

The Role of Work Motivation In Mediating the Effect of Compensation on Teacher Performance at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan

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Abstract

Teacher performance is an important factor in determining the quality of education, especially in vocational schools that require mastery of academic competencies and work skills. This study aims to analyze the effect of compensation on teacher performance with work motivation as an intervening variable at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The research population consists of all 119 employees of SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan, all of whom were included in the research sample. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS software. The results showed that compensation had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance and a positive and significant effect on work motivation. Work motivation was also found to have a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. In addition, the results of the indirect effect test showed that work motivation was able to significantly mediate the relationship between compensation and teacher performance. The coefficient of determination value showed that compensation was able to explain 14.7% of the variation in work motivation, while compensation and work motivation together were able to explain 46.9% of the variation in teacher performance. The conclusion of this study confirms that improving teacher performance can be achieved through fair and proportional compensation management and strengthening teacher work motivation. These findings are expected to serve as a basis for schools in formulating strategic policies to improve teacher performance and professionalism in vocational education.

Keywords: Compensation, Work Motivation, Teacher Performance

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Introduction

Teacher performance is one of the main factors that determine the quality of education in schools. Teachers with high performance are able to plan, implement, and evaluate the learning process effectively so that the curriculum objectives and student competency achievements can be optimally achieved. In the context of vocational education, such as at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan, the demands on teacher performance are even greater because teachers are not only required to master academic material but also vocational competencies relevant to the needs of the world of work.

Various studies show that factors in the work environment, such as compensation, work climate, and work motivation, play an important role in improving teacher performance. For example, research by Situmorang et al. (2023) shows that compensation and work environment affect teacher performance through work motivation (compensation, work environment, work motivation affect performance). Research by Putri & Fauzi (2024) found that compensation and work environment contribute to work motivation and subsequently impact teacher performance. Additionally, a study by Muazza (2024) states that work climate and motivation have a positive contribution to vocational teacher performance, indicating a close relationship between working conditions and the work results of educators in vocational schools.

Compensation in the context of education includes not only salaries or allowances, but also non-financial rewards that reflect appreciation for teachers' contributions. Fair and adequate compensation is believed to increase teachers' internal motivation and professional commitment. Other studies also show that inadequate compensation can reduce teachers' morale and overall performance. On the other hand, work climate is teachers' perception of working conditions, relationships with colleagues, leadership support, and the work atmosphere that affects psychological comfort and productivity. A conducive work climate has been proven to encourage teachers' motivation and engagement in carrying out their duties.

In many studies, work motivation has been proven to be an intervening variable that can strengthen the relationship between compensation and work climate on performance. Motivation describes teachers' internal and external drives to achieve organizational goals, which then have an impact on productivity and professionalism in carrying out daily tasks. These findings provide an empirical basis that work motivation not only directly affects performance but also acts as a link between working conditions and teachers' work outcomes.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that there is still an empirical need to comprehensively explore how compensation and work climate affect teacher performance directly and indirectly through work motivation at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. This research is important to provide strategic recommendations for schools in improving the quality of teacher performance, especially in vocational schools that have high work competency requirements.

Literature Review Theoretical Framework Teacher Performance Definition of Teacher Performance

According to Muspawati (2020), teacher performance is the work results or work achievements attained by a teacher in carrying out their duties as an educator based on the required standards, procedures, and competencies.

Factors Affecting Teacher Performance

Muspawati (2020) emphasizes that teacher performance is influenced by the following main factors:

- 1) Teacher Competence
Competency is the main basis of performance. Teachers with high pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies will be more effective in teaching.
- 2) Work Motivation

Motivation is the driving force behind teachers' work behavior. Highly motivated teachers are more proactive, diligent, and focused on achieving learning objectives.

- 3) Non-Physical Work Climate
The work climate encompasses teachers' morale, work ethic, discipline, and sincerity in carrying out their duties.
- 4) Compensation
Democratic, communicative, and supportive leadership can boost teachers' morale, encourage creativity, and improve the quality of learning.
- 5) Physical Work Environment
The physical and psychological environment of the school (classrooms, facilities, work climate, relationships between teachers) also determines the effectiveness of teachers' work.
- 6) Training and Professional Development
Performance improves when teachers receive training, workshops, ongoing guidance, and academic supervision.
- 7) Welfare / Compensation
Fair compensation encourages teachers to work more productively and take responsibility for their duties.
- 8) Work Discipline
Muspawi emphasizes that high discipline (punctuality, adherence to rules, consistency in tasks) greatly determines teacher performance.

Teacher Performance Indicators

According to Muspawi (2020), teacher performance indicators cover several aspects:

- 1) Ability to plan learning
The quality of planning is crucial to the direction, effectiveness, and outcomes of learning because it forms the basis for the teaching and learning process.
- 2) Ability to carry out learning activities
High-performing teachers must be able to manage the classroom, deliver material clearly, develop active interactions, use varied methods, and create a conducive learning environment. This indicator also includes the teacher's creativity in overcoming learning obstacles.
- 3) Ability to evaluate learning
Teachers must be able to assess student learning outcomes using appropriate evaluation techniques. Evaluation indicators include the ability to develop assessment instruments, conduct formative and summative assessments, provide feedback, and analyze evaluation results to improve the learning process.
- 4) Responsibility for professional duties
Professional responsibility is not only reflected in technical teaching abilities, but also in the teacher's willingness to comply with rules, complete work programs, and maintain integrity in carrying out tasks.
- 5) Ability to collaborate with school community members
Collaboration is an important part of performance because teachers cannot work individually to improve the quality of education. This cooperation is also reflected through participation in school activities, teacher meetings, and professional development activities.
- 6) Discipline and work ethics
Teachers' performance is also measured by their discipline in terms of attendance, adherence to schedules, and orderliness in carrying out learning activities.
- 7) Ability to develop oneself and professionalism
This professional development strengthens pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies, thereby improving the quality of learning.

Work Motivation Understanding Work Motivation

According to Robbins & Judge (2022), work motivation is a process that explains the intensity, direction, and persistence of individuals in achieving a goal. So, in the context of teacher motivation, it is internal and external encouragement that drives a teacher to carry out their educational tasks, whether in teaching, educating, guiding, or carrying out other professional responsibilities, with enthusiasm, consistency, and a focus on achieving educational goals at school.

Indicators of Work Motivation

According to Robbins & Judge (2022), indicators of work motivation consist of:

- 1) Intensity
How much effort teachers put into preparing and conducting lessons.
- 2) Direction
To what extent do teachers focus on educational goals and character building for students?
- 3) Perseverance
Teachers' consistency in teaching despite facing limitations in facilities or diverse student conditions.

Compensation Definition of Compensation

Dessler (2021) defines compensation as a reward system provided by organizations to employees in the form of allowances and rewards, both financial (such as salaries and bonuses) and non-financial (awards/compensation opportunities). The main purpose of compensation is to motivate employees to improve their performance and productivity within the organization, as well as to retain quality employees.

Compensation Indicators

According to Dessler (2021), compensation indicators are:

- 1) Salary and Wages
Fixed payments given to employees based on their position and responsibilities. Wages are payments given based on hours worked or volume of work.
- 2) Allowances and Other Benefits
Compensation in the form of health insurance for employees and their families. Pension benefits: Long-term benefits provided to employees after retirement. Vacation and leave benefits: Granting employees the right to take paid vacation time.
- 3) Bonuses and Incentives
Additional payments given based on individual/group performance achievements. Incentives: results-based compensation that encourages employees to increase productivity or achieve certain targets.
- 4) Non-Financial Awards
Achievement awards: Awards in the form of certificates, medals, or other recognition for outstanding achievements. Compensation opportunities: Providing opportunities to participate in training and skills development that increase employee value in the long term.
- 5) Work-Life Balance
Providing employees with flexibility in scheduling work hours to accommodate personal needs. Remote work policies. Offering flexibility in choosing work locations, which is increasingly popular in the modern work environment.
- 6) Job Security and Other Benefits
Programs that provide financial protection for employees in certain circumstances. Job security: Protection that ensures employees have long-term job stability.

Conceptual Framework

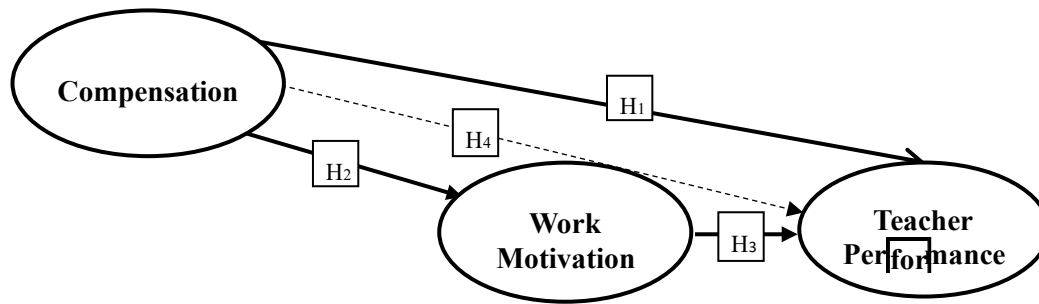


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

H₁ : Compensation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.

H₂ : Compensation has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.

H₃ : Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.

H₄ Compensation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance through work motivation at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.

Research Methodology Type of Research

The type of research used by the researcher is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2022), 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 and data collection using research instruments. This type of quantitative research was conducted to create a study aimed at adjusting a study and analyzing compensation and work climate on teacher performance through work motivation at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.

Research Location and Time

The research location was at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan, located at Jl. Kolam No.3, Kec. Percut Sei Tuan, Deli Serdang. The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, from October to December 2025.

Population and Sample

According to Arikunto (2025), if the subject is less than 100, it is better to take all of them so that the research is a population study. In this study, the population consists of all employees at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan, comprising 119 civil servants (PNS), and the entire population will be 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

	Compensation	Teacher Performance	Work Motivation
X1.1	0.797		

X1.2	0.869		
X1.3	0.827		
X1.4	0.817		
X1.5	0.805		
X1.6	0.865		
Y.1		0.683	
Y.2		0.851	
Y.3		0.663	
Y.4		0.835	
Y.5		0.824	
Y.6		0.885	
Y.7		0.794	
Z.1			0.824
Z.2			0.780
Z.3			0.870

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 ≥ 0.60 . 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.

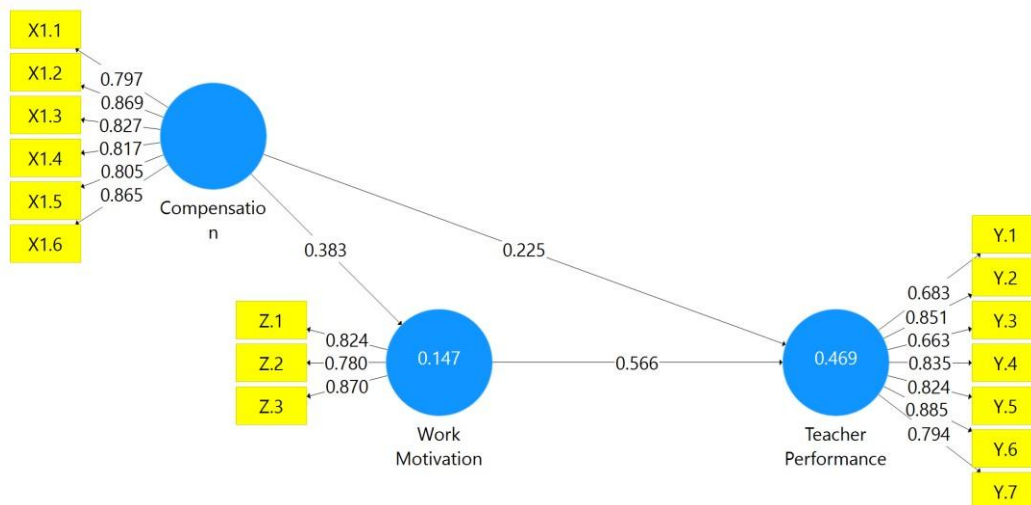


Figure 2. Outer Loading

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Compensation	0.910	0.914	0.930	0.690
Work Motivation	0.767	0.787	0.865	0.681
Teacher Performance	0.901	0.909	0.922	0.631

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	0.147	0.140
Teacher Performance	0.469	0.459

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 0.147, meaning that the influence of compensation is 0.147 or 46.9%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model. The R-square value for teacher performance is 0.469, meaning that compensation and work motivation account for 0.469 or 46.9%, 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
Compensation -> Teacher Performance	0.225	2.702	0.007	Accepted
Compensation -> Work Motivation	0.383	5.092	0.000	Accepted
Work Motivation -> Teacher Performance	0.566	7.909	0	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

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

1. Compensation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance with a t-statistic value of 2.702 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.007 below 0.05, meaning that compensation has a real effect on teacher performance because the significance value is above 0.05 (). The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that compensation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance (Rahayu & Mesra, 2025).
2. Compensation has a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 5.092 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that compensation 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 compensation has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Sihombing et al., 2025).

3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance with a t-statistic value of 7.909 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation has a real effect on performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies, namely that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance (Azmi & Pratama, 2024; Ferine & Surya, 2025).

Indirect Influence 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
Compensation -> Work Motivation -> Teacher Performance	0.217	4.044	0.000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 5 shows the indirect effect between variables, namely: compensation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 4.044 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between compensation and teacher performance.

Conclusion

1. Compensation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.
2. Compensation has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.
3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.
4. Compensation has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance through work motivation at SMK Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan.

Recommendations

1. Teacher performance with the lowest score was "I prepare lesson plans before teaching." Therefore, the recommendation is to increase supervision and guidance for educators in preparing lesson plans so that each teaching activity is carried out in a structured, effective manner and in accordance with learning objectives.
2. Work motivation with the lowest score was "My work efforts are always directed towards achieving the school's educational goals." In this case, SMK Negeri 1 Stabat needs to develop a mentoring and support program for teachers (e.g., mentoring, forums for sharing difficulties, and access to counseling) so that when teachers encounter various obstacles, they still feel supported and motivated to carry out their teaching duties well.
3. Compensation with the lowest score statement: "The salary I receive is commensurate with my workload and responsibilities." The school is advised to conduct periodic evaluations of the payroll system to ensure that it remains fair and proportional to the workload and responsibilities, thereby increasing the motivation and performance of teaching and education personnel.

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