

## WORK ETHIC OF NYAO PEOPLE IN MOSSO VILLAGE, INDONESIA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG) BORDER AREA

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### *Abstract*

*This research aims to understand the work ethic of the Nyao people in Mosso Village, a border area between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea (PNG). The research focuses on identifying the factors that shape their work ethic and its impact on social, economic and cultural life. A qualitative approach was used in this research with ethnographic methods. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with key informants selected using a snowball sampling technique, including village heads, traditional leaders (Ondoafi), and community members. Participatory observations were also conducted to understand community work practices firsthand. Data analysis was conducted inductively through the stages of coding, categorization, and interpretation. The results showed that the work ethic of the Nyao community was formed since childhood through the socialization of cultural values in the family and community. The main factors that drive their work ethic include the values of honesty, discipline, responsibility, and adaptation to the environment. In addition, interaction with the surrounding community and the desire to achieve a better life also strengthen their work motivation. This work ethic contributes to household economic sustainability and maintaining social harmony within the community.*

**Keywords:** Border Papua Indonesia, Mosso Village, Papua New Guinea, Nyao Peoples, Work Culture, Work Ethic

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Work culture plays a crucial role in shaping the economic and social progress of a community. A strong work ethic contributes to productivity, innovation and the overall development of society. Various studies have highlighted how cultural values influence work behavior, such as the high work ethic among the Japanese that drove the growth of their industry and placed Japan among the world's leading economies (Yogi & Aritenang, 2020). Similarly in Indonesia, the Minang and Bugis communities are known for their entrepreneurial spirit, while other ethnic groups are often perceived differently based on their economic participation (Antoni, 2018). This variation demonstrates the importance of understanding work culture as a determining factor in community development.

The Nyao, an indigenous group originating from Nyao Cabring village in Papua New Guinea, have undergone significant social and economic transformation since settling in Mosso village. However, their migration history is less relevant in understanding their work culture than the life experiences and values that shape their daily practices. The environment in which Nyao people live plays a fundamental role in shaping their work ethic, influencing their adaptation strategies and work dynamics (Lekitoo,

2016). Their ability to manage, utilize and sustain living conditions reflects a distinctive cultural character shaped by internal traditions and external influences.

While the work ethic of the Nyao people in Mosso Village is strongly influenced by cultural values that emphasize community cooperation and resource sharing, there are significant gaps in the optimization of their productivity. Previous studies have shown that traditional practices in agriculture, such as sago and cassava cultivation, are still an integral part of their lives (Tommi & Agamawan, 2024). However, limited access to modern farming techniques and markets has led to low levels of production and economic well-being of the community (Apriani, 2023; Sulistiani et al., 2024). Although there have been empowerment efforts through training on digital communication and more efficient farming techniques (Rery et al., 2024), external influences such as the lack of access to education and technology are still major obstacles in improving a more adaptive and economic growth-oriented work ethic. Therefore, further research is needed to identify more effective strategies to bridge this gap and sustainably improve the competitiveness of the Nyao community.

This research aims to understand the culture and work ethic of the Nyao people, by exploring the various factors that led to the formation of this work culture and analyzing its impact on their lives. In this regard, the research will examine how the culture and work ethic of the Nyao people was formed, what values underlie it, and how internal and external factors contributed to the growth of the work culture. In addition, the research also seeks to explore the impact of the Nyao people's culture and work ethic in their daily lives, in social, economic and cultural aspects. Thus, this research is expected to provide a deeper insight into the characteristics of the Nyao people's work culture and the factors that shape it, as well as reveal its influence on their lives as a whole.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Ethos is a Greek word. In Greek spelling, the letter “e” in the word “ethos” can be epsilon (short e) and it can also be eta (long e). If the “e” is epsilon, then ethos means “habit”, “custom” or “origin”. However, if the “e” is eta, then ethos means: (1) residence, or station; (2) custom, decency, habit, disposition, or way of doing; and (3) attention, or friendliness. According to Soekito (1978), Philosophers define ethos as a character (in a play) that must become the character of the actor. Meanwhile, socio-logists define ethos as a number of characteristic cultural traits that differentiate and play a group with other groups (Desmita, 2016).

Meanwhile, Sinamo (2014) defines ethos in relation to the world of work as a paradigm that contains a noble spirit, noble values, and superior morality that manifests into a set of positive work behaviors, such as working right and honestly, writing and sincere work, working frugally and carefully, working without guilt and without waste. So, work ethic is nothing but a mental attitude or way of seeing, perceiving, appreciating, and valuing the value of work. Work ethic will affect the spirit, quality and productivity of work. Work ethic will also form a transformative spirit, a spirit that always tries to change the situation towards a better quality or a spirit and mental attitude that believes that today's life must be better than yesterday, and tomorrow must be better than today (Panjaitan et al., 2022).

The negative image of Indonesian mentality is also described by Mochtar Lubis as follows: hypocritical, reluctant and reluctant to take responsibility, feudal in attitude and

behavior, superstitious, artistic and weak in character (Anshori, 2018). Jones (2012) even more harshly assesses Indonesian people today as a nation that is lazy, passive in the face of challenges brought by the modernization process and at the very least unable to do something meaningful on its own initiative. Sinamo (2014) summarizes the eight work cultures of the Indonesian nation which he calls the crazy work culture, namely: 1). Instead of working sincerely with gratitude, many people prefer to work reluctantly because they think “my salary is very small”; 2). Rather than working righteously and responsibly, many people prefer to work for money alone and legalize all means with the slogan “all matters require cash”. 3). Instead of working thoroughly and with integrity, many people would rather denounce their honest colleagues as fools and advise them to “work smart to survive”. 4). Instead of working hard with passion, many people prefer to take it easy with the principle of “the mountain won't run away”. 5). Instead of working seriously and with love, many people prefer to do their work in a routine that is full of boredom and at the end of the week, they exclaim happily “thank God, it's Friday”. 6). Instead of working smart and full of creativity, many people prefer to work as much as their stomachs, saying “we are not the owners of this company and country”. 7). Instead of working diligently with excellence, many people prefer to work as they please with the attitude of “what do I care, what do I think”. 8). Instead of working in full humility, many people prefer to work indifferently with the attitude of “you know, what else do you want; this is already good” (Desmita, 2016).

The work ethic of indigenous and rural communities is strongly influenced by cultural values and customs, reflecting a unique perspective on work and responsibility. In indigenous communities, work is often seen as a moral obligation that not only fulfills the needs of the individual, but also the community as a whole (Hermanus et al., 2023). In addition, social relationships within the community play an important role in shaping the work ethic, emphasizing respect and reciprocity in daily work interactions (Harrison & Williams, 2018). Cultural practices, such as weaving among the Timorese, also demonstrate discipline and pride in skills passed down through generations, emphasizing the importance of quality and responsibility in work (Hermanus et al., 2023).

In addition, indigenous communities are known for their resilience and ability to adapt to various challenges. The strengths-based perspective in indigenous communities emphasizes that challenges are not obstacles, but rather opportunities to strengthen social cohesion and shared growth (Walls et al., 2024). Cultural values also provide a foundation for individual perseverance, as seen in the Madurese entrepreneurial spirit rooted in their cultural and religious beliefs (Zuhri et al., 2024). While the work ethic of indigenous communities is often admired for its resilience and strength, external challenges such as modernization and economic pressures remain factors that affect the sustainability of traditional work practices. Hence, it is important to understand the complexity of indigenous peoples' work ethic and how they continue to evolve in the face of changing times.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to understand the work ethic of the Nyao community in Mosso Village, a border area of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. This approach aims to explore the meanings, patterns, and factors

that shape the work ethic of the local community through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies.

### **3.2. Location and Research Subjects**

The research was conducted in Mosso Village, Muara Tami District, Jayapura City. Mosso is a village that borders Papua New Guinea, has an area of 32.7 km<sup>2</sup>, and borders Yetti Village to the south, Skouw Sae Village to the north, Sangke Village to the west, and Papua New Guinea to the east.

Research subjects were selected by purposive sampling, involving traditional leaders (Ondoafi), community leaders, village heads, and residents who have a deep understanding of the culture and work ethic of the Nyao community.

### **3.3. Data Collection Techniques**

This research used several data collection techniques to obtain comprehensive information. Participatory observation was conducted by directly observing the daily activities of the community, including patterns of social interaction and economic practices that reflect their work ethic. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with several key informants, such as Ondoafi, village heads and local residents, to better understand the cultural values and factors that influence their work ethic. To complement the primary data, documentation studies were also used by referring to various secondary sources, such as local government reports, historical records, and relevant previous research.

### **3.4. Data Analysis Technique**

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process began with data reduction, where data from interviews and observations were recorded, categorized, and reduced based on the main themes relevant to the work ethic of the Nyao community. Furthermore, the reduced data is presented in the form of descriptive narratives to describe the patterns and characteristics of the work ethic found in the field. The final stage in this analysis is conclusion drawing, where the main findings from the analysis are interpreted and linked to relevant theories, so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

### **3.5. Data Validity**

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (comparing data from various informants), technique triangulation (using interviews, observation, and documentation), as well as discussions with fellow researchers to ensure consistency of findings.

### **3.6. Research Ethics**

Prior to conducting the research, official permission was obtained from the Jayapura City government, Muara Tami District, as well as related parties such as POS Satgas Pamtas TNI and Mosso customary leaders. The researcher also guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of the informants, and obtained consent before the interviews were conducted.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Result Analysis

#### 4.1.1. Characteristics and Mentality of the Nyao People

The work culture of the Nyao community is formed from childhood, where individuals begin to learn values, rules and cultural norms within the family institution. These values are then socialized in social groups and implemented in community life through motivation, attitudes and daily behavior. Thus, work culture for the Nyao people is not just a habit, but also a self-identity in developing life and expressing oneself.

One of the main aspects of the Nyao community's work ethic is the activity of sago flour production. Processing local food resources into daily staple foods is a practice based on cultural values. This activity not only shows their identity, but also reflects their high work spirit and motivation. In addition, the management of natural resources to meet household economic needs is evidence of the perseverance and patience of the Nyao community in cultivating garden land in order to produce economic surpluses and meet daily food needs.



**Figure 1. Opening Gardens & Land Management**

Source: Primary data, 2018

In their daily lives, Nyao people also show great care for their tools. Repairing and maintaining tools of life is done with care, patience and a sense of responsibility. This activity reflects the importance of sustainability in their lives. In addition, hard work in obtaining daily food needs shows care and responsibility in finding, preparing and providing basic needs for the family. The motivation to continue working to make ends meet makes time a very valuable aspect of the Nyao people's lives.



**Figure 2. Repair equipment and go to work in the garden**

Source: primary data, 2018

In the field of trade, the Nyao community in Mosso Village shows persistence, diligence, seriousness and responsibility in running their business. For some

communities, trading activities are the main source of income for the family, while for others, trading serves as an additional source of income alongside other economic activities such as gardening. The flexibility in running various economic businesses demonstrates the Nyao community's ability to manage resources and adapt to existing economic conditions.

Early education for Nyao children is an effort to shape the character of hard work and fighting mentality so that they are able to achieve their desired goals. Accustoming children to listening to stories from adults about customs and the surrounding natural environment provides deep memories and knowledge. It also fosters a mentality of patience and care in their culture. The fighting spirit in adapting to the surrounding natural environment provides great benefits in the process of adapting to the lives of the Nyao people, forming characters who care about the environment and understand the surrounding conditions throughout life.

In addition, learning to catch fish in nature and getting used to processing existing resources in cultural life provides a real experience of how to work hard to achieve something. This activity instills an attitude of hard work, perseverance and resilience to achieve success. Meanwhile, cooperation within the family through various productive activities fosters a sense of shared responsibility in completing a job, both in cultural and social activities. Thus, cooperation is an integral part of Nyao community life that supports the sustainability of the brand's work culture.

#### **4.1.2. Factors Driving the Growth of the Nyao Work Ethic**

The main factor driving the growth of Nyao society is knowledge, which plays a crucial role in every activity of their lives. With their knowledge, Nyao people are able to understand various aspects of the universe, the surrounding environment and their own culture. Through this understanding, they make every effort to manage and utilize natural resources to meet their needs. The desire to achieve a prosperous and happy life, like other families in Mosso Village, encourages them to carry out various activities with seriousness, hard work and patience until they get the expected results.

The motivation to progress and develop like other communities makes the Nyao community strive to realize their goals by applying the values of honesty, discipline, helpfulness, perseverance, attention, and responsibility in various activities. Caring attitudes and sensitivity to positive activities also shape their character and motivation in living their daily lives. With this kind of behavior, the sense of solidarity increases in carrying out various collective activities.

Success in life cannot be achieved by being passive, lazy, or idle. Instead, hard work in various activities is the main key to achieving success. This is in line with Work Ethic theory, which emphasizes the importance of dedication, effort, and discipline in the world of work. The high work ethic, as demonstrated by the Nyao people, reflects key principles in the Work Ethic, such as tenacity, responsibility and perseverance in achieving economic and social well-being. For example, a Nyao trader will work hard to prepare his wares at the kiosk in order to meet the basic needs of the local community. Thus, the work ethic practiced by Nyao people is a major factor in promoting their sustainable growth and prosperity.

### **4.1.3. Impact of the Nyao Peoples Work Ethic**

The work ethic of the Nyao community has a positive impact on the fulfillment of their daily needs as well as being a source of motivation for them to continue to improve their standard of living. The various activities they carry out reflect a strong determination to develop and adapt to the changing demands of life. Nyao people do not just work to survive, but also have an intrinsic drive to achieve a better future. This is in line with the concept of work ethic, which emphasizes that work values such as dedication, perseverance and goal-orientation are major factors in improving the welfare of individuals and communities (Leong et al., 2014).

The characteristics of the Nyao community are shaped by cultural values passed down through generations, such as honesty, discipline and hard work, which are key principles in their social interactions and economic activities. This strong work ethic shows dedication and resilience in the face of various challenges, so that every effort made is always directed towards the welfare of the community. These values are not just abstract norms, but are practiced consistently in daily life, forming the basis of their social structure. This perspective is in line with research by Mitonga-Monga et al. (2016) which asserts that a high work ethic contributes to increased productivity and competitiveness of local communities in the face of changing social and economic environments.

In addition, the lives of Nyao people are strongly influenced by the spirit of solidarity and cooperation. They emphasize the importance of helping each other, caring for others, and collective efforts to achieve common progress. This spirit of togetherness strengthens their determination to achieve equality with communities outside Mosso Village, not in the context of competition, but as an effort to improve themselves and enhance their quality of life. This drive to improve is not only aimed at individual gain, but also at the welfare of the community as a whole. This is relevant to contemporary work ethic theory, which highlights the role of work ethic in building inclusive and sustainable communities, where hard work and togetherness are the main foundations in creating long-term prosperity (Breen & Deranty, 2021). Thus, the Nyao community shows that a strong work ethic, supported by cultural values and togetherness, is a major factor in building a better life. Consistency in applying ethical work principles not only improves individual well-being but also strengthens their social resilience in the face of dynamic global change.

## **4.2. Discussion**

The work ethic of the Nyao people is strongly linked to their cultural identity and environmental practices. This ethos reflects a disciplined lifestyle that has been passed down through generations. Nyao agricultural practices are rooted in indigenous knowledge that emphasizes sustainability and community dynamics (Fenetiruma & Kamakaula, 2023). Their work ethic reflects cultural beliefs similar to the Protestant work ethic proposed by Max Weber, where hard work is considered a virtue associated with identity (Sa'i, 2023). The traditional farming methods used by the Nyao people promote ecological balance, demonstrating their respect for nature and sustainable practices (Kusmarni & Holilah, 2018). The integration of local wisdom in agriculture emphasizes the importance of maintaining biodiversity and cultural heritage, as is also seen in other indigenous communities (Prayoga et al., 2020). Despite facing external pressures, the Nyao people have maintained their work ethic for the sake of cultural continuity and sustainability (Tosam, 2024). Their perseverance is not only for economic gain, but also

as a form of maintaining cultural identity in a changing world. However, it is important to realize that a high work ethic alone does not guarantee economic success, as evidenced by other communities that face similar challenges despite their industry (Sa'i, 2023).

The Nyao people's agricultural practices, such as land clearing and planting, reflect their patience and resilience. These activities illustrate a strong work ethic, which contributes to economic viability and social cohesion. In addition, the maintenance of work equipment demonstrates their commitment to responsibility and sustainability, reflecting long-term planning and good resource management (Zuhri et al., 2024). Nyao culture's emphasis on self-reliance reflects the Japanese bushido ethos, which values discipline and continuous self-improvement. These cultural parallels highlight the importance of work ethic in promoting collective progress and social stability. However, while Nyao's work ethic is commendable, there are potential negative impacts such as stress from high workloads, which can affect individual well-being.

The strong communal values in Nyao society reinforce their work ethic, fostering a culture of mutual support and shared responsibility. This cooperative spirit is reflected in their economic activities, such as fishing and agriculture, which not only strengthens collective identity but also enhances economic resilience. This is in line with Durkheim's theory of mechanical solidarity, where shared norms and values sustain traditional societies. Their involvement in cooperative fishing and farming helps improve food security and builds strong social ties (Matogo et al., 2024). Education plays an important role in instilling work values from an early age through storytelling and informal education. Nyao's adaptive strategies in education reflect Bandura's social learning theory, where children learn through observation and participation in community activities. This method ensures that future generations maintain a strong work ethic that is essential for community resilience (Pendry, 2022). The communal labor system in Nyao society strengthens group unity and economic decision-making. This collective approach encourages leadership that is aligned with community goals, thereby contributing to overall economic growth (Maziarz, 2016). However, while communal values bring benefits, the high reliance on group dynamics can also be challenging, especially in terms of individual innovation and personal initiative.

Nyao people's motivations are driven by collective aspirations for common progress, which is in line with Weber's idea that cultural values support economic behavior. Their involvement in trade and agriculture is not only for personal gain but also to improve the well-being of their community, creating a sense of common purpose. The Nyao people's work ethic reflects Sen's capability approach, which emphasizes the importance of pursuing meaningful economic opportunities to improve well-being. This perspective encourages self-improvement and community development, reinforcing their commitment to hard work. Nyao people are also motivated by comparisons with other communities, striving to achieve equal levels of progress while retaining their cultural identity. However, there are challenges in maintaining a balance between collective interests and individual aspirations, which can create tension between personal goals and community expectations.

It can thus be concluded that the work ethic of the Nyao people is deeply rooted in their cultural traditions, social structure and environmental adaptations. Their work attitude is characterized by diligence, responsibility and collective cooperation, which is evident in their agricultural practices, sago processing and trading activities. From an early age, Nyao individuals are socialized into a work system that not only aims for

economic survival but also reflects their cultural identity and community values. This is in line with Geertz's (1963) view that work is an integral part of how people view the world. By emphasizing discipline and self-reliance, they demonstrate a balance between traditional resilience and aspirations of progress, making work ethic an important aspect of their survival and identity. While a high work ethic has provided many benefits, challenges such as work stress and the balance between individual and collective interests need to be addressed. Thus, it is important to continue to maintain a balance between cultural heritage and adaptation to socio-economic change for the future sustainability of the Nyao people.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The results of this study show that the work ethic of the Nyao community is an integral part of their cultural identity that has been passed down from generation to generation. This work culture is formed from childhood through socialization in the family and social groups, and applied in daily life. Key activities such as sago flour production, farm management and trading are clear evidence of how the Nyao people carry out their work ethic with diligence, discipline and responsibility. Values such as honesty, hard work and solidarity become the main foundation in shaping their character and work mentality. In addition, the care of their tools and diligence in meeting their daily food needs reflect the importance of sustainability in their lives.

The growth of the Nyao people's work ethic is driven by various factors, including knowledge, motivation and cultural values. Knowledge of the environment and natural resources enables them to optimize the use of resources to meet their needs. Motivation to achieve prosperity and the desire to develop like other communities encourage them to work hard and apply the values of discipline, diligence and responsibility in every economic activity. Solidarity and mutual cooperation also play an important role in building a collective work spirit that strengthens the social and economic resilience of the Nyao community. The impact of this strong work ethic is not only visible in the economic aspect, but also in the cultural sustainability and social cohesion of the Nyao community. They do not simply work to survive, but also have an intrinsic drive to achieve a better future. Their work values contribute to the community's increased productivity and competitiveness in the face of social and economic change. The high spirit of solidarity allows the Nyao community to continue to develop without losing their cultural identity. Thus, this study confirms that a high work ethic, supported by cultural values and community cooperation, is a major factor in building a more prosperous and sustainable life for the Nyao people.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the local government and relevant agencies provide further support in skills development and market access for the Nyao community. Community-based training programs can be introduced to improve efficiency in natural resource management and economic diversification. In addition, policies are needed that support the sustainability of the Nyao people's work culture by strengthening early education on work ethic values, both in the family environment and formal education.

Supporting the trade sector and small businesses is also important so that Nyao communities can improve the competitiveness of their local products. The development of adequate infrastructure, access to technology, and guidance in marketing can help

expand their economic opportunities. In addition, strengthening the value of mutual cooperation and solidarity within the community will continue to be a major factor in maintaining a high work ethic and ensuring sustainable prosperity for the Nyao people.

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