

## The Analysis of Democratic Leadership and Work Ethic on Teacher Performance in Catholic Middle Schools, Karo Regency

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### ABSTRACT

Teacher performance plays a critical role in improving educational quality. This study analyzes the influence of democratic leadership by school principals, management of work stress, and work ethic on teacher performance in Catholic junior high schools in Karo Regency. Employing a quantitative approach, data were analyzed using regression and path analysis to examine direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The results indicate that democratic leadership has both a direct positive effect on teacher performance (path coefficient = 0.246) and an indirect effect through work ethic. Democratic leadership also positively influences work ethic (coefficient = 0.213), while work stress management has an even stronger effect on work ethic (coefficient = 0.266). Among all variables, work ethic exerts the strongest influence on teacher performance (coefficient = 0.515), making it the most dominant factor. These findings suggest that while effective leadership and stress management contribute to better teacher outcomes, strengthening teachers' work ethic is key to achieving optimal performance. School management should therefore prioritize fostering a positive work culture and supportive environment to enhance both work ethic and performance.

**Keywords:** Democratic Leadership; Educational Quality; Teacher Performance; Work Ethic; Work Stress Management

## INTRODUCTION

It is universally acknowledged that teachers are the key to successful learning outcomes for students in the classroom. Essentially, the role of a teacher is to guide students in achieving educational goals, particularly at the junior high school level. The effectiveness of a teacher in carrying out this role is commonly referred to as teacher performance. Performance, in general, can be defined as a means of achieving optimal outcomes in an organization, whether individually or in teams, through understanding and managing work according to a predefined framework or standards (Basalamah et al., 2019). Ali (2018) defines performance as the extent to which the implementation of tasks achieves organizational objectives, goals, and missions through strategic planning.

Teacher performance is the level of success in carrying out educational responsibilities within the scope of authority and standards established for a specific period (Farida et al., 2020; Özgenel & Mert, 2019). It is measurable through a teacher's competencies and the ability to manage classroom challenges. However, some teachers are still unaware of their crucial role in shaping a resilient young generation. For instance, a teacher might assign worksheets instead of delivering meaningful instruction, thereby failing to fulfill their teaching role.

High competence and a strong work ethic are integral to delivering quality education. Quality teaching leads to high-quality graduates, while poor teaching results in underprepared students, incapable of meeting the demands of today's competitive world (Novita, 2024). A professional teacher prioritizes quality and service, contributing significantly to student achievement and the overall success of educational institutions. As Bernawi and Arifin (2014) emphasize, the transformation of educational quality requires adopting new educational paradigms. The study further categorizes the factors affecting teacher performance into internal and external dimensions. Internal factors originate from within the teacher, including performance, skills, attitudes, mindsets, work ethics, learning experiences, and family background. External factors involve elements such as compensation, teaching facilities, work environment, and school leadership (Suprihatiningrum, 2014). It was highlighted that teacher performance is a determinant of teaching quality. Mangkunegara in Pianda (2018) identifies two main factors influencing performance: ability and work ethic. These include both potential and actual abilities, as well as internal motivators such as intelligence, skills, talents, motives, and health, and external influences like family and work environments. Other critical performance determinants include democratic leadership by the principal, managerial capabilities, health coverage, salary, training programs, infrastructure, education level, and both physical and mental conditions of the teachers (Berhanu, 2025). This study, therefore, focuses on three main elements: the democratic leadership style of school principals, teacher work ethic, and teacher performance.

Performance is a critical indicator of progress in any institution, educational or otherwise. It reflects the values and behaviors contributing to the achievement of organizational goals (Aryani et al., 2021; Volchik & Maslyukova, 2018). Thus, evaluating teacher performance is essential for identifying whether their contributions meet the required standards. Such evaluations guide schools in making strategic improvements and encouraging teachers' professional development.

According to Esthi (2020), organizational performance is influenced by four factors: environment, individual characteristics, organizational traits, and job characteristics. Teacher performance can be evaluated using indicators such as job execution, subject mastery, professional pedagogical skills, adaptability, and personal character. As

education evolves with technological and cultural shifts, teachers must respond effectively to meet students' diverse needs and prepare them for future challenges.

Given the weight of responsibility carried by teachers, support from all stakeholders, government, communities, parents, school leaders, and the teachers themselves is essential to maximize their performance (Ni et al., 2018). Leadership plays a vital role in achieving school goals. In the context of education, principals act as navigators, influencing both teachers and students toward continuous improvement (Dhuey & Smith, 2018). A principal's democratic leadership style is particularly crucial, as effective leadership fosters compliance without coercion. Consequently, teacher performance must be enhanced to align educational quality with societal and technological developments. A professional teacher is expected to possess the qualifications, competencies, communication skills, creativity, productivity, a strong work ethic, and a high commitment. As Burkhanova et al. (2020) argue, the professionalization of teachers involves not only teaching strategies but also continuous self-development and reflective learning practices. The ultimate goal of education lies in optimizing teacher performance for present and future excellence. Wahyu et al. (2021) assert that teacher performance is reflected in their ability to carry out learning activities effectively. The principal, as the head of the institution, bears the responsibility for school development and sustainability. A visionary principal analyzes and addresses institutional strengths and weaknesses, particularly focusing on improving teacher performance, which directly affects school quality (Jhonshon et al., 2024).

Prior research on the role of democratic leadership in enhancing teacher performance supports this view. For example, Lestari (2023) highlights how a principal's leadership style serves as a central element in school success. Her qualitative research, through field studies, observations, interviews, documentation, and triangulation, confirms that democratic leadership contributes significantly to school effectiveness. Observations further reveal that effective teachers manage instructional content, classroom environments, learning resources, educational foundations, and student assessment with professionalism. A visionary principal thus plays a pivotal role in enhancing teaching quality. As such, in the context of SMPS RK Deli Murni in Karo Regency—a key educational institution in its region—the leadership style of the principal significantly impacts teacher morale and performance. The present study aims to investigate the relationship between democratic school leadership, teacher work ethic, and teacher performance, specifically focusing on how leadership influences stress management and performance outcomes at Catholic junior high schools in Karo Regency.

The significance of this study lies in its emphasis on teacher performance as a critical determinant of both the quality and effectiveness of the educational process. In today's educational landscape, teachers are not only facilitators of academic content but also mentors who shape students' character and competencies. Optimal teacher performance reflects a high level of professionalism and serves as a benchmark for the success of educational institutions. However, the reality shows that many teachers still fall short in fulfilling these responsibilities, which ultimately affects the quality of student outcomes.

This research offers novelty by focusing explicitly on the democratic leadership style of school principals and its direct and indirect influence on teachers' work ethic and performance. While previous studies have addressed factors affecting teacher performance, few have examined the specific dynamic between democratic leadership and teachers' work ethic within the context of private junior high schools. The contribution of this study is to provide empirical evidence on how participative leadership and a strong work ethic can synergistically enhance teacher performance. These findings are

expected to inform school leadership practices and policies aimed at fostering a professional and motivated teaching workforce, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Research on the influence of principal leadership in enhancing teacher performance has been extensively explored, highlighting the multifaceted nature of leadership in educational contexts. [Hoque and Raya \(2023\)](#) examined the democratic leadership style of school principals. The findings revealed that although principals adopted a democratic leadership orientation, there was a tendency toward autocratic behaviors. Nonetheless, the principals demonstrated strategic thinking and insight, suggesting that leadership style, even when mixed, plays a vital role in shaping teacher performance. These results indicate that democratic leadership, when implemented effectively, can create a conducive work environment that enhances teacher effectiveness.

Similarly, [Muhtadi \(2021\)](#), through a qualitative descriptive study, explored principal leadership strategies in addressing teacher performance challenges. The study emphasized the importance of fostering a supportive work atmosphere and conducting regular evaluations—key components of participative or democratic leadership. Despite facing obstacles such as low teacher discipline, these leadership practices proved effective in improving performance, suggesting both a direct and indirect influence on outcomes through improved work environments and teacher attitudes.

H1: Democratic leadership of school principals has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance.

Building on this, [Kanya et al. \(2021\)](#) emphasized that teacher performance is influenced not only by leadership but also by individual effort, professional skills, and working conditions. He noted that principals play a key role in fostering teacher development through democratic leadership and emotionally intelligent, values-based approaches. These practices contribute to motivating teachers and reinforcing their ethical commitment to the profession, dimensions that are closely aligned with the concept of work ethos, which refers to teachers' internalized values such as responsibility, discipline, and commitment to their duties.

H2: Work ethos has a positive and significant influence on teacher performance.

The study by [Tahir et al. \(2024\)](#) showed how principals enhanced both personal and professional aspects of teachers through structured activities such as religious study sessions, seminars, and workshops. These leadership initiatives contributed to the development of positive work values, strengthening teachers' work ethic and professional commitment. Such findings suggest that leadership can significantly shape teachers' internal motivation and work ethos, particularly when it is values-driven and participatory.

H3: Democratic leadership of school principals has a positive and significant influence on work ethos.

In support of the mediating role of work ethos, prior studies imply that leadership does not exert its influence in isolation. Instead, its impact is often channeled through intermediary variables such as motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and ethical work values—all of which are conceptually related to work ethos. Although few of the cited studies tested mediation directly, their findings suggest a plausible

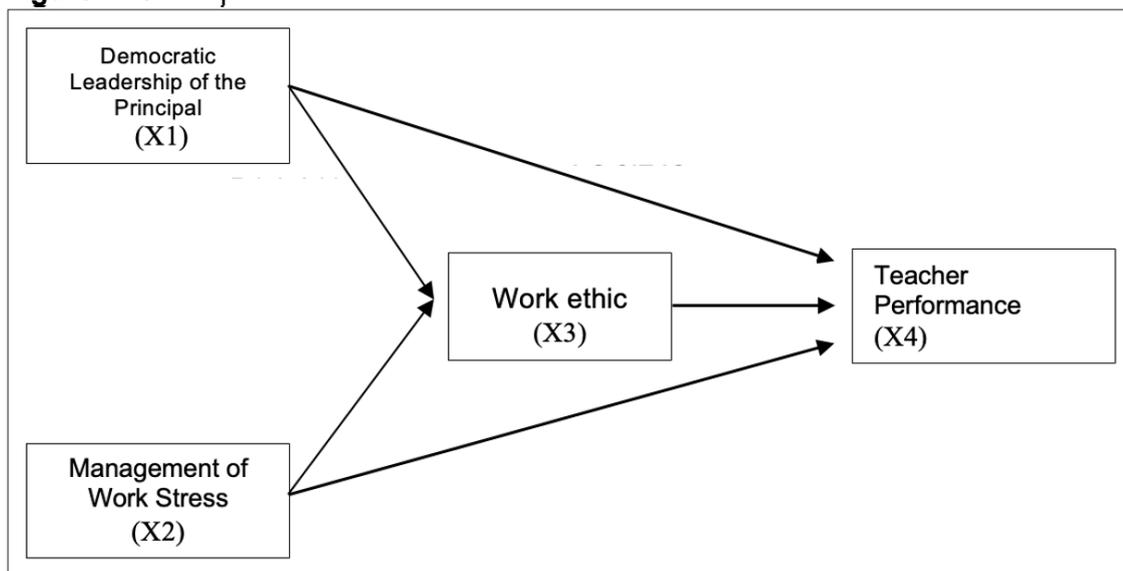
pathway through which leadership affects performance indirectly. For example, [Muhtadi \(2021\)](#) emphasized the importance of a conducive atmosphere and discipline, which contribute to building a work ethos. Likewise, [Ertosun and Adiguzel's \(2018\)](#) findings on value-based leadership practices point toward a developmental process in which leadership nurtures strong personal values that ultimately enhance professional effectiveness. This supports the notion that work ethos may mediate the relationship between democratic leadership and teacher performance.

H4: Work ethos mediates the relationship between democratic leadership of school principals and teacher performance.

Collectively, these studies affirm that democratic and participatory leadership styles positively impact both teacher performance and work ethos. Leadership approaches rooted in trust, open communication, empowerment, and ethical values are essential in fostering a culture of professionalism and commitment among teachers. These findings are directly relevant to the present study, which investigates how democratic leadership of school principals influences both work ethos and teacher performance in Catholic Junior high schools in Karo Regency—a context where the cultivation of moral and professional values is particularly emphasized.

The conceptual framework of this study is displayed in [Figure 1](#).

**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework



## RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to analyze the influence of the democratic leadership of school principals and work ethic on teacher performance in Catholic junior high schools in Karo Regency. A quantitative approach was employed, using a causal-comparative design to examine the directional and causal relationships between variables. This design is appropriate for testing hypotheses and evaluating both direct and indirect effects among constructs within a defined population.

The research method applied is descriptive quantitative analysis, utilizing path analysis to explore the causal relationships between variables. Path analysis was chosen because it allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple relationships, including mediation effects, which is essential for investigating the hypothesized role of work ethic

as a mediating variable. The analysis was conducted through two regression models. The first model examined the influence of democratic leadership and work ethic on teacher performance, while the second model assessed the influence of democratic leadership and work stress on work ethic. These models provided a comprehensive view of the interrelated pathways among the key variables.

The variables studied included democratic leadership and work stress as independent variables, work ethic as the intervening variable, and teacher performance as the dependent variable. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which facilitated the calculation of path coefficients, coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ), and significance levels using t-tests. In addition, the Sobel test was used to confirm the significance of the mediating effect of work ethic.

The research was conducted in Catholic junior high schools across Karo Regency between December 2024 and February 2025. The study involved school principals and teachers, with teachers serving as the primary units of analysis while principals contributed contextual data on leadership practices. The sampling technique ensured adequate representation across participating schools. This methodological approach was designed to produce valid, reliable, and generalizable findings that reflect the dynamics of school leadership, teacher work ethic, and performance in the specified educational setting.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Analysis

**Table 1.** Analysis of Descriptive Variables

Statistics			
	X1	X3	X4
N	80	80	80
Mean	91.4250	58.5125	79.0000
Median	93.0000	59.0000	80,0000
Mode	94.00	56.00	80.00
Std. Deviation	13.21370	8.18148	11.74303
Variance	174,602	66,937	137,899
Range	70.00	46.00	61.00
Minimum	43.00	24.00	37.00
Maximum	113.00	70.00	98.00
Sum	7314.00	4681.00	6320.00
Mean Ideal	78	42	60
Std. Ideal Deviation	17.33	9.33	13.33
Minimum Ideal	26	14	20
Maximum Ideal	130	70	100

Note: X2 = Leadership Democratic Head School; X3 = Ethos Work; X4 = Teacher Performance

Based on [Table 1](#), the results of the descriptive analysis of the research variables are as follows: Democratic Leadership of the School Head (X1) has an average value of 91.43, which is higher than the ideal value (78), indicating that the Democratic Leadership of the School Head is measured as fairly good. Work Ethos (X3), with an average of 58.51, is below the ideal value (60), indicating a need for improvement in work ethos. Meanwhile, Teacher Performance (X4) has an average score of 79, which is higher than the ideal value (60), showing that teacher performance is adequate. Overall, although several variables show performance above the ideal value, there is still room for improvement in stress management and work ethos.

**Identity of the Tendency Level of Study Variables**  
***Democratic Leadership of the School Head Variable***

In this sub-chapter, a descriptive analysis is conducted to determine the tendency level of the Democratic Leadership of the School Head variable, which is an important factor influencing the teacher's work environment and performance.

**Table 2.** Leadership Democratic Head School

No	Interval	F <sub>Absolute</sub>	F <sub>Relative (%)</sub>	Category
1	106 – score highest	12	15	Tall
2	79 - 105	56	70	Currently
3	52 - 78	11	13.75	Not enough
4	Lowest score - 51	1	1.25	Low
Amount		80	100	

Based on Table 2, it is known that the distribution of scores for the variable shows that the majority of respondents (70%) are in the "Medium" category, followed by 15% with high scores, 13.75% with low scores, and only 1.25% with very low scores. This shows that most respondents have scores in the middle range, with only a few showing extreme scores.

***Ethos Work Variable***

This sub-chapter describes the trend level of teachers' work ethos, which reflects the extent of their commitment and dedication in carrying out their duties. Through the following table, it will be shown how teachers perceive their work ethos and the factors that influence it.

**Table 3.** Variables Ethos Work

No	Interval	F <sub>Absolute</sub>	F <sub>Relative (%)</sub>	Category
1	58 – score highest	49	61.25	Tall
2	43 - 57	28	35	Currently
3	28 - 42	1	1.25	Not enough
4	Lowest score - 27	2	2.5	Low
Amount		80	100	

Based on Table 3, it is known that the majority of respondents (61.25%) are in the "High" category regarding work ethos, followed by 35% in the "Medium" category. Only a small portion of respondents fall into the "Low" (1.25%) and "Very Low" (2.5%) categories. This indicates that the majority of respondents possess a high work ethos.

***Teacher Performance Variable***

In this final sub-chapter, the trend of teacher performance levels will be analyzed, which describes the extent to which teachers fulfill the expected performance standards in carrying out their profession. This analysis is important for understanding the connection between other factors, such as leadership and work ethos, with the achievement of teacher performance.

**Table 4.** Teacher Performance Variables

No	Interval	F <sub>Absolute</sub>	F <sub>Relative (%)</sub>	Category
1	82 – score highest	32	40	Tall
2	61 - 81	43	53.75	Currently
3	40 - 60	3	3.75	Not enough
4	Lowest score - 39	2	2.5	Low
Amount		80	100	

Based on [Table 4](#), it is known that the majority of respondents (53.75%) were in the “Medium” category regarding teacher performance, followed by 40% in the “High” category. Only a small number of respondents fell into the “Low” (3.75%) and “Very Low” (2.5%) categories. This shows that most teachers have performance that falls within the medium to high category.

### **Instrument Test Study**

#### **Validity Test**

**Table 5.** Validity Test

No	Variables	Number of Items	Valid	No Valid	Number Item No Valid
1	Teacher Performance	30	20	10	1,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,13
2	Democratic Leadership of the Principal	30	26	4	7,8,10,11
3	Job Stress	30	20	10	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12
4	Work Ethic	30	14	16	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,16,17,18,19,20,21

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on [Table 5](#), the results of the validity test indicate that all question items in the teacher performance, democratic leadership of school head, work stress, and work ethic questionnaires are valid. The validity of the questionnaire is shown by the calculated *r* values (*r* count) being greater than the critical value in the *r* table, which is 0.219 at a significance level of 5% with a total sample size (*N*) of 80. To determine this, the degrees of freedom (*df*) were calculated using the formula  $df = N - 2$ , resulting in  $df = 78$ . Referring to the Pearson correlation distribution table, the *r* table value for  $df = 78$  and  $\alpha = 0.05$  is 0.219. Since all *r* count values exceed 0.219, it can be concluded that the questionnaire used in this study has been proven valid, as all items meet the required validity condition ( $r \text{ count} > r \text{ table}$ ).

#### **Reliability Test**

The reliability test was applied to assess the consistency of the measurement tool, ensuring it remains reliable and stable when used repeatedly. This study employed the Cronbach’s alpha technique to evaluate the internal consistency of the instrument. A questionnaire is considered reliable if it has a reliability coefficient greater than 0.6. This result indicates that the instrument used in this study is relatively consistent and dependable, demonstrating that repeated measurements would yield stable outcomes.

**Table 6.** Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Teacher Performance (X4)	0.816	Reliable
Leadership Head School (X1)	0.899	Reliable
Work Ethic (X2)	0.839	Reliable
Job Stress (X3)	0.878	Reliable

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on [Table 6](#), the results of the reliability test show that the Cronbach’s Alpha values for each research variable are all above 0.7, which indicates that each variable is considered reliable. The highest Cronbach’s Alpha value was found in the Democratic Leadership of the School Head variable (X1) at 0.899, followed by the Work Stress variable (X3) at 0.878, the Work Ethic variable (X2) at 0.839, and the Teacher Performance variable (X4) at 0.816. These findings confirm that the measurement

instruments used in this study demonstrate strong internal consistency and can be trusted to produce stable results across repeated applications.

### Data Assumptions

#### Normality Test

The normality test in this research aims to determine whether the data for each variable is normally distributed. This test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method with the assistance of the SPSS program. According to [Neumann et al. \(2020\)](#), data is considered normally distributed if the significance value is greater than 0.05. On the other hand, if the significance or probability value is less than 0.05, the sample is considered not normally distributed. The normality test is essential to ensure that the data meets the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis.

**Table 7.** Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		80
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	0.0000000
	Std. Deviation	5.36558431
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.095
	Positive	0.082
	Negative	-0.095
Test Statistic		0.095
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.070 <sup>c</sup>
a. Test distribution is Normal.		
b. Calculated from data.		
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.		

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on [Table 7](#), the results of the normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test show that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value obtained is 0.168. Since this significance value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, which states that the residual data is normally distributed. This indicates that the residual data in this regression model is normally distributed, thereby fulfilling the assumption of normality required for further statistical analysis.

#### Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity refers to a condition where a perfect or near-perfect linear relationship occurs between independent variables in a regression model ([Abdulhafedh, 2022](#)). The multicollinearity test is used to determine whether there is a violation of the classical assumption of multicollinearity through the linear relationship between independent variables, typically assessed using tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. Multicollinearity is considered not to occur if the tolerance value is greater than 0.1 and the VIF is less than 10. The results of the multicollinearity test in this study are presented as follows.

**Table 8.** Multicollinearity Test

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
Leadership Democratic Head School	0.522	1.916
Work stress	0.278	3.602
Ethos Work	0.266	3.762

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on Table 8, the results of the multicollinearity test show that the Tolerance and VIF values for each independent variable meet the acceptable criteria. For the Leadership of the Democratic Head of School variable, the Tolerance value is 0.522 and the VIF is 1.916, indicating no multicollinearity problem. Meanwhile, for the Ethos Work variable, the Tolerance value is 0.266 and the VIF is 3.762, which are still within the acceptable limits ( $VIF < 10$ ), meaning that there is no serious multicollinearity issue. Overall, the test results indicate that there is no significant multicollinearity among the independent variables in the model, allowing the regression analysis to proceed with valid results.

### Multiple Regression Test Analysis

#### Multiple Regression Test Model 1

Table 9. Multiple Regression Test Model 1

Model		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Beta		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	7.234	3.665			1.974	0.052
	Leadership Democratic Head School	0.132	0.048	0.213		2.742	0.008
	Management Stress Work	0.960	0.106	0.702		9.049	0.000

Dependent Variable: Ethos Work

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

$$Y = 0.213X_1 + 0.702X_2$$

Based on Table 9, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis show that both independent variables—Leadership of the Democratic Head of School and Management of Work Stress—have a significant influence on the dependent variable, Ethos Work. The unstandardized regression coefficient for the leadership of the democratic head of school is 0.132, with a t-value of 2.742 and a significance level of 0.008. This indicates a statistically significant positive effect, meaning that improvements in democratic leadership practices are associated with increases in ethos work. The standardized coefficient (beta) for this variable is 0.213, suggesting a moderate relative contribution to the overall model.

In contrast, the management of work stress shows a stronger influence, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.960, a t-value of 9.049, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. This indicates that effective management of work-related stress significantly and positively affects ethos work. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.702 highlights the dominant role this variable plays in predicting ethos work, compared to the leadership variable. The constant in the model is 7.234, with a significance level of 0.052, indicating a moderate level of significance for the baseline level of ethos work when both independent variables are held constant.

In summary, the regression analysis confirms that both democratic leadership and stress management are significant predictors of ethos work, with stress management having a stronger impact.

#### Multiple Regression Test Model 2

Table 10. Multiple Regression Test Model 2

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>	
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Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.910	4.866		-0.187	0.852
	Leadership Democratic School Head	0.219	0.065	0.246	3.356	0.001
	Management Stress Work	0.408	0.197	0.208	2.068	0.042
	Ethos Work	0.739	0.148	0.515	5.003	0.000
Dependent Variable: Teacher Performance						

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

$$Y = 0.246 X_1 + 0.208 X_2 + 0.515 X_3$$

Based on [Table 10](#), the leadership of the democratic head of school has a regression coefficient of 0.219, with a t-value of 3.356 and a significance level of 0.001. This indicates a statistically significant positive influence on teacher performance at the 0.05 level. In other words, when school leaders adopt a more democratic leadership style, teacher performance tends to improve. The standardized Beta coefficient for this variable is 0.246, suggesting a moderate contribution relative to the other variables in the model.

In addition, management of work stress has a regression coefficient of 0.408, with a t-value of 2.068 and a significance level of 0.042. This result indicates that effective management of work-related stress significantly enhances teacher performance, albeit to a lesser degree than the other variables. The standardized beta for this variable is 0.208, reflecting a relatively modest influence compared to the leadership and ethos variables.

The ethos work shows the strongest impact among all predictors. It has a regression coefficient of 0.739, with a high t-value of 5.003 and a significance value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant and substantial positive effect on teacher performance. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.515 confirms that ethos work contributes the most to the model, emphasizing the importance of fostering a strong work ethos in the school environment.

The constant in the regression model is -0.910, but with a significance level of 0.852, it is not statistically significant. This suggests that the baseline level of teacher performance, when all independent variables are zero, is not meaningful or interpretable in this context.

In conclusion, leadership of the democratic head of school, management of work stress, and ethos work have a statistically significant influence on teacher performance. However, ethos work emerges as the most dominant factor, followed by democratic leadership and stress management.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

#### ***Regression F Test Model 1***

The F test is used to test the overall significance of the regression model. This test aims to determine whether all independent variables in the regression model together have a significant influence on the dependent variable. In other words, the F test assesses whether the model built can explain a significant amount of variation in the data.

**Table 11.** Regression F Test Model 1

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3882.298	2	1941.149	106.331	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1405.689	77	18.256		
	Total	5287.988	79			
a. Dependent Variable: Work Ethic						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Stress Management, Principal Leadership						

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on [Table 11](#), the results of the ANOVA analysis show that the regression model used to predict ethos work based on the independent variable, namely leadership of the democratic head of school, is statistically significant. The F value of 106.331 indicates that this regression model is much better at explaining the variation in ethos work compared to a model without any predictors. With a significance value (Sig.) of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, it can be concluded that the independent variable significantly contributes to influencing ethos work. This means that the regression model is effective in explaining the variation in ethos work.

### **Regression F Test Model 2**

**Table 12.** Regression F Test Model 2

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8566.312	3	2855.437	93.231	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2327.688	76	30,627		
	Total	10894.000	79			
a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Ethic, Leadership Headmaster						

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on [Table 12](#), it is known that the results of the ANOVA analysis show that the regression model used to predict teacher performance is based on three independent variables, namely ethos work and leadership of the democratic head of school, and is statistically significant. The F value of 93.231 indicates that this regression model is much better at explaining the variation in Teacher Performance compared to a model without predictors. With a significance value (Sig.) of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, it can be concluded that the three independent variables significantly contribute to influencing teacher performance. This means that the regression model is effective in explaining variations in teacher performance.

### **T Test**

**Table 13.** T Test

No	Variables	Weight Influence			Sig < 0.05	Information
		T <sub>count</sub>	>/<	T <sub>table</sub>		
1	Leadership Democratic Head School -> Ethos Work	2.742	>	1.665	0.008	H3 accepted
2	Leadership Democratic Head School -> Teacher Performance	3.356	>	1.665	0.001	H1 accepted
3	Ethos Work -> Teacher Performance	5.003	>	1.665	0.000	H2 accepted

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on [Table 13](#), the results of the t-test confirm the significance of the hypothesized relationships among the variables in this study. The data show that the leadership of the democratic head of school has a significant influence on teachers' work ethos, as indicated by a t-count of 2.742, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.665, and a significance level of 0.008 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This supports H3, which posits that democratic leadership positively and significantly influences work ethos. The implication is that democratic leadership practices—such as inclusive decision-making, transparency, and support for teachers—help foster a stronger ethical commitment and dedication among teachers.

The influence of democratic leadership extends to teacher performance as well. The t-count for the relationship between leadership and teacher performance is 3.356, with a significance value of 0.001, further exceeding the critical t-value. This result provides strong evidence for H1, confirming that democratic leadership has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. It underscores the role of school leaders in creating an environment that promotes professional development, motivation, and accountability, all of which contribute to improved performance outcomes.

In addition, the work ethos has the most substantial effect on teacher performance, with a t-count of 5.003 and a significance level of 0.000. These results strongly support H2, which asserts that work ethos significantly and positively affects teacher performance. Teachers with a high sense of ethos—marked by dedication, responsibility, and ethical work behavior—tend to deliver higher-quality teaching and show greater commitment to student success and school improvement.

Taken together, these findings provide empirical support for H4, which proposes that work ethos mediates the relationship between democratic leadership and teacher performance. The significant influence of democratic leadership on work ethos, coupled with the strong impact of work ethos on teacher performance, indicates a mediation pathway. In other words, democratic leadership not only directly enhances teacher performance but also does so indirectly by first strengthening the teacher's work ethos. This dual pathway highlights the importance of leadership style in shaping both the attitudes and performance outcomes of educators.

### ***Path Analysis Test***

**Figure 2.** Path Analysis Model II

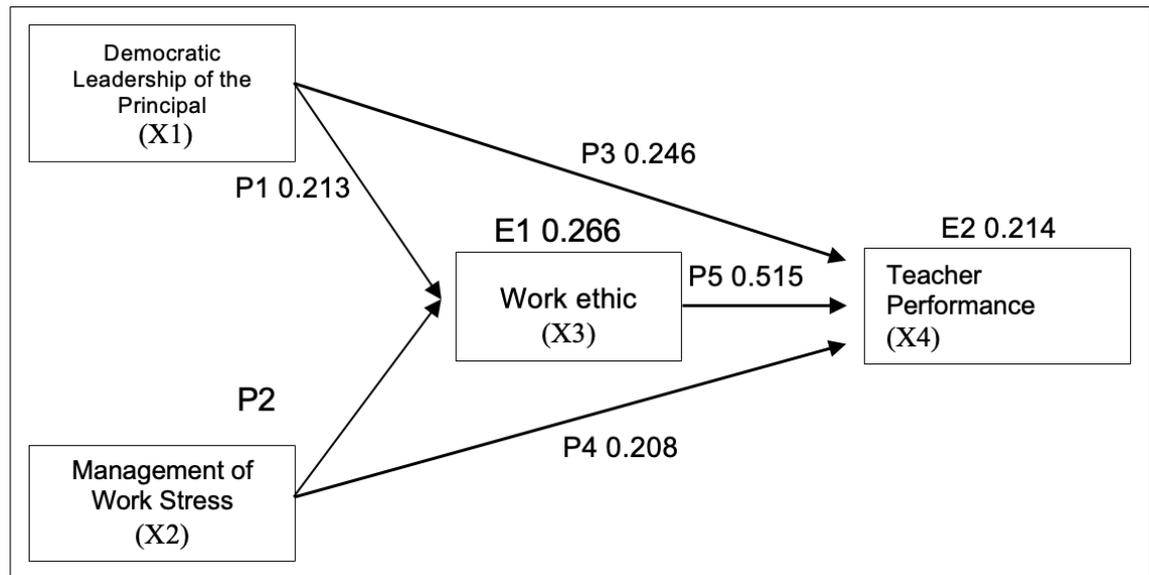


Figure 2 illustrates the path analysis results (Model II), depicting the direct and indirect relationships among the variables: Democratic Leadership of the Principal (X1), Management of Work Stress (X2), Work Ethic (X3), and Teacher Performance (X4). The path coefficient from Democratic Leadership to Teacher Performance (P3) is 0.246, indicating a moderate and positive direct effect. This means that an improvement in democratic leadership contributes to enhancing teacher performance, supporting H1. However, its influence is not the strongest among the variables considered.

Work Ethic (X3) emerges as the most influential variable on Teacher Performance (X4), as indicated by the highest path coefficient (P5 = 0.515). This finding reinforces the conclusion that work ethos significantly drives teacher performance, affirming H2. A one-unit increase in work ethos corresponds to a 0.515-unit rise in performance, highlighting the critical role of ethical dedication and commitment in professional outcomes.

Additionally, the figure shows that Democratic Leadership of the Principal (X1) positively influences Work Ethic (X3) with a path coefficient (P1) of 0.213, while Management of Work Stress (X2) affects Work Ethic with a slightly higher coefficient (P2 = 0.266). These values confirm that both leadership and stress management significantly shape the ethical behavior and commitment of teachers, validating H3. The relatively stronger influence of stress management on work ethos suggests that a supportive and well-managed work environment can meaningfully enhance teachers' professional ethics.

The indirect effect of democratic leadership on teacher performance through work ethic further supports H4, which posits a mediating role of work ethos. Since leadership affects work ethos (P1 = 0.213), which in turn strongly influences performance (P5 = 0.515), it is clear that part of leadership's impact on performance is channeled through the development of ethical work behaviors.

Furthermore, the Management of Work Stress (X2) also has a direct path to Teacher Performance (P4) with a coefficient of 0.208, reinforcing its moderate yet meaningful contribution to improving teacher performance. Stress management not only reduces workplace tension but also helps teachers remain focused and motivated.

The total predicted influence on Teacher Performance (X4), represented by E2 = 0.214, encapsulates the cumulative impact of these three independent variables. In conclusion, while democratic leadership and stress management are both important, Work ethic

stands out as the most critical factor for enhancing teacher performance. Efforts to boost performance should therefore emphasize cultivating a strong ethical work culture, supported by democratic leadership and effective stress management practices.

**Sobel Test**

**Table 14.** Sobel Test 1

Variable	Unstandardized	Std. Error	Test Statistics	P-Value	Conclusion
KKS against EK	0.132 (a)	0.048 (sa)	2.40	0.016	Influential significant
EK against KG	0.739 (b)	0.148 (sb)			

Source: SPSS Software (2024)

Based on the results of the Sobel test presented in [Table 14](#), it is evident that work ethos significantly mediates the relationship between democratic leadership of the school principal and teacher performance. The test statistic value of 2.40 with a p-value of 0.016, which is less than the 0.05 threshold, indicates that this indirect effect is statistically significant. This means that the influence of leadership on performance is not only direct but also effectively transmitted through the development of a strong work ethic among teachers. The unstandardized coefficient for the effect of leadership on work ethos is 0.132 with a standard error of 0.048, while the effect of work ethos on teacher performance is 0.739 with a standard error of 0.148. These values reinforce the conclusion that work ethos serves as a meaningful intermediary in the pathway from leadership to teacher performance.

Integrating these findings with previous analyses, it becomes clear that the democratic leadership of the principal has a significant and multifaceted role in improving teacher performance. As shown in [Table 13](#), leadership directly influences teacher performance with a t-count of 3.356 and a significance value of 0.001, and also significantly affects work ethos with a t-count of 2.742 and a significance value of 0.008. Likewise, work ethos directly enhances teacher performance, as reflected by a t-count of 5.003 and a significance value of 0.000. These relationships are further supported by the path analysis model in [Figure 2](#), which illustrates that while leadership has a moderate direct effect on performance (coefficient = 0.246), the strongest influence comes from work ethos (coefficient = 0.515). This confirms that work ethos not only acts as a critical determinant of performance but also as a mediator that amplifies the impact of leadership.

Therefore, the cumulative evidence strongly supports the research hypotheses, particularly the mediating role of work ethos. Democratic leadership fosters a conducive work environment that cultivates a stronger ethical commitment among teachers, which in turn drives higher levels of performance. These findings highlight the importance of leadership styles that prioritize participation, support, and shared values, as they lay the foundation for a motivated and high-performing teaching workforce.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of this study provide strong empirical support for the proposed hypotheses (H1-H4), revealing a complex but coherent pattern of relationships among democratic principal leadership, work ethos, and teacher performance. Based on the path analysis results, the democratic leadership of school principals has a significant and positive influence on teacher work ethos (path coefficient = 0.213), confirming H3. Although this effect is statistically significant, its magnitude is moderate, indicating that while leadership plays an important role in shaping work ethos, other contextual and personal

factors such as organizational culture, intrinsic motivation, and peer collaboration also contribute meaningfully. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that leadership sets the tone for workplace ethics but must be supported by a culture of mutual respect and shared values to be truly effective (Barclay, 2014; Modise, 2023).

The study also confirms H1: democratic leadership significantly influences teacher performance (path coefficient = 0.246). Principals who adopt a democratic style—emphasizing participation, support, and shared decision-making—can positively impact the performance of their teaching staff. However, as with work ethos, this influence is moderate in size, indicating the need for a multifaceted approach to performance improvement. This result supports prior studies, which found that while transformational and democratic leadership enhance teacher efficacy and job satisfaction, their impact is most potent when combined with conducive institutional policies and ongoing professional development (Liu et al., 2021; Tesfaw, 2014).

Most notably, H2 is strongly supported: work ethos has the most substantial direct impact on teacher performance, with a path coefficient of 0.515—the highest among all variables tested. This finding underscores the central role of internal motivation, ethical commitment, and professional dedication in determining teacher effectiveness. Teachers with a strong work ethos are more likely to engage actively in their tasks, exhibit resilience in the face of challenges, and deliver higher-quality educational outcomes. This echoes findings from prior literature that links strong work ethics with job engagement, persistence, and student achievement (Meriac, 2012; Zulkarnain et al., 2022).

Further strengthening this conclusion, the Sobel Test results provide evidence for H4, showing that work ethos significantly mediates the relationship between democratic leadership and teacher performance. The test statistic value of 2.40 and p-value of 0.016 confirm that leadership influences performance not only directly but also indirectly by fostering a stronger work ethic. This mediating effect highlights how effective leadership can instill values, commitment, and motivation in teachers, which in turn enhances their performance. These findings are in line with studies such as those by Sun et al. (2022) and Xing (2022), which emphasize the importance of leadership in shaping teachers' professional identity and work engagement.

Interestingly, the role of work stress, although not central in the initial hypotheses, also demonstrates a modest positive influence on performance (path coefficient = 0.208), suggesting that manageable levels of stress may serve as a motivator. This nuanced finding supports the “challenge-stress” perspective, where moderate stress can enhance focus and productivity (Bui et al., 2021; Gaillard, 2018). However, it also reinforces the need for caution: excessive or poorly managed stress may lead to burnout and reduced performance.

In conclusion, the findings of this study collectively validate all four hypotheses and offer a comprehensive view of the dynamics influencing teacher performance. Democratic leadership is crucial but operates most effectively through the enhancement of work ethos. Meanwhile, work ethos stands out as the strongest predictor of performance, both directly and as a mediating variable. Therefore, educational institutions seeking to improve teacher performance should adopt an integrated strategy that strengthens democratic leadership practices, cultivates ethical work values, and manages work stress constructively. Through this holistic approach, schools can create an environment that fosters motivation, commitment, and sustained excellence among teachers.

## **CONCLUSION**

The objective of this research is to analyze the influence of Democratic Leadership of School Principals and Work Ethic on Teacher Performance in Catholic junior high schools in Karo Regency. The findings indicate that the leadership of school principals positively influences work ethic. Based on path analysis, the path coefficient of 0.213 shows that democratic leadership has a positive effect on the work ethic of teachers and staff. The better the leadership, the higher the work ethic. Specifically, a one-unit improvement in leadership corresponds to a 0.213-unit increase in work ethic. Although this influence is statistically significant, the relatively small coefficient suggests that other factors, such as the work environment and organizational culture, have a more dominant role. Therefore, to significantly enhance work ethic, additional efforts such as improving teacher welfare and providing professional training are necessary. Overall, democratic leadership exerts a positive but not dominant influence on work ethic.

Work ethic (X3) demonstrates a very strong influence on teacher performance (X4), with a path coefficient of 0.515. This effect is considerably greater than that of democratic leadership (0.246). An increase of one unit in work ethic leads to a 0.515-unit increase in teacher performance, indicating that work ethic is the dominant factor in determining teacher performance. Work ethic reflects commitment, discipline, and responsibility; teachers with a strong work ethic tend to be more effective in their roles. Among the variables studied, work ethic has the greatest impact on teacher performance. Thus, during recruitment and human resource development, schools should assess the work ethic of prospective teachers. To improve teacher performance, emphasis should be placed on reinforcing work ethic through fostering a positive work culture and a supportive environment.

Principals should focus on enhancing their leadership skills and creating a supportive work environment by assisting teachers in managing work stress and encouraging the cultivation of a positive work ethic among staff. Effective leadership, characterized by clear direction, support for professional development, and a conducive work environment, positively influences teacher performance. However, because the influence of leadership is moderate, additional strategies such as teacher training, incentives, and improvements in learning facilities are necessary to optimize performance.

In conclusion, democratic leadership affects teacher performance moderately, indicating that other factors also contribute to teacher effectiveness. Teachers are encouraged to actively manage work stress, strengthen their work ethic, and participate in training programs to improve their skills and competencies. Overall, democratic leadership, effective stress management, and a strong work ethic are critical in improving teacher performance. Therefore, efforts to enhance leadership quality, support stress management, and build a positive work ethic should be prioritized in advancing education in schools.

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## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the implementation of this research. All processes in this research are carried out objectively and independently without any pressure, personal interests, or influence from any party that can affect the results of the research.

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