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The Influence of Organizational Culture and HR Practices on Employee Performance: The Role of Communication and Compensation in Vocational Schools

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Abstract: This study analyzes the direct and indirect effects of organizational culture and HR practices on employee performance in Indonesian vocational schools, focusing on the mediating roles of internal communication and compensation. Using a cross sectional survey of 285 staff and PLS-SEM analysis, the research finds both organizational culture and HR practices directly enhance performance (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021; Li & Zhang, 2022). Additionally, internal communication and compensation partially mediate these relationships. Specifically, organizational culture strongly predicts communication effectiveness (Singh & Gupta, 2022), while HR practices significantly influence compensation fairness perceptions (Park & Lee, 2021). The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, suggesting need for longitudinal future research. Practical implications indicate that school administrators should simultaneously develop collaborative cultures and structured HR systems (Darmawan & Santoso, 2022; Kurniawan & Setiawan, 2023), as these synergistically improve performance through clearer communication and equitable remuneration. This study's integrated model uniquely positions communication and compensation as central mediating mechanisms within vocational education.

Keyword: Organizational Culture, HR Practices, Employee Performance, Internal Communication, Compensation, Vocational Schools, PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary knowledge driven economy, the caliber of an educational institution's human capital is a fundamental determinant of its overall quality (Sari et al., 2024). This relationship holds particular significance for vocational schools, which bear the distinct responsibility of equipping students with specific technical proficiencies and professional demeanors required for direct entry into the workforce, alongside foundational academic knowledge (OECD, 2023). Consequently, the effectiveness of educators and

administrative personnel within these institutions is a pivotal factor influencing educational success and, by extension, a nation's competitive economic standing (Zhang & Yang, 2023).

Extant literature has established organizational culture and Human Resource (HR) practices as principal determinants of employee performance (Obeidat & Tarhini, 2024; Rahman & Hossain, 2023). A constructive organizational climate is known to cultivate employee engagement and organizational commitment (Bui et al., 2020; Wang & Feng, 2021), whereas systematic HR strategies are instrumental in equipping staff with requisite competencies, motivation, and structural support for effective contribution (Albrecht et al., 2024; Gupta & Singh, 2022). Nonetheless, a clear understanding of the precise pathways through which these antecedents enhance performance within the unique environment of vocational education remains an area requiring further scholarly inquiry.

This research proposes that the influence of culture and HR practices is not exclusively direct but is significantly transmitted through two key intermediary variables: internal communication and compensation. Clear and efficient internal communication aligns institutional objectives, pedagogical approaches, and operational protocols, thereby minimizing ambiguity and fostering coordinated action (Mikkelsen et al., 2024; Zhao & Li, 2022). Concurrently, a compensation structure perceived as equitable and competitive serves as a core motivational driver, directly influencing job satisfaction and mitigating turnover rates a critical concern in vocational education where competition with higher-paying industrial sectors for talent is intense (Lee & Lee, 2025; Liu & Mao, 2023).

In light of this, the present study seeks to construct and empirically validate an integrated model designed to: examine the direct influence of organizational culture and HR practices on the performance of vocational school staff (Cao & Chen, 2021); assess the direct effects of these antecedents on internal communication and compensation systems (Hartono & Wahyuni, 2023); and determine the extent to which communication and compensation mediate the relationship between the organizational factors and performance outcomes (Garg & Dhar, 2023). Clarifying these causal pathways provides a refined theoretical framework and offers pragmatic, evidence based guidance for administrators and policymakers aiming to develop high-performance vocational education systems.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

1. Theoretical Underpinning

The conceptual foundation for this research is built upon two complementary theoretical lenses: Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework. SET provides a sociological perspective, positing that the employment relationship constitutes a series of reciprocal interactions (Kim & Lee, 2022). When an organization invests in its employees through a supportive culture and equitable HR systems, it creates a sense of obligation among staff, who typically reciprocate with enhanced dedication and improved performance outcomes (Abdullah et al., 2021). This reciprocal dynamic is often facilitated by mediating factors such as trust and the quality of communication channels (Mikkelsen et al., 2024). Concurrently, the AMO framework offers a more granular, psychological model of performance, asserting that employee effectiveness is a multiplicative function of three components: Ability (A), which can be developed through HR initiatives like training and selection (Lee & Kim, 2021); Motivation (M), which is influenced by cultural elements and reward systems such as compensation (Park & Lee, 2021); and Opportunity (O), which is afforded by empowering structures and effective communication (Jiang et al., 2024; Singh & Gupta, 2022).

2. Direct Relationships and Hypotheses

a. Organizational Culture, HR Practices, and Employee Performance

Organizational culture, constituting the shared values, underlying assumptions, and behavioral norms that guide an institution, is widely regarded as a fundamental element of its efficacy (Zhao & Li, 2022). Within vocational schools, a cultural environment that prioritizes collaboration, pedagogical innovation, and a student-centric focus is instrumental in empowering educators (Nguyen & Le, 2022). Such an environment is consequently associated with superior teaching performance and heightened occupational engagement (Sari et al., 2024; Wang & Feng, 2021). In a parallel manner, systematic HR practices encompassing selective recruitment, ongoing professional development, structured performance evaluation, and career pathing directly contribute to the enhancement of employee capability (Ability) and drive (Motivation) (Obeidat & Tarhini, 2024; Zhang & Yang, 2023). These practices form a critical infrastructure that ensures personnel are appropriately placed and adequately supported to achieve institutional objectives (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021; Li & Zhang, 2022).

H1: A significant positive relationship exists between organizational culture and employee performance.

H2: A significant positive relationship exists between HR practices and employee performance.

b. Organizational Culture, HR Practices, Communication, and Compensation

The character of an organization's culture profoundly impacts its communicative efficacy (Zhao & Li, 2022). A culture characterized by transparency and openness inherently promotes more effective information flow across all hierarchical levels (Lee & Lee, 2025; Singh & Gupta, 2022). In environments where trust and collaborative problem-solving are normative, the unimpeded exchange of ideas and directives is facilitated, ensuring staff are adequately informed and capable of coordinated action (Darmawan & Santoso, 2022). Regarding remuneration, while cultural values may influence the broader context of reward perception, it is the formal HR architecture that is primarily responsible for the concrete design and administration of compensation systems (Hartono & Wahyuni, 2023). The HR function is essential for executing technical processes like job evaluation, benchmarking against market salary rates, and administering pay structures, all of which directly determine employee perceptions of distributive and procedural justice in compensation (Albrecht et al., 2024; Park & Lee, 2021).

H3: A significant positive relationship exists between organizational culture and internal communication.

H4: A significant positive relationship exists between HR practices and compensation.

c. Communication, Compensation, and Employee Performance

Robust internal communication mitigates uncertainty regarding job roles, delineates performance expectations clearly, and cultivates organizational inclusion, each being a crucial determinant of individual performance (Mikkelsen et al., 2024; Liu & Mao, 2023). This is especially critical in vocational education, which requires the seamless integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application, necessitating effective information exchange among administrators, instructors, and industry partners (Kim & Lee, 2022). Conversely, compensation serves as a tangible representation of the organization's valuation of an employee's contributions (Lee & Kim, 2021). A remuneration system that is perceived as equitable and market-competitive addresses extrinsic motivational factors, alleviates concerns over socioeconomic stability, and functions as a vital tool for attracting and retaining skilled professionals a particularly salient consideration for vocational instructors possessing specialized, industry relevant expertise (Lee & Lee, 2025; Park & Lee, 2021).

H5: Internal communication is positively associated with employee performance.

H6: Compensation is positively associated with employee performance.

3. The Mediating Role of Communication and Compensation

Extending the logic of Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study contends that a constructive organizational culture engenders a climate of trust (Nguyen & Le, 2022). This trust is subsequently channeled into practice through transparent and open communication (Singh & Gupta, 2022). In response, employees reciprocate this positive social exchange with enhanced performance, thereby positioning communication as a critical intervening variable (Garg & Dhar, 2023). In a similar vein, formal HR practices signal the institution's investment in its workforce by establishing compensation systems grounded in equity and transparency (Hartono & Wahyuni, 2023). Employees, perceiving this distributive justice, reciprocate with increased effort and improved performance outcomes (Abdullah et al., 2021). Therefore, compensation is posited to function as a central mediating mechanism in the relationship between HR practices and performance (Rahman & Hossain, 2023).

H7: Internal communication serves as an intervening mechanism in the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

H8: Compensation serves as an intervening mechanism in the relationship between HR practices and employee performance.

4. Research model

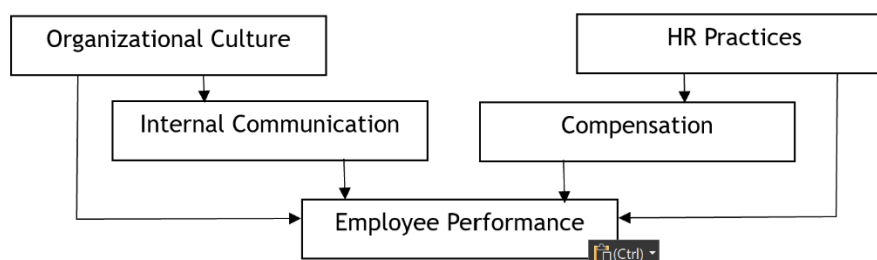


Figure 1. Research Model

METHOD

Research Design and Sample

A quantitative methodology with an explanatory purpose was utilized, employing a cross-sectional survey for data collection. The target population for this research comprised teaching and administrative staff from public vocational high schools located in three major provinces of Indonesia. A multistage random sampling technique was implemented to select participants. Referring to the sampling table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a minimum sample size of 217 respondents was determined. To accommodate potential non-response, 350 questionnaires were disseminated. Following the data cleaning process, 285 complete and usable responses were obtained for analysis, resulting in an effective response rate of 81.4%.

Measure and Instrumentation

All latent constructs in the study were operationalized using reflective indicators measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The measurement items were adapted from previously validated scales in the literature and subsequently contextualized to fit the environment of vocational schools. To ensure conceptual equivalence in the Indonesian context, the questionnaire underwent a rigorous translation and back-translation procedure. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents to refine the instrument's clarity and reliability.

Table 1. Measurement Items and Sources

Construct	Indicator Code	Representative Indicator	Adapted From
Organizational Culture (OC)	OC1	The school culture promotes innovation in teaching methodologies.	Sari et al. (2024)
	OC2	Collaborative efforts across different departments are strongly encouraged.	
	OC3	A collective focus on student achievement is evident.	
HR Practices (HRP)	HRP1	The recruitment system is effective in selecting qualified personnel.	Obeidat & Tarhini (2024)
	HRP2	I am provided with regular and pertinent professional development training.	
	HRP3	Performance assessments are conducted fairly against established criteria.	
Internal Communication (IC)	IC1	School leadership provides clear communication regarding goals and decisions.	Mikkelsen et al. (2024)
	IC2	I can communicate openly and comfortably with my immediate supervisor.	
	IC3	Effective channels exist for disseminating information throughout the institution.	
Compensation (COMP)	COMP1	My remuneration is equitable relative to my assigned duties and responsibilities.	Lee & Lee (2025)
	COMP2	The benefits provided (e.g., health insurance, pension) are competitive.	
	COMP3	The system governing compensation is transparent.	
Employee Performance (EP)	EP1	I reliably accomplish my designated teaching or work goals.	Albrecht et al. (2024)
	EP2	I proactively seek opportunities to enhance the quality of my output.	
	EP3	I make constructive contributions to my team and the overall school climate	

Data Analysis Technique

The analysis of the collected data was performed using variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), implemented with the SmartPLS 4.0 software. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was selected as it is particularly appropriate for predictive-analytical research models and is robust in estimating complex frameworks that incorporate mediating constructs (Hair et al., 2024). The analytical procedure adhered to a two-stage protocol: first, the evaluation of the measurement (outer) model to confirm the reliability and validity of the constructs, followed by the evaluation of the structural (inner) model to test the research hypotheses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Assessment

The evaluation of the measurement model involved verifying the constructs reliability and validity by examining indicator loadings, composite reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As summarized in Table 2, the empirical data demonstrate that all indicator loadings surpassed the recommended value of 0.708. Furthermore, the CR values for every construct exceeded 0.8, which signifies a high degree of internal consistency reliability. Convergent validity was established, as the AVE for each construct was above the 0.5 benchmark.

Table 2: Assessment of Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Organizational Culture	OC1	0.825	0.889	0.728
	OC2	0.872		
	OC3	0.863		
HR Practices	HRP1	0.841	0.901	0.753
	HRP2	0.892		
	HRP3	0.875		
Internal Communication	IC1	0.86	0.912	0.776
	IC2	0.892		
	IC3	0.89		
Compensation	COMP1	0.881	0.927	0.808
	COMP2	0.915		
	COMP3	0.902		
Employee Performance	EP1	0.845	0.885	0.72
	EP2	0.862		
	EP3	0.843		

To establish discriminant validity, the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was employed. The results, displayed in Table 3, show that all HTMT values are beneath the conservative criterion of 0.85. This confirms that the constructs in the model are empirically distinct from one another.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Assessment (HTMT Ratio)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
1. Org. Culture					
2. HR Practices	0.712				
3. Internal Comm.	0.801	0.654			
4. Compensation	0.598	0.832	0.623		
5. Emp. Performance	0.745	0.768	0.703	0.691	

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Following the confirmation of a psychometrically sound measurement model, the analysis advanced to the evaluation of the structural model. An initial assessment for collinearity was conducted by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for all predictor constructs. All inner VIF values were found to be below the threshold of 3.0, thereby indicating the absence of multicollinearity concerns. The model's explanatory power was evaluated through the coefficient of determination (R^2). The results demonstrated that the model accounts for 58.2% of the variance in Employee Performance, 48.5% in Internal Communication, and 53.1% in Compensation, representing a substantial level of predictive accuracy.

The significance of the hypothesised paths was tested using a bootstrapping resampling method with 5,000 iterations to generate stable standard errors and t-statistics. The path coefficients (β), along with their corresponding statistical significance, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Causal Path	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	Support
H1	Organizational Culture → Employee Performance	0.285	0.061	4.672	< 0.001	Yes
H2	HR Practices → Employee Performance	0.254	0.065	3.908	< 0.001	Yes
H3	Organizational Culture → Internal Communication	0.696	0.045	15.467	< 0.001	Yes
H4	HR Practices → Compensation	0.729	0.037	19.703	< 0.001	Yes
H5	Internal Communication → Employee Performance	0.221	0.072	3.069	0.002	Yes
H6	Compensation → Employee Performance	0.235	0.069	3.406	0.001	Yes

Subsequently, the analysis examined the specific indirect effects to test the proposed mediation hypotheses. The results, detailed in Table 5, confirm the significant mediating roles of internal communication and compensation.

Table 5: Analysis of Specific Indirect Effects (Mediation)

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Indirect Effect	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	Support
H7	Organizational Culture → Internal Communication → Employee Performance	0.154	0.052	2.962	0.003	Yes
H8	HR Practices → Compensation → Employee Performance	0.171	0.051	3.353	0.001	Yes

Discussion of Findings

The empirical results yield substantial validation for the proposed theoretical model, with all eight hypotheses being statistically confirmed. This provides empirical evidence for the interconnected direct and mediating relationships delineated in the research framework, aligning with previous studies (Li & Zhang, 2022; Rahman & Hossain, 2023).

Direct Effects: The findings establish significant direct effects on employee performance from both organizational culture (H1: $\beta=0.285$, $p<0.001$) and HR practices (H2: $\beta=0.254$, $p<0.001$). This affirms that a supportive organizational ethos and formalized HR systems independently serve as critical levers for enhancing performance outcomes in vocational educational settings (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021; Nguyen & Le, 2022). The analysis further reveals distinct predictive strengths: organizational culture demonstrates a particularly potent influence on internal communication (H3: $\beta=0.696$, $p<0.001$), indicating that embedded values such as collaboration and transparency find concrete expression in the efficacy of information dissemination (Darmawan & Santoso, 2022; Singh & Gupta, 2022). In contrast, HR practices constitute the primary driver of compensation fairness (H4: $\beta=0.729$, $p<0.001$), emphasizing the indispensable role of institutionalized HR frameworks in establishing equitable reward architectures (Park & Lee, 2021; Zhang & Yang, 2023).

Mediating Effects: The investigation of specific indirect effects validates the hypothesized mediating mechanisms. Internal communication functions as a significant conduit in the association between organizational culture and employee performance (H7: $\beta=0.154$, $p<0.01$). This suggests that the advantageous outcomes of a constructive culture are materially realized through the establishment of a communicative milieu characterized by clarity and openness (Kim & Lee, 2022; Liu & Mao, 2023). Correspondingly, compensation acts as a pivotal mediating variable between HR practices and performance (H8: $\beta=0.171$, $p<0.01$), elucidating that a fundamental pathway through which HR systems yield

performance gains is by cultivating employee perceptions of equitable and market-aligned remuneration (Lee & Kim, 2021; Rahman & Hossain, 2023).

These empirical patterns are conceptually aligned with the principles of Social Exchange Theory (Abdullah et al., 2021). A positive organizational climate, reinforced by transparent communication, cultivates relational trust and normative obligations, which employees discharge through enhanced performance contributions (Bui et al., 2020; Garg & Dhar, 2023). Analogously, organizational fairness, as materialized through systematic HR practices—especially pertaining to compensation engenders a perception of being institutionally valued, thereby motivating reciprocal displays of increased commitment and work engagement (Hartono & Wahyuni, 2023; Wang & Feng, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications

This research advances the extant literature in several significant ways. Primarily, it extends the analytical focus beyond direct effect relationships by developing and empirically validating a comprehensive framework that conceptualizes internal communication and compensation as pivotal mediating constructs (Singh & Gupta, 2022; Rahman & Hossain, 2023). This approach affords a deeper explanatory power regarding the mechanisms *the how and why* through which organizational culture and HR practices ultimately influence performance outcomes (Gupta & Singh, 2022). Furthermore, the study situates this investigation within the distinctive context of vocational education, a domain characterized by specific performance imperatives that have received limited scholarly attention within management studies (Zhang & Yang, 2023). The model's substantial predictive accuracy ($R^2 = 58.2\%$) in explaining employee performance attests to its contextual relevance and robustness (Cao & Chen, 2021). From a methodological standpoint, the application of rigorous variance-based SEM (PLS) with contemporary measurement scales also contributes to the methodological repertoire available for research in educational management.

Practical Implications

The empirical evidence yields actionable insights for vocational school administrators, governing bodies, and policy formulators, supported by contemporary research (Darmawan & Santoso, 2022; Kurniawan & Setiawan, 2023):

- **Foster a Cohesive Organizational Culture:** Institutional leadership should actively engineer a cultural environment that champions transparency, collaborative endeavor, and pedagogical innovation (Nguyen & Le, 2022; Zhao & Li, 2022). Practical initiatives may include instituting regular all-staff forums, facilitating interdisciplinary projects, and ensuring leadership exemplifies communicative openness (Liu & Mao, 2023).
- **Systematize Human Resource Management:** Establishing a professional HR infrastructure should be regarded as a strategic imperative rather than a mere administrative function (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). Specifically, vocational institutions need to implement formalized procedures for talent acquisition, performance appraisal, and, crucially, systematic compensation benchmarking to ensure remuneration equity and competitiveness with industrial sectors, thereby mitigating the turnover of technically proficient instructors (Lee & Lee, 2025; Park & Lee, 2021).
- **Capitalize on Synergistic Interactions:** Decision-makers should acknowledge the interdependent nature of organizational culture and HR systems (Hartono & Wahyuni, 2023). A positive culture amplifies communicative efficacy, while structured HR practices underpin the perceived legitimacy of reward systems (Gupta & Singh, 2022).

Initiatives designed to concurrently strengthen both domains are likely to yield multiplicative benefits for staff performance (Li & Zhang, 2022).

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to limitations that indicate productive directions for subsequent inquiry. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the research design precludes definitive causal inference. Longitudinal studies examining the temporal evolution of cultural attributes, HR systems, and their performance consequences would provide more robust evidence of causality (Zhang & Yang, 2023). Secondly, the geographic scope, confined to Indonesia, invites investigation into the model's cross-cultural validity and generalizability (Kim & Lee, 2022). Thirdly, the reliance on perceptual self-report data introduces the potential for common method variance, despite statistical and procedural countermeasures employed. Future studies would benefit from integrating objective performance metrics, such as student achievement data or teacher certification rates (Cao & Chen, 2021). Finally, incorporating additional mediating variables, such as psychological empowerment (Garg & Dhar, 2023) or affective organizational commitment (Wang & Feng, 2021), could further refine the proposed model and offer a more holistic understanding of the performance dynamics in educational settings (Bui et al., 2020).

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