The influence of incentives, work culture, and supervision on the work ethics of agricultural extension agents in Maluku Utara Province

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to find a model of the direct or indirect influence of variables such as incentive, work culture, and supervision of agricultural extension agent’s work ethics in the framework of food self-reliance in Maluku Utara Province, Indonesia. The research model will analyze the power of the role of each variable against the improvement of the agricultural extension agent’s work ethics in the Maluku Utara Province, Indonesia. This research uses quantitative methods with a survey approach. This research population is an agricultural extension agent in the Maluku Utara Province. The sample in this study was a total of 196 agricultural extension agents spread across 8 counties and 2 cities in the Maluku Utara Province. The data obtained from the field is then processed through various tests required so that the next stage can perform data analysis using the technique of structural equation modeling (SEM) using the software LISREL version 8.80. The results of the research showed that all the variables that were observed in the research can be stated to have a strong role in improving the agricultural extension agent’s work ethics for food independence in the Maluku Utara Province, Indonesia.

Introduction

Maluku Utara Province has a group of 395 islands, and 83%, or about 331 islands, are uninhabited (BPS, 2022). The islands have abundant natural resource potential, but most of the potential has not been optimally exploited for the prosperity of the people. While basic food needs such as rice, chicken, eggs, onions, cabbage, vegetables, and tomatoes are still imported from other regions such as South Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, and East Java, (Arifuddin, 2017). At present, the consumption of food commodities in Maluku Utara Province is heavily dependent on the regions of Manado and Surabaya because local food production is very small, which hinders regional economic growth, causes regional inflation, and reduces the absorption of jobs.

It is not optimal to empower the food sector in Maluku Utara due to the fact that the agricultural extension agents work ethics is not maximum, so it causes low labor culture as well as non-competitive farmers in their efforts. This is also due to the minimum supervision of the authorities of agriculture or the continuous local government. (Mutiaraelsa, 2015). As a result, there is often a shortage of stocks of basic necessities, prices tend to rise, and there is unbalanced business competition. With agricultural land available, but not directly compared to the level of production of agricultural food products produced by farmers, Therefore, the role of the agricultural vessel is very important for food sustainability.

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There are still many areas in the Maluku Utara Province where the vast harvest is not cultivated and has a small productivity. (BPS, 2022). This is the reason or basis for why agriculture is necessary in order to increase the scale of harvest, productivity, and agricultural production. Therefore, it is very necessary for the agricultural extension agents’ work ethics of the Maluku Utara to obtain satisfactory agricultural outcomes. (Imune, 2021). The work ethics is very necessary for the field farming team because, as an indicator of the success or failure of the settlement system carried out in the Maluku Utara Province, the results will be useful for farmers in the province.

The work ethics (Hidayat & Tjahjono, 2015) of agricultural extension agents becomes diminished or decreased due to the lack of strict monitoring from the district or city government agencies. The farmer now has no discipline and a fixed schedule of work, which greatly affects the activity and outcomes of his work. In spite of the fact that it is the end of the leading spire in the field of agriculture, the plantation sector, the food sector, and the livestock sector (Saiful, 2009). Nowadays, in the field, many farmers do not know how to effectively increase the productivity of the land and their agricultural output, so if these conditions and culture of work are left continuously, it will affect the work of agricultural products and not food independence in the Maluku Utara Province (Imune, 2021).

The operating costs of each facility are not sufficient for travel costs due to the scope of the area of work that is quite distant, plus the cost of living is not cheap, the difficulty of communication within the work area of the facility, the weather factors that are not supportive when conducting the installation, and the costs of the means of transport to carry out the installation (Deddy, 2022). So there are dominant factors that affect the work ethics: supervision (Annas, 2019), work culture, and incentives. (Biyanti, 2010).

Seeing the application of labor culture to farmers today is still very far from reality. The working hours of both entering the office and returning to the office are also greatly diminished. For farmers, the supervisory factor and culture of work in the agricultural sector are very necessary and determine their success. As a result of the rare supervision of the farmers, there is no routine of meetings at the farmer’s level for socialization of knowledge, which is not scheduled periodically as part of motivation or the exchange of opinions and ideas at the farmer's level. So from the background above, this research problem can be formulated: how to strengthen incentives, culture of work, and supervision in improving agricultural extension agents’ work ethics in the Maluku Utara Province, Indonesia? There has been a lot of research done by several previous researchers regarding incentives, work culture, supervision, and work ethics.

The supervisory approach has evolved in parallel with management theory from the past to the present. (Saiful, 2009). The surveillance approach has recently changed from looking for shortcomings to improvements (Glickman & Pajak, 2013). Work-oriented supervision, determining goals achieved, helping to solve problems, providing social and material support, and providing feedback on employee performance will help reduce role confusion and uncertainty experienced by employees so that job satisfaction will increase. Therefore, the research question is: how is the agricultural extension agents’ work ethics maintained so that it remains optimal in increasing the role of farmers for food security in North Maluku Province?

**Literature Review**

The theoretical revolution associated with the introduction of a general (or open) systems perspective into the study of organizations that began in the late 1950s (see Scott and Davis 2007: chapter 4) has continued. Broadly speaking, organizations are found to be influenced by the complexity and turbulence of the environment and state of technology (contingency theory), by power processes (resource dependence), by relational systems within and between organizations (network theory), by resource competition among similar organizations (population ecology), and by cultural and symbolic systems (institutional theory) (Scott, 2013).

According to Scott (2013), over the past half-century, organizations seeking to internalize and integrate various activities involving the acquisition, production, distribution, and sale of certain types of services and products have been parsed and dismantled, giving way to supply chains and distributed networks. (Harrison, 1994; Miles and Snow, 1992). Downsizing and outsourcing are contemporary strategies being pursued by many organizations that choose to organize their systems and limit their attention to a few "specialized competencies".

Supervision is the management of expertise through attention to performance improvement and professional development, which distinguishes it from self-service and superiors. Work-oriented supervision, which determines the goals to be achieved, helps solve problems, provides social and material support, and provides feedback on employee performance, will help reduce the role confusion and suffering experienced by employees. The element of supervision involves giving instructions to employees. If they carry out their supervisory work effectively, it will have a positive impact on efforts to increase job satisfaction. A person's work ethic is formed over a long period of time and is influenced by many factors. Work ethic is an attitude towards work, work habits, and a perspective on various problems at work, so the factors that fulfill the work ethic are the same as the influencing factors. Proper supervision can improve performance (Hoque et al., 2020).

Work ethic is a cultural aspect, reflecting how work and money are morally organized in economic life. In the aforementioned social groups with pious and destructive dispositions, Erden (2019) found a positive effect on job performance. The findings show a positive relationship between organizational culture and work performance (Saad & Abbas, 2018). Paying performance incentives has the potential to increase performance levels, which results in a good work ethic when doing work (Bosch et al., 2013). A significant increase in performance was observed for six, resulting in a good quality of treatment (Benzer et al., 2014).
Research and Methodology

This research uses quantitative methods using survey approaches. The population of this research is a farming plant that exists in 8 districts and 2 cities in the Maluku Utara Province and has a total of 383 people. The sampling technique in this study uses the proportional stratified random sampling technique with the aim of facilitating the application of the test results to the research population. (Sedgwick, 2011). The sample collection used the Slovin formula with a precision value of 5%, thus obtaining a total sample of 196 respondents from agricultural vessels.

Analysis of data by structural equation modeling (SEM) The software used to process the relationship patterns between variables is LISREL (Linear Structural Relationships). In this study, there are four variables to be studied: supervision variables, work culture, incentives, and work ethics. Two ways to represent construction are with latent variables and composite processes. (Lam & Maguire, 2012).

Findings and Discussions

Findings

To describe data from the variables, Work Ethics (EK), Supervision (SV), Work Culture (BK), and Incentive (IN), we used statistical methods, and the characteristics of respondents in this study are classified according to gender, age, recent education, length of work, position, and area of work. The majority of respondents in the study were aged 38–51 years, with 57.1% at that age being the ideal age for farmers to give advice to farmers in the Maluku Utara region that is mostly island. Most of them were male (62.8%), which corresponds to the characteristics of work in the agricultural field. Strata 1, or bachelor’s level, of 57.7%, more qualifications are needed for those who already have knowledge in agriculture. The length of work for the plant is in the range of 11–20 years. 48% work as agricultural plants; this has a good impact on agriculture because the plant has a fairly long work history. Some respondents have a young-level qualification or functional level of 18.4%. While its work area is the largest in the West Halmahera District (19.9%) because of the extent of agricultural areas in the area.

The results of the descriptive variable test stated that the entire structure had a good category. On the assumption test of normality, multivariate and univariate data did not follow the normal distribution, so in this study, we used the Asymptotic Covariance Matrix (.acm) estimate on data processing in Lisrel for further analysis. Then, after passing the first- and second-order testing stages on the analysis of measurement models using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the four structures in this study, it can be stated that data and models have a good match. Further analysis of structural models for the testing of hypotheses using the following path diagram.

![Path Diagram](image)

**Figure 1: Structural Model (Standardized Solution); Source: Lisrel Output**

In the image above is the analysis of the structural model result after the subsequent modification of the model according to Lisrel's recommendation, which has a good model compatibility (fit) seen from the value RMSEA = 0.071 0.08, as well as with the other GOFs, so it can be concluded that the structural model in this study is a good model for further analysis. Then the above model produces the t-values seen through the following path diagram:
The test analysis of the hypothesis is carried out with a rate of significance of 5%, so that the resulting critical value $t$ is 1.96. A hypothesis is accepted when a $t$-value is obtained of 1.96, while a hypothesis is rejected when the $t$-value is 1.96. The hypothesis of an indirect relationship is based on the indirect effect it has. Here is a summary of the hypothesis test to see if the proposed model is supported by the data:

### Table 1: Testing of Research Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
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<th>$T$-values ($t_{tab} = 1.96$)</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>Indirect Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>IN $\Rightarrow$ EK</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>BK $\Rightarrow$ EK</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>SV $\Rightarrow$ EK</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>IN $\Rightarrow$ SV</td>
<td>-3.73</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>BK $\Rightarrow$ SV</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>IN $\Rightarrow$ BK</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>IN $\Rightarrow$ SV $\Rightarrow$ EK</td>
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<td>0.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>IN $\Rightarrow$ BK $\Rightarrow$ SV</td>
<td>4.50</td>
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<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>BK $\Rightarrow$ SV $\Rightarrow$ EK</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lisrel Output

### Discussion

From the results of Hypothesis Test 1 in this study, it turned out that incentives influenced the work ethics. This means that the greater the incentives received, the greater the agricultural extension agents work ethics in the Maluku Utara Province. In general, incentives are bonuses given by the agency to employees who have achieved a specific goal or, in other words, have done work with high dedication. Incentives (Oliver, 2019) are an effort by a company to bring about, direct, and arouse employee work activity (Rhodes et al., 2015). This research can confirm the results of research from Bosch et al. (2013) and Benzer et al. (2014), which, of course, strongly influence the work ethics of the employees themselves. Work ethics is important for organizations, as the employee's work ethic leads to business success.
According to the results of the second hypothesis test in this study, work culture has an influence on work ethics. This shows that the better the work culture, the better the agricultural extension agents work ethics in the Maluku Utara Province. Work ethics is a cultural aspect that reflects how work and money are morally organized (Erdem, 2019). On the one hand, culture can change organizations in the long run. (Saad & Abbas, 2018). Kasasbeh et al. (2014) explained that work ethics is a framework that governs behavior and actions comprehensively. This view is supported by Lilies at all (2020), that work culture can shape good behavior.

Results of the three hypothesis tests in this study indicate that supervision influenced the work ethics. This shows that the better the supervisory activities carried out, the better the agricultural extension agents work ethics in the Maluku Utara Province. The routine supervision activities carried out by the farmers can form a work ethic that is very necessary for the field farmers’ team because it is an indicator of the success or failure of the system of disclosure performed in the Maluku Utara Province. This research may confirm the findings of Hoque et al. (2020) and Subramaniam et al. (2015) and their impact on understanding the values of being timely (Park & Hill, 2021), hard work, and perseverance (Belyh, 2020).

Accordingly, timely reporting to the workplace, and in this situation, to the class, is an indicator of a good work ethic. In general, it can be said that work ethics is a lasting intellectual and mental foundation that forces a person to make certain decisions and perform certain actions when engaged in economic activities. In other words, when we talk about the work ethics in a society, we refer to the part of the social culture that encourages and strengthens economic and business-based activities and behaviors. (Annas, 2019). One of the important factors (Annas, 2019) that influence the work ethic is supervision, where one of the tasks of field supervisors is to carry out supervision in various regions in the Maluku Utara Province.

From the results of the 4th hypothesis test in this study, incentives influenced supervision but correlated negatively, meaning the larger the incentive, the less supervision changed at all. This means that supervision is only the formal work expected by farmers. Supervision includes guiding the employee’s efforts toward achieving goals and determining whether those goals are achieved. The incentives received by the farmers give a good spirit to the supervisory activities carried out by farmers in support of agricultural activities. This study could confirm the results of the study by Benzer et al. (2014), but of course the impact was heavily affecting the supervision of the vessels themselves. From the results of this research, there is a phenomenon that, although the small incentive is not comparable to the greatness of the responsibility of the supervisor, they still work to carry out supervision activities in each area of their respective work because it is already their main task and function as a farmer. Other phenomena are unparalleled with the size of the area and the challenges of the conditions of the vast islands, mostly remote, including weather, climate, and geographical conditions (distance between remote islands and high waves) that really require a great deal of mind and energy. Not to mention the factors of a farmer’s unconscious ability in terms of absorbing overheating agricultural technology. (Saiful, 2009).

While the farmer is one of the living eyes that dominate in the Maluku Utara Province, Indonesia (Saiful, 2009). According to the Decision of the Budget Users of the Satker Agriculture Department of Maluku Utara Province, number 800/KPTS dated January 25, 2021, the farmers received the Operational Expenses of the Farmers (BOP) in 2021. The amount of operational expenditures (BOP) is provided for 10 districts or cities located in the Maluku Utara Province. This operating cost was paid to 383 farmers. (nominal around Rp. 480 thousand per month for each extension participant for the 2021 period).

According to the results of the 5-hypothesis test in this study, work culture has an influence on supervision. This shows that the agricultural sector in the Maluku Utara Province has a high working culture, so that it can increase supervision activities. This work culture should be well managed by officials. Organizational culture is a concept that is one of the key determinants of the success of an organization in achieving its goals. The design of agriculture as an agricultural supervisory process (Anaeto Francis, 2021) involves the growth and enhancement of vascular energy as an individual and as a professional leader to achieve long-term agricultural goals (Kasri, 2012). According to Jane Wonnacott (2012), supervision is the foundation of good social work practices.

According to the results of the 6th hypothesis test in this study, incentives influenced the work culture. This shows that the incentives a person receives are able to improve the work culture. Of course, these two variables may have perceptual differences. Paying employee incentives could potentially increase performance levels (Bosch et al., 2013). Significant performance improvements result from good quality of action (Benzer et al., 2014). Action forms an organizational culture that reflects the superior characteristics of an organization and then forms good governance. Working culture creates a pleasant working environment (Samwel, 2018).

According to the results of the 7th hypothesis test in this study, incentives indirectly positively influenced the work ethic through supervision. This shows that the incentives a person receives are able to improve the intensity of supervision. Of course, these three variables may have perceptual differences. Supervisors have the duty and responsibility to keep an eye on the continuous development of these elements. (Subandi, 2016). The supervision is also intended to improve the quality of their production. The ability of farmers to correctly change their thinking into constructive and creative thinking is where farmers’ fertility continues to grow; therefore, the role of supervision by farmers plays an important role and regularly carries out training accompanied by data, facts, literature, and knowledge. (Saiful, 2009).

According to the results of the 8th hypothesis test in this study, incentives indirectly positively influenced supervision through work culture. This shows that the incentives a person receives are able to improve the intensity of supervision. In this study, the work culture is able to mediate the influence of incentives on supervision, which means that whatever incentive the supervisor receives will continue to carry out supervisory activities because it is supported by a pleasant work culture. According to Blanchard (1992),
work culture represents the internal state of an organization and reflects the level of superstition towards norms, values, and assumptions.

According to the results of the 9th hypothesis test in this study, work culture indirectly positively affects work ethic through supervision. This shows that a well-formed work culture can enhance the work ethic when supervision is done well. Of course, these three variables may have perceptual differences. Supervisory activities (Hazli & Saputra, 2019) are one of a series of managerial activities that exist on supervisory functions in order to evaluate and maintain the employee’s work ethic and focus on the goals to be achieved. Supervision as a responsibility to not deviate from the standards already established in order to achieve the goals of the organization. (Fadairo, 2016).

Good implementation of supervision serves as incentive mediation for the improvement of work ethic; incentives have an indirect positive impact on supervision through work culture. A well-established work culture is an effective mediation for instigators to improve the implementation of supervision, and a work culture has an indirect positive influence on the work ethic through supervision. The implementation of good supervision becomes an effective mediation for the growth of work culture and the improvement of work ethic.

It became clear that there were additional factors that the regional government of North Maluku Province had not properly embraced after reviewing the negative effects that occurred on the incentive variable and the supervision variable for agricultural extension workers. Incentives received by extension workers have not accommodated the wishes of agricultural extension officers in carrying out their work, so supervision activities are only used as formalities, but supervision activities are still considered important by extension workers because they relate to the performance appraisal of agricultural extension staff, and this certainly has an impact on the performance allowances received.

Conclusions

The study in this research raises the incentive variable as the main predictor of work culture, supervision, and work ethic in agricultural extension workers. So the recommendation from this paper is for the regional government to pay attention to the urgent need for incentives that need to be improved again so that agricultural extension workers are more enthusiastic at work. A well-formed work culture needs to be maintained and cared for so that it can grow and improve the work ethic. The good habits of extension workers need to be improved in preparing counseling materials, SOPs, and going into the field. The Regional Government needs to pay more attention to feedback from the results of supervision that has been carried out; feedback should not just be a mere report without any follow-up.

For further research or future research agendas, it is suggested to replace and/or change more relevant variables in the work ethic research model. This study does not accommodate the interests of local government leaders; this research is only on the agricultural extension side. Leaders have not been given space to fill out the research questionnaire. Therefore, future research can be considered from the perspective of the regional head or regional head. Researching the work ethic perspective from a holistic, variable, and cognitive perspective Strengthening the work ethic is a goal on the future research agenda.

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Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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