

The Role of Work Motivation in Mediating the Influence of Ability on Employee Performance at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office

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Abstract

Employee performance is a strategic factor in determining the effectiveness and quality of service in public sector organizations, including the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office. Optimal performance is not only determined by individual abilities, but also by work motivation that encourages the maximum utilization of those abilities. This study aims to analyze the influence of ability on employee performance with work motivation as a mediating variable. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The research population consisted of all 77 civil servants at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office, all of whom were included in the sample. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS application. The results showed that ability had a positive and significant effect on employee performance and work motivation. In addition, work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and is able to mediate the effect of ability on employee performance. These findings indicate that employee ability will have a greater impact on performance if supported by strong work motivation. Therefore, the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office needs to strengthen employee competency development while increasing work motivation through sustainable human resource development policies to encourage improved employee performance.

Keywords: Ability, Work Motivation, Employee Performance

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Introduction

Employee performance is a strategic element in determining the effectiveness and quality of public sector organizations, including law enforcement agencies such as the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office. As an institution with duties and responsibilities in law enforcement and public service, the attorney's office is required to have employees who are able to work professionally, accountably, and in accordance with established performance standards. Optimal employee performance is reflected in the ability to complete tasks in a timely, accurate, and high-quality manner, thereby supporting the achievement of organizational goals.

However, in practice, various problems are still encountered that indicate that employee performance is not yet fully optimal. Phenomena such as delays in completing administrative tasks, documentation errors, and limited mastery of certain competencies, particularly in the use of work technology, indicate a gap between job demands and employee capabilities. This condition shows that improving employee performance does not only depend on regulations and organizational structure, but is also greatly influenced by the quality of the human resources carrying out the tasks.

One of the main factors that influence employee performance is ability, which includes the knowledge, skills, and competencies that employees possess in carrying out their duties. Employees with adequate ability are theoretically capable of producing better performance because they have the capacity to understand work procedures, solve problems, and adapt to job demands. However, high ability does not always automatically result in optimal performance if it is not accompanied by internal motivation to work to the best of one's ability.

It is in this context that work motivation plays an important role. Work motivation serves as a psychological force that drives individuals to direct, maintain, and increase their work efforts in achieving organizational goals. Employees who have high abilities but low work motivation tend not to utilize their potential optimally. Conversely, strong work motivation can encourage employees to develop and implement their abilities more effectively in completing tasks.

Various empirical studies show that work motivation is closely related to employee performance and has the potential to be a mediator variable in the relationship between individual factors and performance. Within the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework, work motivation is positioned as the main driver that bridges individual abilities with performance outcomes. This means that employees' abilities will have a greater impact on performance if they are supported by strong work motivation.

At the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office, employee work motivation is influenced by various factors, such as role clarity, reward systems, opportunities for selfdevelopment, and organizational support. If work motivation is not managed properly, the abilities possessed by employees have the potential to not be utilized optimally, resulting in suboptimal overall organizational performance.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that work motivation plays a strategic role in mediating the influence of ability on employee performance. Therefore, research on the role of work motivation in mediating the influence of ability on employee performance at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office is important to conduct. This research is expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of public sector human resource management science and serve as a basis for consideration by prosecutor's office leaders in formulating policies for competency development and increasing employee work motivation to encourage more optimal and sustainable performance.

Literature Review Employee Performance Definition of Employee Performance

According to Robbins and Coulter (2021), employee performance is the work results achieved by an individual in carrying out their responsibilities, which are measured based on organizational standards, criteria, and objectives. They emphasize that performance reflects how effectively an individual achieves the expected results in a job.

Factors Affecting Employee Performance

Robbins and Coulter (2021) explain that employee performance is influenced by three main factors: 1) Ability

Ability consists of the knowledge, skills, and innate abilities that employees possess to carry out their duties.

2) Work Motivation

Motivation is an internal or external drive that makes a person want to work optimally.

3) Opportunity to perform

Opportunity refers to organizational support and environmental conditions that enable employees to work optimally.

Employee Performance Indicators

Robbins & Coulter (2021) categorize performance into six main indicators, namely: 1)

Work Quality

The level of accuracy, neatness, precision, and quality of work produced by employees. 2)

Work Quantity

The amount of output produced within a specific period of time.

3) Timeliness

How quickly work is completed according to the set schedule.

4) Cost Effectiveness

The ability of employees to work economically, reduce waste, and maximize resources. 5)

Work Independence

The extent to which employees can work without much supervision from their superiors.

6) Interpersonal Skills

Employees' ability to collaborate, work in teams, and maintain good relationships with coworkers, supervisors, and the community.

Work Motivation Understanding Work Motivation

According to Vo et al., 2022, work motivation is a drive that stems from individual needs (competence, autonomy, social relations) that encourages productive and effective individual work behavior.

Indicators of Work Motivation

Indicators of work motivation according to Vo et al., 2022 are as follows:

1) Competence

Refers to an individual's ability to perform tasks well and feel capable of mastering their work. In this study, competence is measured through "highest level of education achieved" as a proxy.

2) Autonomy

Refers to an individual's freedom and control over how they perform their work, namely the ability to make their own decisions and have choices in their work.

3 Social connectedness

Refers to an individual's need to feel connected, accepted, and have positive relationships with others in the work environment, for example, feeling that they belong to a group, are supported by coworkers, and have a sense of social belonging.

Ability Definition of Ability

San Román-Niaves et al. (2025) define abilities as the development of employees' knowledge and skills through training programs that equip them with the competencies necessary for sustainable practices.

Ability Indicators

The ability indicators from San Román-Niaves et al. (2025) are:

- 1) Employee knowledge about the environment and work procedures.
Green education and green knowledge are core elements in building employee capabilities. The higher the employee's knowledge, the more prepared they are to perform sustainability-oriented work.
- 2) Employee skills in implementing environmentally friendly work practices.
Emphasizing the role of green skills as core competencies developed through training programs
- 3) Employee participation in training and development.
Training & development is a pillar of ability enhancement. San Román-Niaves et al. emphasize that organizations must provide green training that enhances employee capabilities.
- 4) Alignment of competencies with organizational demands
Emphasizing that organizations must have employees with competencies aligned with their sustainability vision. Here, ability includes the alignment of competencies with job requirements.
- 5) Relevant educational or training background
Even before starting work, employees already possess skills from their previous education or training.

Conceptual Framework

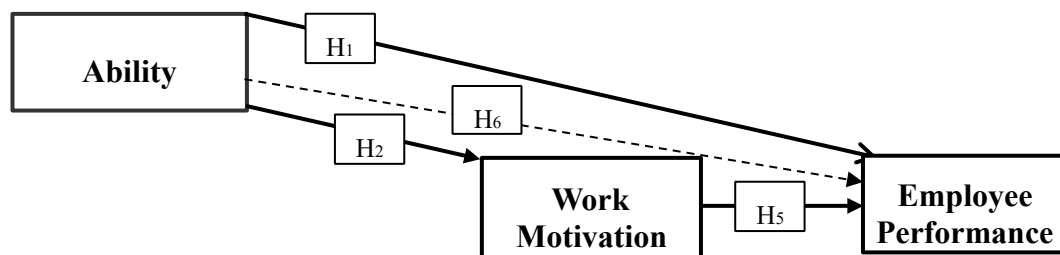


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

- H₁ : Ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office ().
- H₂ Ability has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.
- H₃: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.
- H₄ : Ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.

Research Methodology Type of Research

The type of research used by the researcher is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2010), quantitative research can be defined as a method based on positivism philosophy, used to study a specific population or sample, with sampling techniques generally conducted randomly, data collection using research instruments, and quantitative/statistical data analysis with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses. This type of quantitative research was conducted to create a study aimed at adjusting a study and analyzing the ability and opportunity on employee performance mediated by work motivation at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.

Research Location and Time

The research location was at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office, located on Jalan Pakkat Dolok Sanggul, Humbang Hasundutan. The research period was from April to June 2025.

Population and Sample

Sugiyono (2021) defines population as a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and then conclusions are drawn. The population in this study was all 77 civil servants at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office, and the entire population was used as the sample.

Research Data Sources

The data source used in this study is primary data.

Results Outer Model Analysis

Outer Model Analysis using the PLS Algorithm, resulting in: **Validity Test**

Table 1. Outer Loadings Values

	Ability	Employee Performance	Work Motivation
X1.1	0.853		
X1.2	0.848		
X1.3	0.890		
X1.4	0.797		
X1.5	0.826		
Y.1		0.697	
Y.2		0.884	
Y.3		0.766	
Y.4		0.837	
Y.5		0.854	
Y.6		0.880	
Z.1			0.884
Z.2			0.793
Z.3			0.860

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, which show the results of outer model testing through loading factor/outer loadings values, all indicators in each variable have a loading value

≥ 0.70 . This indicates that each indicator is measured validly and strongly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire have met the validity criteria, as shown in the following figure.

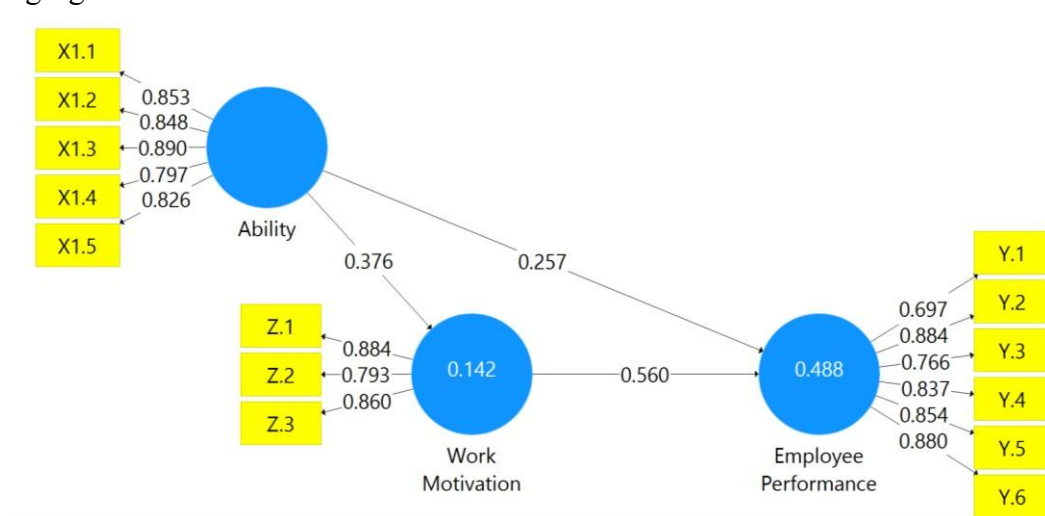


Figure 2. Outer Loading

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Ability	0.898	0.907	0.925	0.711
Employee Performance	0.904	0.918	0.926	0.676
Work Motivation	0.802	0.812	0.883	0.717

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

From Table 2 above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable in measuring their respective constructs. Thus, the research instrument is declared reliable and suitable for use in structural model testing.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

In assessing the model with PLS, we begin by looking at the R-square for each dependent latent variable. The table below shows the Rsquare estimation results using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R-Square
Work Motivation	0.142	0.130
Employee Performance	0.488	0.474

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 3 shows the R square values for both dependent variables. For the work motivation variable, the R square value is 0.142, meaning that the influence of ability is 0.142 or 14.2%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model. The R-squared value for employee performance is 0.488, meaning that ability and work motivation account for 0.488 or 48.8%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model) Hypothesis Testing Direct Influence Between Variables

The direct effect between variables can be seen in the path coefficients. The data analysis results show the direct effect values in the following table.

Table 4. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Ability -> Employee Performance	0.257	2.903	0.004	Accepted
Ability -> Work Motivation	0.376	4.240	0.000	Accepted
Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.560	7,098	0	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

The results in Table 4 show the following direct influence values:

1. Ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a t-statistic value of 2.903 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.004 below 0.05, meaning that ability has a real effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05 . The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Hasanuddin, 2023; Damanik et al., 2025; Wibowo et al., 2026).
2. Ability has a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 4.240 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that ability has a significant effect on work motivation because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that ability has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Basa & Indrawan, 2023).
3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a tstatistic value of 7.098 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation has a real effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies, which found that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Mesra & Rahayu, 2025).

Indirect Effects Between Variables

The indirect effect between variables can be seen in the specific indirect effects value. The data analysis results show the indirect effect value in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effects (Indirect Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Ability -> Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.211	3.919	0.000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 5 shows the indirect effect between variables, namely: ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 3.919 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.014 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between ability and employee performance.

Conclusion

1. Ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.
2. Ability has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.
3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.
4. Ability has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.
5. Opportunity has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office.

Recommendations

1. The lowest-scoring employee performance statement was "I produce work of the quality required by the established standards." Therefore, the recommendation is that the Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office needs to increase opportunities for employees to contribute optimally by providing measurable work autonomy, involving employees in operational decision-making, and providing adequate facilities and work support. This effort will open up space for employees to apply their abilities and competencies to the fullest, so that the performance and quality of the institution's services can improve continuously.
2. The lowest-scoring work motivation statement was "I have the freedom to determine the best way to complete my work." The Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office is advised to increase employee autonomy by providing targeted freedom in determining work completion methods, accompanied by clear work guidelines and proportional supervision. This step can encourage initiative, responsibility, and work effectiveness among employees without neglecting compliance with applicable procedures and regulations.
3. Ability with the lowest score of "My competencies are in line with the demands of the organization." The Humbang Hasundutan District Attorney's Office is advised to align employee competencies with organizational demands through competency mapping, continuous training and development, and employee placement according to expertise and work unit needs. This step is important so that the competencies possessed by employees can be optimally utilized in supporting the achievement of institutional performance.

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