	31	31.3
	Single	66	66.7
	Widowed/Divorced	2	2.0
Education Level	Junior High School	2	2.0
	Senior High School	52	52.5
	Diploma (D1/D2/D3/D4)	6	6.1
	Bachelor's Degree	34	34.3
	Master's Degree	5	5.1
Age (years)	Mean ± SD (Min–Max)	25.82 ± 4.67 (18–44)	—
Organizational Tenure (years)	Mean ± SD (Min–Max)	3.55 ± 3.47 (0–25)[1]	—

Note: [1] A tenure value of 0 indicates less than one year of employment, recorded as 0 in the dataset.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the study variables. Job description and work ethic exhibited the highest mean scores, whereas work discipline recorded the lowest mean. This relatively lower score should be interpreted with caution because the construct was represented by five retained items following the instrument validation process. Correlation analysis indicated that job description was strongly and positively associated with compensation ($r = 0.869$, $p < 0.01$) and work ethic ($r = 0.854$, $p < 0.01$). Compensation also demonstrated a positive correlation with work ethic ($r = 0.723$, $p < 0.01$). By contrast, work discipline was negatively correlated with the remaining variables. Despite the relatively strong associations among several constructs, none of the correlation coefficients reached a level generally considered indicative of severe multicollinearity, suggesting that the variables were sufficiently distinct to warrant inclusion in the subsequent multiple regression analysis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix (N = 99)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Job Description	89.70	5.75	1			
2. Work Discipline	8.32	3.75	−0.479**	1		
3. Compensation	26.62	2.13	0.869**	−0.457**	1	
4. Work Ethic	89.49	5.06	0.854**	−0.434**	0.723**	1

Note. Variable numbering: 1 = Job Description, 2 = Work Discipline, 3 = Compensation, and 4 = Work Ethic. Pearson correlation coefficients are reported below the diagonal. $p < 0.01$ (**).

4.3 Validity and Reliability

Table 3 presents the results of the validity and reliability assessment for the measurement instruments. The evaluation indicated that all constructs achieved acceptable psychometric properties following the item purification process. The job description and compensation scales retained all original items, whereas five items from the work discipline scale (WD02, WD04, WD06, WD08, and WD10) and eight items from the work ethic scale (WE02, WE06, WE10, WE13, WE14, WE15, WE16, and WE28) were removed because they did not satisfy the predetermined validity criterion. After item refinement, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranged from 0.608 to 0.906, exceeding the minimum threshold for acceptable internal consistency. The retained items also demonstrated satisfactory corrected item–total correlations, indicating that each indicator contributed meaningfully to its respective construct. Accordingly, the final measurement model comprised 20 job description items, five work discipline items, six compensation items, and 20 work ethic items. These results provide sufficient evidence that the measurement instruments were both reliable and appropriate for the subsequent regression analysis.

Table 3. Results of Instrument Validity and Reliability Testing

Variable	Initial	Final	Cronbach's α	Item–Total Correlation	Decision
Job Description	20	20	0.852	0.253–0.573	Valid and Reliable
Work Discipline	10	5	0.906	0.735–0.801	Valid and Reliable
Compensation	6	6	0.608	0.256–0.480	Acceptable Reliability
Work Ethic	28	20	0.780	0.176–0.536	Valid and Reliable

4.4 Assumption Testing

Table 4 presents the results of the regression assumption tests. The normality assessment based on the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test with the Monte Carlo approach yielded a significance value of 0.277, indicating that the residuals did not deviate significantly from a normal distribution. No evidence of multicollinearity was observed, as all independent variables exhibited Tolerance values exceeding 0.10 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values well below the recommended threshold of 10. The Glejser test likewise produced significance values greater than 0.05 for all predictors, suggesting that heteroscedasticity was not present. Taken together, these findings indicate that the underlying assumptions of multiple linear regression were satisfactorily met, providing a sound statistical basis for the subsequent hypothesis testing.

Table 4. Assumption Testing

Assumption	Indicator	Criterion	Result	Decision
Normality	Kolmogorov–Smirnov (Monte Carlo Sig.)	> 0.05	0.277	Passed
Multicollinearity	Tolerance (JD; WD; C)	> 0.10	0.236; 0.764; 0.243	Passed
	VIF (JD; WD; C)	< 10.00	4.231; 1.309; 4.121	Passed
Heteroscedasticity	Glejser test, Sig. (JD; WD; C)	> 0.05	0.429; 0.080; 0.483	Passed

Note: JD = Job Description; WD = Work Discipline; C = Compensation.

4.5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 5 reports the results of the multiple linear regression analysis. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 86.499$, $p < 0.001$) and accounted for 73.2%

of the variance in work ethic ($R^2 = 0.732$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.724$), indicating substantial explanatory power for the proposed model.

The regression coefficients revealed that job description exerted a positive and statistically significant effect on work ethic ($\beta = 0.909$, $t = 8.318$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for H1. By contrast, work discipline ($\beta = -0.036$, $t = -0.598$, $p = 0.551$) and compensation ($\beta = -0.083$, $t = -0.769$, $p = 0.444$) did not exhibit the hypothesized positive effects on work ethic. Consequently, H2 and H3 were not supported. These findings suggest that, after controlling for the other predictors in the model, job description emerged as the only organizational factor that made a unique and statistically significant contribution to explaining employees' work ethic.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Results

H	Predictor	β	t	p	Decision
H1	Job Description	0.909	8.318	<0.001	Supported
H2	Work Discipline	−0.036	−0.598	0.551	Not Supported
H3	Compensation	−0.083	−0.769	0.444	Not Supported

Note: Model statistics: $R^2 = 0.732$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.724$, $F = 86.499$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 99$.

4.6 Discussion

The results indicate that job description has a positive and statistically significant effect on work ethic ($\beta = 0.909$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H1. Clearly defined roles minimize ambiguity, help employees understand organizational expectations, and strengthen task commitment [29], [30]. This finding is consistent with [19], but differs from [20]. Theoretically, role clarity guides behavior, reduces uncertainty, and enhances employee confidence. Managerially, organizations should regularly review and effectively communicate job descriptions as organizational needs evolve.

The analysis indicates that work discipline does not exert the hypothesized positive effect on work ethic ($\beta = -0.036$, $p = 0.551$), leading to the rejection of H2. Compliance with organizational rules alone is insufficient to strengthen work ethic. Discipline maintains operational order [32], whereas work ethic reflects broader internalized values, commitment, and occupational responsibility [25]. This finding is consistent with [22] but differs from [21]. Compliance functions primarily for operational consistency rather than as an intrinsic driver. Managerially, disciplinary policies must be complemented by initiatives that cultivate commitment and a supportive culture.

The analysis indicates that compensation does not have the hypothesized positive effect on work ethic ($\beta = -0.083$, $p = 0.444$), leading to the rejection of H3. While vital for satisfaction and retention, work ethic reflects intrinsic values that cannot be strengthened solely through financial incentives [37]. This aligns with [24] but contrasts with [23]. Fair compensation serves as a foundational condition rather than a distinguishing factor for work ethic. Theoretically, work ethic is more closely tied to intrinsic values than extrinsic reward, managerially, financial compensation should be paired with non-financial recognition and career development.

5 Conclusion

Based on a cross-sectional survey of 99 private-sector employees in Java, this study concludes that job descriptions most influence work ethic by reducing role ambiguity and strengthening accountability. In contrast, work discipline and compensation show no significant direct effects separately. However, the overall model is statistically significant, explaining 73.2% of the variance in work ethic, indicating that these three factors collectively remain vital managerial practices. Supporting the Job Characteristics Theory, these findings emphasize role clarity for fostering commitment, especially for early-career employees. Consequently, organizations should prioritize comprehensive job descriptions over strict discipline or financial compensation.

Despite these findings, the results should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations of the study. The use of convenience sampling, with respondents drawn exclusively from Java, restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. In addition, the work discipline construct employed in this research primarily captures employees' self-regulatory behavior rather than broader organizational compliance. Future research is therefore encouraged to enhance the external validity of the findings by adopting probability sampling techniques, expanding the geographical coverage of the sample, and employing alternative measures of work discipline to capture the construct more comprehensively.

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