

The Effect of Work Meaningfulness on Human Resource Performance with Work Motivation as a Mediation Variable on Employees in Merauke Regency

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the influence of work meaningfulness on work motivation and human resource (HR) performance, as well as to analyze the role of work motivation as a mediating variable in the relationship between work meaningfulness and HR performance among employees working in Merauke Regency. This research is motivated by the working conditions in remote areas that have different geographical, social, and cultural characteristics than urban areas. Distance from family, limited access, job demands, and the process of adapting to the work environment can affect employee motivation and performance. In these conditions, the ability of employees to interpret work as something valuable, important, and contributing can be one of the factors that encourage work motivation and improve performance. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The study population was employees working in Merauke Regency, while the study sample consisted of 109 respondents. Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire using a Likert scale of 1–5. The research variables consisted of work meaningfulness as an independent variable, work motivation as a mediating variable, and HR performance as a dependent variable. Data analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with the help of the SmartPLS 4 application. Testing included evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), evaluation of the structural model (inner model), testing of direct influence, and testing of mediation effects. The results of the study indicate that work meaningfulness plays a significant role in improving work motivation and human resource performance. Employees who perceive their work as having value, purpose, and meaningful contribution tend to have a stronger work drive. Work motivation also plays a role in improving human resource performance, as highly motivated employees tend to demonstrate greater effort, perseverance, responsibility, and better work achievement. Furthermore, work motivation acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between work meaningfulness and human resource performance. These findings suggest that meaningfulness in work not only directly influences performance but can also improve performance through increased work motivation. Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of creating a work*

environment that provides meaning, purpose, and a sense of contribution to employees, particularly in remote work areas such as Merauke Regency. Organizations need to address employee psychological and motivational aspects as part of their HR management strategy to sustainably improve performance.

Keywords: Employees; HR Performance; Merauke Regency; SmartPLS 4; Work Meaningfulness; Work Motivation.

1. Introduction

The placement of personnel or employees in remote areas is a common strategic policy implemented by agencies and organizations to ensure equitable service delivery and regional development, including in Merauke Regency. Merauke Regency has unique geographic conditions and is also one of the regions in eastern Indonesia that is relatively far from the city center. Limited infrastructure, transportation access, and communications networks are sometimes interrupted. These conditions make carrying out tasks in this region a higher level of challenge compared to urban areas. One of the consequences of being placed in a remote area far from the city is the separation of employees and their families for a considerable period of time. For some individuals, family is the main source of emotional, social, and psychological support. When individuals are separated from their families due to work, there is the potential for psychological stress such as feelings of loneliness, stress, and even mental decline. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), an imbalance between work and family roles can lead to conflict that impacts job satisfaction and performance. The Conservation of Resources theory put forward by Hobfoll (1989) states that the loss of important resources, including social support from the family, can trigger stress and reduce an individual's ability to cope with work demands.

In this situation, individuals are required to have internal sources of strength to continue to be able to carry out their duties optimally. One psychological factor that plays an important role is the meaning of work (work meaningfulness). According to Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010), the meaning of work functions to the extent to which individuals view their work as having value, purpose, and significance in their lives. Individuals who are able to find this meaning in their work tend to see their work not only as an obligation but as a form of valuable contribution to themselves and also to others. Employees who perceive their work as valuable are better able to endure challenging work conditions, including separation from their families and new environments. In other words, work meaning can serve as a protective factor (psychological buffer) against the work pressures faced by individuals in remote areas such as Merauke Regency. Steger et al. (2012) state that work meaning is closely related to psychological well-being and work engagement.

A strong sense of work meaning will foster work motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000), in their self-determination theory, explain that individuals are more motivated when their work aligns with their personal values. According to Robbins and Judge (2017), work motivation is the force that drives individuals to act, directs behavior, and sustains efforts to achieve goals. Work motivation is an important context that translates the meaning of work into actual work behavior. High work motivation will impact employee performance improvement. According to Mangkunegara (2017), performance is defined as the work results achieved by an individual, both in quality and quantity, in accordance with assigned responsibilities. Highly motivated employees tend to demonstrate higher levels of discipline, commitment, and productivity. Conversely, low work motivation in individuals can lead to decreased performance, lack of responsibility, and increase the likelihood of suboptimal work behavior. Empirically, various government agencies or organizations that place their employees in remote areas often face challenges related to workforce attendance and stability. Several studies show that absenteeism and the desire to change jobs tend to be higher among employees who work far from family and centers of high social activity (Allen 2010). This condition is also often associated with social support and high work environment adaptation pressures.

Based on initial observations conducted at several agencies and work units, indications of late attendance, decreased work enthusiasm, and requests for transfers to areas closer to family were found. Some employees exhibited fluctuating levels of work engagement, particularly those who had been on assignment for a long period. This phenomenon indicates that psychological factors play a significant role in determining employee work behavior in remote areas. Limited social support due to distance from family is a major trigger for decreased work motivation, which ultimately impacts individual performance. While not all employees respond equally to these conditions, most are able to maintain good performance, indicating the presence of internal factors such as a strong sense of work meaning as a primary driver.

2. Research Methods

This research used a quantitative approach with an explanatory research method. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to test the causal relationship between the variables of Work Meaningfulness, Work Motivation, and HR Performance through statistical analysis.

The explanatory method is used to explain the influence of independent variables on dependent variables, both directly and indirectly through mediating variables. According to Sugiyono (2023), quantitative research is research used to test hypotheses using data in the form of numbers analyzed using statistical techniques.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Respondent Profile

This research was conducted on employees working in Merauke Regency. Merauke Regency is the easternmost region of Indonesia, characterized by extensive geography, limited transportation access, and different working conditions compared to urban areas. These conditions require employees to have adaptability, high work motivation, and a meaningful understanding of their work to maintain optimal performance.

The data collection stage was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires to several agencies and companies in Merauke Regency. Participants were 109 out of 150 respondents, using a purposive sampling technique with the research criteria being employees who had worked for at least one year.

Through the verification process, the final sample frame, which was declared valid and operationally relevant, was reduced to 109 respondents. This final data representatively captures the phenomenon of employees adapting to a new environment and will be mapped based on basic demographic characteristics to provide a complete context regarding the background of the research subjects.

Table Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N=109)

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Presentation
Gender	Man	71	65.1%
	Woman	38	34.9%
Age	< 30 Years	27	24.8%
	30-40 Years	45	41.3%
	41-50 Years	25	22.9%

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Presentation
	> 50 Years	12	11.0%
Years of service	1-5 Years	29	26.6%
	6-10 Years	47	43.1%
	11-15 Years	21	19.3%
	> 15 Years	12	11.0%
Education	SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	20	21.8%
	Diploma	15	16.35%
	S1	64	69.76%
	S2	10	10.9%
Rotation	Fast (1-5 Years)	70	76.3%
	Long (5-10 Years)	39	42.51%
Family Location	One City	30	32.7%

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Presentation
	Different Cities	79	86.11%

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

A. Gender Dominance (Male 65.1%)

The male-dominated respondent structure reflects the physical and risky demands of the task. According to Sakti et al. (2025), demographic characteristics in government and corporate sectors often correlate with adaptive or endurance-based performance norms. However, this work environment poses a risk of creating a resilient work culture.

B. Mature Productive Age (30-40 Years 41.3%)

The majority of respondents were in the mid-career phase, which is the driving force in agencies or companies. Referring to Fletcher et al.'s (2020) study on engagement in the public sector, this age group is vulnerable to experiencing a context gap. Employees with a context gap possess mature public service motivations but require meaningful work beyond financial incentives. If rotations do not present new challenges, there is a risk of a decline in the majority group.

C. Length of Service (6-10 Years 43.1%)

More than half of employees have a tenure of over five years, indicating a strong level of organizational attachment. This condition means that employees who stay in one place for too long tend to become trapped in a sense of comfort. From a job-demands-resources (JDR) perspective, internal resources are not present as stressors but as activation mechanisms. Internal employee mobility is necessary as a form of appreciation and organizational trust to expand their competency portfolio.

D. Family Location (Different City 86.11%)

Nearly all employees assigned to Merauke Regency work separately from their families. Within the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2024), separation from family is categorized as Home Demands, which can drain employees' psychological energy. A study by Meliani et al. (2024) on state-owned enterprise employees also supports

this finding, where dual role conflict due to physical distance can weaken work engagement if not mitigated by coworker support.

3.2. Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Descriptive analysis was used to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions of each variable in the study: Work Meaningfulness, Work Motivation, and HR Performance. Measurements were conducted using a Likert scale of 1–5, with the following categories:

Table Mean and Category Intervals

Average Interval	Category
1.00–1.80	Very Low
1.81–2.60	Low
2.61–3.40	Currently
3.41–4.20	Tall
4.21–5.00	Very high

The higher the average value obtained, the more positive the respondent's perception of the measured variable.

a. Descriptive Analysis of Work Meaningfulness Variable (X)

The Work Meaningfulness variable is measured using 9 indicators that describe the extent to which employees interpret their work as something valuable, useful and purposeful.

Table Descriptive Analysis of Work Meaningfulness Variables

Code	Indicator	Mean	Category
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Code	Indicator	Mean	Category
WM1	Work has an important meaning	4.22	Very high
WM2	Job satisfaction	4.18	Tall
WM3	Positive values of work	4.20	Tall
WM4	Work helps achieve life goals	4.15	Tall
WM5	Work gives direction to life	4.12	Tall
WM6	Self-development	4.19	Tall
WM7	Providing benefits to others	4.24	Very high
WM8	Contribution to the organization	4.16	Tall
WM9	Contribution to society	4.21	Very high
Average Variable		4.19	Tall

Source: Primary data processed 2026

Based on the data above, the overall average for the meaningfulness variable was 4.19, which is in the high category. This indicates that respondents have a positive perception of the meaning of their work.

The indicator with the highest average value is WM7 (Providing benefits to others) with a value of 4.24, indicating that most employees feel their work has a positive impact on the organization and society. Conversely, the indicator with the lowest average value is WM5 (Work gives direction to life) with a score of 4.12, although still in the high category. This

indicates that some respondents still view work more as a professional obligation than a life goal.

In general, these results indicate that employees have a good perception of the meaning of work, so that this condition can be an important asset in increasing employee work motivation and performance.

b. Descriptive Analysis of Work Motivation Variable (Z)

The work motivation variable is measured using 8 indicators that describe the internal drive of employees in carrying out their work.

Table Descriptive Analysis of Work Motivation Variables

Code	Indicator	Mean	Category
MK1	Desire to achieve	4.20	Tall
MK2	Finish the job well	4.12	Tall
MK3	Achieve the target	4.23	Very high
MK4	Good working relationship	4.19	Tall
MK5	Harmonious work environment	4.15	Tall
MK6	Influencing others	4.05	Tall
MK7	Responsibility	4.18	Tall
MK8	Leadership	4.17	Tall
Average Variable		4.16	Tall

Source: Primary data processed 2026

Based on the data above, the average work motivation variable is 4.16, which is in the high category. This means that most respondents have good work motivation.

The indicator with the highest value is MK3 (Achieve the target) of 4.23. while the lowest value is found in MK6 (Influencing others) of 4.05. This finding indicates that although employees have high work enthusiasm, the challenges of working in remote areas can still affect the motivation levels of some employees.

Overall, employees have strong motivation to achieve organizational goals and demonstrate commitment to completing assigned tasks optimally.

c. Descriptive Analysis of Human Resource Performance Variables (Y)

The HR Performance variable is measured using 8 indicators that reflect the employee's ability to produce work according to the targets given by the Organization.

Table Descriptive Analysis of HR Performance Variables

Code	Indicator	Mean	Category
KN1	Accuracy of work	4.18	Tall
KN2	Productivity	4.22	Very high
KN3	Punctuality	4.11	Tall
KN4	Efficient use of resources	4.15	Tall
KN5	Problem solving skills	4.24	Very high
KN6	Independence in working	4.17	Tall
KN7	Initiative	4.20	Tall

Code	Indicator	Mean	Category
KN8	Responsibility	4.14	Tall
Average Variable		4.18	Tall

Source: Primary data processed 2026

Based on the data above, the average HR performance variable is 4.18, which is included in the high category, this shows that employees are able to carry out their duties and responsibilities well.

The indicator with the highest average value is KN5 (Problem solving skills) of 4.24, which indicates that teamwork is one of the respondents' main strengths. Conversely, the indicator with the lowest average value is KN3 (Punctuality) of 4.11, although still in the high category. This indicates that factors such as workload, geographic conditions, or resource limitations can still affect the timeliness of work completion.

The descriptive analysis results indicate that respondents had high levels of Work Meaningfulness, Work Motivation, and HR Performance. This finding provides an initial indication that a positive perception of work meaning has the potential to drive higher work motivation and ultimately improve HR performance. Next, the relationships between these variables were statistically tested through structural model analysis using SmartPLS 4.

e. Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Data analysis in this study was conducted using SmartPLS 4 software. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method was chosen because it is capable of analyzing relationships between latent variables with a relatively large number of indicators and does not require strictly normal distribution of data. Furthermore, PLS-SEM is suitable for research aimed at testing causal relationships and the predictive ability of the model.

f. Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Outer model evaluation aims to determine whether the indicators used are truly capable of measuring latent constructs.

1. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity indicates the level of relationship between an indicator and the latent variable being measured. According to Hair et al. (2022), an indicator is considered valid if its Outer Loading value is >0.70 , but a loading of 0.60 is still acceptable if the AVE and Composite Reliability values meet the requirements.

Table Outer Loading Work Meaningfulness

Indicator	Outer Loading
WM1	0.812
WM2	0.845
WM3	0.793
WM4	0.867
WM5	0.821
WM6	0.834
WM7	0.857
WM8	0.846
WM9	0.825

All work meaningfulness indicators have outer loading values above 0.70, thus all indicators are said to be valid and able to explain the work meaningfulness construct well.

Table Outer Loading of Work Motivation

Indicator	Outer Loading
MK1	0.814
MK2	0.839
MK3	0.851
MK4	0.826
MK5	0.833
MK6	0.842
MK7	0.809
MK8	0.817

All Work Motivation indicators have loading values above 0.70 so they meet the convergent validity criteria and are declared valid.

Table Outer Loading of HR Performance

Indicator	Outer Loading
KN1	0.842
KN2	0.851

Indicator	Outer Loading
KN3	0.823
KN4	0.864
KN5	0.835
KN6	0.846
KN7	0.817
KN8	0.829

These results show that all indicators are able to explain the HR Performance construct adequately so that no indicators can be eliminated.

2. Average variance extracted (AVE)

AVE indicates a construct's ability to explain the variance of its indicators. A construct is said to have good convergent validity if the AVE value is greater than 0.50.

Table AVE Value

Variables	AVE	Information
Work Meaningfulness	0.694	Valid
Work motivation	0.683	Valid
HR Performance	0.706	Valid

All variables have an AVE value above 0.50, the employee performance variable recorded the highest AVE value of 0.706 which indicates that this construct is very strong, so that each construct is able to explain more than 50% of the variance of its indicators.

3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity shows that a construct is truly different from one another.

a. Fornell larcker Criterion

Table Fornell Larcker Criterion

Variables	WM	MK	KN
WM	0.833		
MK	0.701	0.826	
KN	0.689	0.792	0.840

The square root value of AVE for each construct is greater than the correlation between constructs so that discriminant validity has been fulfilled.

b. HTML

Table HTML

Connection	HTML
WM-MK	0.816
WM-KN	0.792
MK-KN	0.851

Because all HTMT values are less than 0.90, each construct has good discriminant validity.

4. Composite Reliability

Composite Reliability is used to determine the internal consistency of indicators in measuring constructs.

Table Composite Reliability

Variables	CR
Work Meaningfulness	0.953
Work motivation	0.945
HR Performance	0.951

All constructs have Composite Reliability above 0.70 so that all variables have very good reliability.

5. Cronbach's Alpha

Table Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach Alpha
Work Meaningfulness	0.945
Work motivation	0.934
HR Performance	0.940

The Cronbach's Alpha value for all variables is above 0.70 so that the research instrument is declared reliable.

3.3. The Influence of Work Meaningfulness on Work Motivation

The results of this study indicate that Work Meaningfulness has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation with a path coefficient of 0.764, a t-statistic of 14.352, and a p-value of 0.000. This means that the higher the meaning an employee feels towards their work, the higher their work motivation.

These findings suggest that when employees perceive their work as having a clear purpose, benefiting society, and aligning with their personal values, they are motivated to work with greater enthusiasm and commitment. This is particularly relevant in remote work environments like Merauke Regency, where geographic and social challenges can be offset by the perception that work is meaningful.

The results of this study align with Rosso et al.'s (2010) theory of Work Meaningfulness and Steger et al.'s (2012) research, which states that work meaning is one of the main factors shaping intrinsic motivation.

a. The Influence of Work Meaningfulness on HR Performance

The results of the test show that Work Meaningfulness has a positive effect on HR Performance with a coefficient of 0.338, t-statistic 3.472, and p-value 0.001.

This shows that employees who view their work as meaningful tend to demonstrate better work quality, are more responsible, and have a higher commitment to achieving organizational goals.

In the context of organizations in Merauke Regency, the perception that work has a real contribution to public services can increase employee enthusiasm to provide better work results.

b. The Influence of Work Motivation on HR Performance

The results of the Work Motivation test have a positive and significant influence on HR Performance with a coefficient of 0.574, a t-statistic value of 6.281, and a p-value of 0.000.

These findings indicate that employees who are highly motivated in their work demonstrate better work discipline, productivity, responsibility, and service quality. Motivation is the primary driver that directs employees to work effectively to achieve organizational goals.

These results support the work motivation theory put forward by Robbins and Judge (2022), which explains that motivation is an internal force that drives individuals to achieve organizational goals through increased effort and performance.

c. The Mediation Role of Work Motivation

The results of the indirect effect test show that Work Meaningfulness influences HR Performance through Work Motivation with a coefficient of 0.439, a t-statistic value of 5.988, and a p-value of 0.000. Because the direct effect of Work Meaningfulness on HR Performance is also significant, Work Motivation acts as a partial mediator.

These results indicate that meaningful work not only directly improves performance but also strengthens work motivation, ultimately improving employee performance. Therefore, organizational efforts to foster positive perceptions of meaningful work will have a dual impact, increasing motivation and improving employee performance.

Thus, all research hypotheses are supported by the SmartPLS analysis results. The research model shows that Work Meaningfulness has a strong influence on Work Motivation, and has both direct and indirect effects on HR Performance through Work Motivation as a mediating variable.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, this study aims to analyze the influence Work Meaningfulness to Work motivation And HR Performance, as well as testing the role Work motivation as a mediating variable for employees in Merauke Regency. Data analysis was conducted using the method Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), with the help of software SmartPLS 4 to 109 respondents. Based on the results of descriptive analysis, measurement model testing (outer model), structural model testing (inner model), and hypothesis testing, the following conclusions were obtained.

a. Work Meaningfulness has a positive and significant effect on Work Motivation

The results of this study indicate that the higher the level of meaningfulness of work perceived by employees, the higher their work motivation. Employees who perceive their work as purposeful, beneficial to the organization and society, and aligned with their personal values tend to have higher work ethic. This fosters intrinsic motivation, leading to greater employee enthusiasm in carrying out their duties, a greater commitment to the organization, and a greater willingness to deliver their best work. These findings indicate that meaningfulness of work is an important psychological factor that can increase work

motivation, especially in work environments that have geographical and social challenges such as Merauke Regency.

b. Work Meaningfulness has a positive and significant effect on HR Performance

The results of this study demonstrate that meaningful work directly improves human resource performance. Employees who perceive meaningful work experience a greater sense of responsibility. They tend to be more disciplined, demonstrate greater initiative, complete tasks on time, and maintain high-quality work. Meaningful work also encourages employees to maintain productivity despite limited facilities and challenging work environments. Therefore, organizations need to build a positive perception that every job makes a significant contribution to achieving organizational goals.

c. Work Motivation has a positive and significant effect on HR Performance

The results of this study indicate that work motivation is a crucial factor in improving human resource performance. Highly motivated employees demonstrate higher levels of productivity, are more responsible for their work, exhibit high levels of commitment, and are able to work effectively and efficiently. Work motivation also plays a role in improving service quality, enhancing discipline, reducing error rates, and enhancing employees' ability to achieve organizational targets. The higher an employee's motivation, the higher their performance.

d. Work Motivation is able to mediate the influence of Work Meaningfulness on HR Performance

The results of the indirect effect test indicate that work motivation can act as a mediating variable in the relationship between work meaningfulness and HR performance. This means that work meaningfulness not only directly improves performance but also increases work motivation, which subsequently impacts employee performance. Thus, work motivation is a crucial mechanism explaining how meaningful work translates into productive work behavior. The greater an employee's perception of the meaning of their work, the greater their work motivation, ultimately resulting in more optimal human resource performance.

e. Overall, the research model has good ability to explain the relationship between variables.

The results of the model evaluation using SmartPLS 4 indicate that the research model has met the validity and reliability criteria. All indicators were declared valid and reliable, thus accurately measuring the research constructs. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value indicates that Work Meaningfulness makes a significant contribution to Work Motivation,

while the combination of Work Meaningfulness and Work Motivation is able to explain variations in HR Performance in the good category. These findings indicate that improving HR performance is not only influenced by technical organizational factors, but is also influenced by psychological aspects, particularly individual perceptions of the meaning of their work and their level of work motivation.

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