

Determinants of Work Ethic and Performance of Primary School Educational Staff in SAMARINDA

Lisa Agus Tina¹, Muhammad Yusril Ade Mahendra², Ilmi Mu'min Musyrifin³, Donny Henndrawan⁴, Baiq Mira⁵

¹ Management, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur,

² Management, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, mya472@umkt.ac.id

³ Management, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, 2411102435026@umkt.ac.id

⁴ Management, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, 2411102435008@umkt.ac.id

Abstract

Purpose:

This study aims to analyze the determinants of work ethic and performance among educational personnel at Public and Private Elementary Schools in Samarinda City. Specifically, this research examines the effect of religiosity and work environment on work ethic and performance, as well as analyzes the role of work ethic as a mediating variable in these relationships.

Design/methodology/approach:

A quantitative approach was employed using a survey method. Sampling was conducted using proportional random sampling and purposive sampling techniques, resulting in 134 respondents from managerial-level educational personnel (principals, vice principals, heads of administration, and treasurers) across 67 elementary schools. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software.

Findings:

The analysis reveals that both religiosity and work environment have a positive and significant effect on the work ethic and performance of educational personnel. However, the findings also demonstrate that work ethic does not significantly affect performance. Furthermore, work ethic is not proven to act as a mediating variable in the relationship between religiosity and performance, nor between work environment and performance.

Practical implications:

School management needs to focus directly on strengthening the internalization of religious values and improving the quality of the work environment, both physically and psychosocially, to enhance the performance of educational personnel. Since work ethic does not automatically translate into performance, management is advised not only to provide work ethic training but also to improve structural systems, implement transformational leadership, and establish a value-based reward system so that individual dedication can be actualized into measurable performance.

Originality/value:

This research provides new insights within the context of basic education that a high work ethic does not automatically serve as a bridge (mediator) for performance improvement if it is not supported by bureaucratic system flexibility and aligned structural support. This study highlights that the influence of religiosity and work environment facilities operates directly on the actual work outcomes of educational personnel in Samarinda City.

Paper type: empirical

Keywords: Religiosity, Work Environment, Work Ethic, performance

1. Introduction

The management of human resources in educational institutions is a critical factor in achieving national education goals. While much attention is placed on teachers, the role of educational personnel—such as administrative staff, principals, treasurers, and librarians—is equally indispensable for supporting optimal educational processes (Irfani & Mulyana, 2023). Effective human resource management directly enhances the quality of administrative services, which in turn influences the effectiveness of the learning process and student outcomes. However, educational personnel constantly

face demands to adapt to technological advancements and complex administrative workloads, which require a solid foundation of motivation and a supportive workplace. To address these challenges, individual intrinsic factors, particularly religiosity, play a foundational role. Religiosity encourages individuals to behave in accordance with religious rules and moral standards in the workplace (Ancok & Suroso, 2019). Previous studies have demonstrated that high religiosity can act as a personal resource that significantly increases work motivation, engagement, and employee well-being (Abualigah et al., 2021). Alongside intrinsic motivation, extrinsic factors such as the work environment are crucial in shaping employee performance. A substantial body of literature suggests that a positive and conducive work environment positively impacts employee performance and career success (Girdwichai & Sriviboon, 2020; Juliarti et al., 2018; Xue et al., 2019). Conversely, some studies argue that the work environment does not significantly affect employee performance, indicating an ongoing academic debate that necessitates further investigation. Furthermore, work ethic is frequently hypothesized to be the bridge that translates these intrinsic values and extrinsic conditions into optimal performance. A strong work ethic has been shown to significantly influence performance in various Muhammadiyah schools and other educational settings (Bakir & Setiawan, 2021). Educational background, work experience, motivation, and a supportive environment are proven to foster a strong work ethic (Harkriskayani & Putra, 2024; Siregar et al., 2025). Despite this, empirical evidence regarding the precise mediating role of work ethic between religiosity, work environment, and the performance of non-teaching educational personnel remains inconclusive, creating a distinct research gap. This study contextualizes these variables within Samarinda City, which comprises 222 elementary schools (163 public and 59 private). Educational personnel in both public and private sectors in Samarinda face unique challenges, including unequal professional development opportunities and varying levels of employee welfare, while simultaneously being expected to integrate religious character-building into their work culture. Therefore, to fill the identified research gaps, this study aims to analyze the determinants of work ethic and performance among educational personnel in Samarinda City. Specifically, this study rigorously evaluates the direct effects of religiosity and work environment on performance, and examines whether work ethic serves as a significant mediating variable in these relationships.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Religiosity

Religiosity refers to an individual's religious maturity, which drives them to behave in accordance with the level of their adherence to religious teachings (Ancok & Suroso, 2019). In the organizational context, individuals with high religiosity will act according to religious rules in the workplace, encompassing beliefs, religious practices, religious experiences, knowledge, and consequences (Ancok & Suroso, 2019). Religiosity acts as a crucial personal resource that enhances employee well-being and engagement, particularly in demanding environments (Abualigah et al., 2021).

2.2 Work Environment

The work environment encompasses all external forces, physical conditions, and psychological relations that potentially affect organizational performance (Robbins & Judge, 2013). It includes everything present in the workplace and the overall relationships that occur among employees (Noah & Steve, 2012). Applying the job demands-resources model, the work environment consists of resources—such as social support and adequate facilities—that can enhance employee well-being and performance, counteracting the negative impacts of job demands (Lytsy & Friberg, 2020). A comprehensive work environment includes physical facilities, work equipment, social facilities, and technological support (Robbins & Coulter, 2012).

2.3 Work Ethic

Work ethic is defined as a set of positive work behaviors rooted in strong cooperation, belief, and commitment to a job (Sinamo, 2020). It represents a positive attitude demonstrated by individuals acting with professionalism and initiative to achieve optimal results (Karauwan et al., 2015). Key indicators of work ethic include work centrality, appreciation for hard work, perceiving work as an obligation, and the delay of gratification (Grabowski et al., 2021). A strong work ethic correlates positively with work motivation and can function as a crucial mediating variable connecting intrinsic values to job quality (Grabowski et al., 2021; Meriac, 2015; Syah, 2023).

2.1.4. Employee Performance

Performance is the actual achievement of an employee compared to the expected performance standards set by the organization (Dessler, 2013). It encompasses the value of a series of worker behaviors that contribute, either positively or negatively, to the accomplishment of organizational goals (Gibson et al., 2012). Employee performance is shaped by individual, organizational, and psychological factors (Gibson et al., 2012). To objectively evaluate performance, standard indicators such as quality of work, promptness, initiative, capability, and communication are utilized.

Drawing upon the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence discussed in the literature review, the conceptual framework of this study integrates intrinsic and extrinsic factors to explain employee performance. Specifically, this research postulates that religiosity, acting as an intrinsic moral and spiritual compass, and the work environment, functioning as an extrinsic organizational support system, simultaneously shape the work attitudes and outcomes of educational personnel. Furthermore, work ethic is positioned as a potential mediating mechanism that bridges these foundational factors with actual job performance. Based on these theoretical interconnections and identified research gaps, the following hypotheses are formulated to be empirically tested within the context of elementary school educational personnel.

H₁: Religiosity has a positive and significant effect on the work ethic of educational personnel.

H₂: Religiosity has a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational personnel.

H₃: The work environment has a positive and significant effect on the work ethic of educational personnel.

H₄: The work environment has a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational personnel.

H₅: Work ethic has a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational personnel.

H₆: Religiosity has a positive and significant effect on performance through work ethic as a mediating variable.

H₇: The work environment has a positive and significant effect on performance through work ethic as a mediating variable.

3. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research design utilizing a survey method to objectively examine the relationships between religiosity, work environment, work ethic, and employee performance. The population comprised all educational personnel across 222 elementary schools, consisting of 163 public schools and 59 private schools in Samarinda City, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. A two-stage sampling process was conducted, beginning with a proportional random sampling technique that selected 30% of the total schools, yielding 67 schools (49 public and 18 private). Subsequently, a purposive sampling technique was utilized to select 134 respondents who held managerial positions, specifically principals, vice principals, heads of administration, treasurers, and head librarians.

The conceptual framework involved two independent variables (religiosity and work environment), one mediating variable (work ethic), and one dependent variable (employee performance). Religiosity was measured through belief, religious practices, religious experiences, religious knowledge, and consequences. The work environment was assessed based on physical and psychological surroundings, including work facilities, work equipment, social facilities, and technological facilities. Work ethic was operationalized through indicators such as discipline, responsibility, hard work, honesty, integrity, work commitment, professionalism, and educational or work background experience. Employee performance was evaluated using metrics including quality of work, promptness, initiative, capability, and communication. All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Primary data were collected directly from the respondents using structured questionnaires distributed both physically and digitally via Google Forms, supported by secondary data from literature reviews and official documents.

The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) facilitated by the SmartPLS software, a technique chosen for its suitability in confirming complex theoretical relationships even with non-normally distributed data. The analysis was conducted in two main stages, starting with the evaluation of the outer measurement model to confirm construct validity and reliability. Convergent validity was established using outer loading factors greater than 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.5, while discriminant validity was examined

through cross-loadings. Construct reliability was verified using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, meeting the required 0.6–0.7 threshold. Subsequently, the inner structural model was evaluated to determine the model's predictive power using the Coefficient of Determination (R^2). Hypotheses and mediation effects were rigorously assessed by analyzing path coefficients, T-statistics (> 1.96), and p-values (< 0.05) to determine the significance of both the direct and indirect relationships among the variables.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

Tabel 1. Respondent Characteristics

Indikator	Kategori	Frekuensi	Persentase
Jenis Kelamin	Laki-laki	63	52,99%
	Perempuan	71	47,01%
Usia	<30 Tahun	30	22,39%
	31-40 Tahun	37	27,61%
	41-50 Tahun	35	26,12%
	>50 Tahun	32	23,88%
Lama Bekerja	1-5 Tahun	32	23,88%
	6-10 Tahun	37	27,61%
	11-15 Tahun	35	26,12%
	>15 Tahun	30	22,39%
Jabatan	Kepala Sekolah	36	26,87%
	Wakil Kepala Sekolah	31	23,13%
	Kepala Tata Usaha	36	26,87%
	Bendahara	31	23,13%

A total of 134 educational personnel from public and private elementary schools in Samarinda participated in this study. Male respondents accounted for 52.99%, while female respondents represented 47.01%. Most respondents were between 31 and 40 years old (27.61%), followed by those aged 41–50 years (26.12%), above 50 years (23.88%), and below 30 years (22.39%). Regarding working experience, the largest proportion had worked for 6–10 years (27.61%). Respondents also represented various administrative positions, including principals, vice principals, heads of administration, and treasurers, indicating that the sample adequately reflects the composition of educational personnel in elementary schools.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated using convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests. All measurement indicators demonstrated outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for every construct exceeded 0.50, confirming satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, discriminant validity was established since each indicator loaded highest on its respective construct compared to other constructs, indicating that all latent variables were empirically distinct.

Tabel 2. Measurement model

Variabel	Indikator	Loading Factor	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Hasil
Religiusitas	RL1.1	0,946		
	RL1.2	0,954		
	RL1.3	0,961		
	RL1.4	0,964		
	RL1.5	0,960		
	RL2.1	0,956		
	RL2.2	0,954		
	RL2.3	0,956		
	RL2.4	0,950		

Variabel	Indikator	Loading Factor	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Hasil
	RL2.5	0,964	0,919	VALID
	RL3.1	0,963		
	RL3.2	0,958		
	RL3.3	0,961		
	RL3.4	0,962		
	RL3.5	0,959		
	RL4.1	0,965		
	RL4.2	0,959		
	RL4.3	0,967		
	RL4.4	0,955		
	RL4.5	0,956		
	RL5.1	0,963		
	RL5.2	0,951		
	RL5.3	0,960		
	RL5.4	0,960		
	RL5.5	0,962		
Lingkungan Kerja	LK1.1	0,952	0,920	VALID
	LK1.2	0,955		
	LK1.3	0,950		
	LK1.4	0,961		
	LK1.5	0,958		
	LK2.1	0,969		
	LK2.2	0,959		
	LK2.3	0,951		
	LK2.4	0,964		
	LK2.5	0,962		
	LK3.1	0,973		
	LK3.2	0,960		
	LK3.3	0,963		
	LK3.4	0,959		
	LK3.5	0,958		
	LK4.1	0,961		
	LK4.2	0,959		
	LK4.3	0,963		
	LK4.4	0,950		
	LK4.5	0,957		
	LK5.1	0,959		
	LK5.2	0,952		
	LK5.3	0,963		
	LK5.4	0,958		
	LK5.5	0,965		
Etos Kerja	EK1.1	0,960		
	EK1.2	0,951		
	EK1.3	0,966		
	EK1.4	0,961		

Reliability assessment also indicated satisfactory internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.996 to 0.998, while Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.996 to 0.998. These values substantially exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating that all constructs were highly reliable for subsequent structural model analysis.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

Tabel 3. Model Assessment

Variabel	<i>R Square</i>	<i>R Square Adjusted</i>
Etos Kerja (Y1)	0,303	0,297
Kinerja Tenaga Kependidikan (Y2)	0,161	0,151

The explanatory power of the structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2). The R^2 value for Work Ethic was 0.303, indicating that Religiosity and Work Environment jointly explained 30.3% of the variance in Work Ethic. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for Educational Personnel Performance was 0.161, suggesting that the proposed model explained 16.1% of the variance in performance. These findings indicate a moderate explanatory power for Work Ethic and a relatively weak explanatory power for Performance.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Tabel 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hipotesis	Hubungan Variabel	<i>T-Statistics</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	Result Hipotesis
H1	Religiusitas > Etos Kerja	7,434	0,000	Supported
H2	Religiusitas > Kinerja Tenaga Kependidikan	2,834	0,005	Supported
H3	Lingkungan Kerja > Etos Kerja	7,745	0,000	Supported
H4	Lingkungan Kerja > Kinerja Tenaga Kependidikan	5,227	0,000	Supported
H5	Etos Kerja > Kinerja Tenaga Kependidikan	0,604	0,546	Rijected

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. The results revealed that Religiosity positively influenced Work Ethic ($t = 7.434$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Religiosity also had a significant positive effect on Educational Personnel Performance ($t = 2.834$, $p = 0.005$), supporting H2. Likewise, Work Environment significantly affected Work Ethic ($t = 7.745$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3, and positively influenced Performance ($t = 5.227$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. However, the effect of Work Ethic on Performance was not significant ($t = 0.604$, $p = 0.546$); therefore, H5 was rejected.

Hipotesis	Hubungan Variabel	<i>T-Statistics</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	Hasil Hipotesis
H6	Religiusitas -> Etos Kerja > Kinerja Tenaga Kependidikan	0,593	0,553	Rijected
H7	Lingkungan Kerja -> Etos Kerja > Kinerja Tenaga Kependidikan	0,597	0,551	Rijected

The indirect effect analysis further demonstrated that Work Ethic did not mediate the relationship between Religiosity and Performance ($t = 0.593$, $p = 0.553$), nor the relationship between Work Environment and Performance ($t = 0.597$, $p = 0.551$). Consequently, both H6 and H7 were rejected.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 Religiosity and Work Ethic

The findings of this study indicate that religiosity has a positive and significant effect on the work ethic of educational personnel. This result suggests that individuals with higher levels of religiosity tend to demonstrate stronger work ethics, reflected in greater discipline, responsibility, honesty, and commitment in carrying out their duties. Religiosity encourages employees to perceive their work not

merely as an occupational responsibility but also as a moral and spiritual obligation, thereby fostering a stronger sense of accountability and dedication in the workplace.

From a theoretical perspective, religiosity serves as an internal value system that guides individual behaviour in organizational settings. Individuals who possess strong religious beliefs are more likely to internalize ethical values and translate them into positive work attitudes. Consequently, educational personnel with high religiosity are expected to exhibit greater sincerity, integrity, and perseverance when performing their responsibilities. This finding supports the argument of Ancok and Suroso, who explain that religiosity reflects an individual's level of religious maturity that encourages behaviour consistent with religious teachings, including behaviour in the workplace. Furthermore, Agustina and Wibowo reported that religiosity contributes positively to employees' work ethic by strengthening moral commitment and personal responsibility.

The present finding is also consistent with several previous empirical studies. Alharbi et al. (2021) reported that intrinsic religiosity significantly enhances employees' motivation and responsibility in educational and social service organizations. Similarly, Arslan & Roudaki (2022) found that religious values strengthen integrity, discipline, and ethical behaviour among employees working in multinational organizations operating within Islamic countries. Likewise, Chaudry & Riaz (2014) demonstrated that religiosity positively influences proactive work behaviour and organizational loyalty among public-sector employees. Collectively, these studies suggest that religiosity functions as an important psychological resource capable of promoting stronger work ethics across different organizational contexts.

The findings of this study extend previous research by confirming that the positive relationship between religiosity and work ethic also exists among educational personnel working in elementary schools in Samarinda. Unlike employees in commercial organizations, educational personnel play an important supporting role in ensuring the quality of educational services. Consequently, religious values become an important personal resource that encourages employees to maintain professional conduct while simultaneously fulfilling their moral responsibilities within educational institutions.

Overall, these findings reinforce the view that religiosity represents one of the important determinants of work ethic. Strengthening religious values within educational organizations may therefore contribute to fostering greater responsibility, integrity, and commitment among educational personnel, ultimately supporting the effectiveness of educational service delivery.

4.5.2 Religiosity and Educational Personnel Performance

The findings of this study reveal that religiosity has a positive and significant effect on the performance of educational personnel. This result indicates that individuals with higher levels of religiosity tend to demonstrate better job performance in carrying out their administrative and educational responsibilities. Religiosity appears to strengthen employees' commitment to their work by encouraging responsibility, honesty, discipline, and consistency, which ultimately contribute to improved organizational performance.

From a theoretical perspective, religiosity provides employees with an internal moral framework that influences work-related attitudes and behaviours. Employees who perceive their work as part of their religious responsibility are more likely to perform their duties conscientiously and maintain ethical standards in everyday activities. Consequently, religiosity serves not only as a personal belief system but also as an intrinsic motivational resource that enhances employees' effectiveness in achieving organizational goals. This argument supports the view of Ancok and Suroso that religiosity shapes individual behaviour according to religious principles, including workplace behaviour. Moreover, religiosity has been recognized as an important psychological resource that promotes employee engagement and well-being, both of which contribute positively to job performance.

The present finding is consistent with previous empirical studies. Bal & Kökalan (2021) reported that religiosity provides emotional and spiritual support that enables employees to cope more effectively with workplace challenges, thereby improving work performance. Abualigah et al. (2021) further explained that religiosity functions as a personal resource capable of increasing employees' psychological well-being and work engagement, which subsequently leads to higher performance. Collectively, these studies indicate that religiosity contributes to employee performance through enhanced motivation, resilience, and ethical behaviour.

The findings of this study extend previous literature by confirming that the positive influence of religiosity on employee performance also applies to educational personnel working in elementary

schools. Unlike many previous studies conducted in corporate or public organizations, this study demonstrates that religiosity remains an important determinant of performance within educational institutions, where employees are expected not only to accomplish administrative tasks efficiently but also to uphold educational values and professional ethics. Religious values therefore become an essential personal resource that encourages educational personnel to maintain high-quality performance while supporting the educational mission of the school.

Overall, these findings emphasize that strengthening religious values among educational personnel may represent an effective strategy for improving organizational performance. Educational institutions may therefore consider incorporating spiritual development activities into human resource development programs to reinforce employees' ethical commitment and professional responsibility.

4.5.3 Work Environment and Work Ethic

The results indicate that the work environment has a positive and significant effect on the work ethic of educational personnel. This finding suggests that employees who work in supportive organizational environments are more likely to demonstrate stronger discipline, responsibility, commitment, and dedication toward their duties. A favourable work environment provides both physical and psychological conditions that encourage employees to perform their responsibilities more effectively and enthusiastically.

From the perspective of organizational behaviour theory, employees' attitudes and behaviours are strongly influenced by their surrounding work environment. Supportive leadership, harmonious interpersonal relationships, adequate facilities, and effective communication create organizational conditions that foster positive work attitudes. Under such circumstances, employees develop greater organizational attachment and become more willing to contribute beyond their formal job responsibilities. Consequently, work ethic emerges not only as an individual characteristic but also as a behavioural response to organizational conditions.

The present finding is in line with previous empirical studies. Maritha et al. (2022) found that healthy and supportive working environments significantly strengthen employees' work ethic by enhancing motivation and organizational commitment. Likewise, The current study extends these findings by demonstrating that the influence of the work environment on work ethic also exists among educational personnel in Indonesian elementary schools. In educational institutions, where organizational effectiveness depends heavily on collaboration among administrative staff and school leaders, a positive work environment appears to strengthen employees' willingness to perform their duties responsibly. This finding therefore highlights the importance of creating organizational environments that support both employee well-being and professional development.

Overall, the findings indicate that improving employees' work ethic requires organizational interventions in addition to individual development. Educational institutions should therefore focus on creating supportive work environments through effective leadership, adequate facilities, positive communication, and collaborative organizational cultures.

4.5.4 Work Environment and Educational Personnel Performance

The findings further reveal that the work environment positively and significantly influences the performance of educational personnel. Employees working in supportive organizational environments demonstrate better performance than those working under less favourable conditions. This suggests that organizational factors remain important determinants of employee effectiveness within educational institutions.

A supportive work environment reduces workplace obstacles and enables employees to concentrate on achieving organizational objectives. Adequate facilities, constructive communication, supportive leadership, and positive interpersonal relationships create organizational resources that facilitate task completion and improve service quality. These organizational resources enhance employees' motivation and efficiency while reducing work-related stress.

This finding is consistent with previous studies. Gu et al. (2022) reported that positive working environments improve educators' task performance by strengthening commitment and achievement motivation. Elrayah & Semlali (2023) demonstrated that sustainable reward systems and supportive organizational environments significantly improve employee performance within educational organizations. The present study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from Indonesian elementary schools, where educational personnel play essential roles in supporting educational administration and service quality. The findings suggest that organizational performance

can be improved not only by enhancing employees' competencies but also by developing organizational environments that encourage collaboration, communication, and mutual support. Taken together, these findings indicate that creating a supportive work environment should become a strategic priority for school management because organizational conditions substantially influence employees' ability to deliver effective educational services.

4.5.5 Work Ethic and Educational Personnel Performance

Contrary to the proposed hypothesis, this study found that work ethic does not have a significant effect on the performance of educational personnel. Although educational personnel demonstrated positive work attitudes characterized by discipline, responsibility, commitment, and integrity, these attitudes were not sufficient to produce measurable improvements in job performance. This finding suggests that possessing a strong work ethic alone does not automatically guarantee higher performance within educational institutions.

One possible explanation is that employee performance is influenced by a broader range of organizational factors beyond individual attitudes. Educational personnel generally operate within highly structured administrative systems where work procedures, institutional policies, leadership practices, and resource availability largely determine performance outcomes. Consequently, even employees with strong work ethics may experience difficulties in improving their performance if organizational support systems remain inadequate. In such circumstances, work ethic functions primarily as a personal characteristic rather than a direct determinant of measurable organizational performance.

The present finding differs from the conventional assumption that work ethic always leads to better employee performance. Nevertheless, it is supported by several recent empirical studies. Huang et al. (2021) reported that within bureaucratic educational organizations, employees' work ethic did not significantly improve performance because rigid administrative procedures restricted employees' autonomy and opportunities for innovation. Citra (2018) emphasized that organizational collaboration and institutional support are required before work ethic can effectively contribute to employee performance. These findings indicate that work ethic should be considered a complementary rather than a standalone determinant of organizational performance.

The present study contributes to the existing literature by demonstrating that the relationship between work ethic and performance may vary according to organizational context. In Indonesian elementary schools, administrative procedures, leadership practices, and institutional management appear to play a more dominant role than individual work ethic in determining employee performance. Therefore, improving educational personnel performance requires organizational interventions in addition to strengthening employees' personal values.

Overall, these findings imply that school management should not rely solely on efforts to cultivate employees' work ethic. Equal attention should also be devoted to improving organizational systems, leadership effectiveness, professional development opportunities, and performance management mechanisms to ensure that employees' positive work attitudes are translated into higher organizational performance.

4.5.6 The Mediating Role of Work Ethic in the Relationship between Religiosity and Educational Personnel Performance

The findings reveal that work ethic does not mediate the relationship between religiosity and educational personnel performance. Although religiosity significantly improves work ethic, the enhanced work ethic does not subsequently lead to higher employee performance. Therefore, the indirect effect of religiosity on performance through work ethic was not statistically significant.

This finding suggests that the influence of religiosity on employee performance occurs primarily through a direct mechanism rather than through improvements in work ethic. Employees with strong religious values may demonstrate higher performance because religiosity directly strengthens responsibility, honesty, self-discipline, and organizational commitment. Consequently, religiosity contributes to performance independently of employees' work ethic.

Several previous studies provide support for this finding. Omarova and Jo (2022) argued that religiosity does not always translate into behavioural outcomes through intermediate psychological variables because individual religious values are highly personal and largely self-regulated. Similarly, Graves & Sarkis (2018) emphasized that employees voluntarily engage in ethical and responsible behaviour based on their personal beliefs rather than organizational influences. Consequently,

religiosity may directly shape employees' workplace behaviour without necessarily strengthening work ethic as an intervening mechanism.

Another possible explanation concerns the complexity of employee performance in educational institutions. Performance is influenced not only by employees' ethical attitudes but also by organizational factors such as leadership effectiveness, organizational culture, performance evaluation systems, workload, and institutional support. Extends previous literature by demonstrating that work ethic is not the primary psychological mechanism explaining how religiosity influences educational personnel performance. Instead, religiosity appears to exert a direct influence on employee behaviour and performance, independent of employees' work ethic.

From a managerial perspective, these findings suggest that strengthening employees' religious values alone is insufficient to improve organizational performance through work ethic. Educational institutions should simultaneously develop organizational systems, supportive leadership, and performance management practices that enable employees' personal values to be effectively translated into higher organizational outcomes.

4.5.7 The Mediating Role of Work Ethic in the Relationship between Work Environment and Educational Personnel Performance

This study also found that work ethic does not mediate the relationship between work environment and educational personnel performance. Although a supportive work environment significantly enhances employees' work ethic, this improvement does not subsequently increase employee performance. Consequently, the indirect effect of the work environment on performance through work ethic was not statistically significant.

One possible explanation is that work ethic represents only one of many psychological outcomes generated by organizational environments. While favourable working conditions improve employees' motivation and attitudes, actual performance may depend more heavily on organizational systems, leadership quality, workload allocation, professional competence, and institutional policies. Therefore, improvements in work ethic alone may be insufficient to generate measurable improvements in employee performance.

This finding is supported by previous studies. Adeyemi et al. (2022) reported that work ethic functions as an effective mediator only when organizational environments are reinforced by transformational leadership and strong organizational values. Without these complementary organizational mechanisms, improvements in work ethic may not translate into better employee performance.

The findings of the present study therefore indicate that the relationship between work environment and employee performance is more complex than originally hypothesized. Rather than operating through work ethic, supportive work environments may influence performance through other organizational mechanisms, including employee engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or psychological well-being. These alternative pathways deserve further investigation in future studies.

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that work ethic is not always an effective mediating variable within educational organizations. In the context of Indonesian elementary schools, organizational conditions appear to influence employee performance primarily through direct organizational mechanisms rather than indirectly through changes in employees' work ethic. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of adopting a comprehensive human resource management approach. Educational institutions should combine supportive work environments with effective leadership, competency development, and performance management systems to maximize employee performance rather than relying solely on improvements in work ethic.

5 Conclusion

This study examined the relationships among religiosity, work environment, work ethic, and the performance of educational personnel in elementary schools in Samarinda, Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that both religiosity and work environment significantly enhance employees' work ethic. In addition, religiosity and work environment have direct positive effects on educational personnel performance. These results indicate that employees' personal values and organizational conditions are important determinants of performance within educational institutions.

However, this study found that work ethic does not significantly influence employee performance. Furthermore, work ethic does not mediate the relationships between religiosity and performance or

between work environment and performance. These findings suggest that although religiosity and supportive working environments strengthen positive work attitudes, improvements in work ethic alone are insufficient to generate higher organizational performance. Instead, employee performance appears to be influenced more directly by personal values and organizational conditions than through work ethic as an intervening mechanism.

The findings contribute to the human resource management literature by providing empirical evidence that the role of work ethic as a mediating variable is context-dependent. In the context of Indonesian elementary schools, work ethic was not found to be the primary mechanism through which religiosity and work environment influence performance. This study therefore extends previous research by highlighting that organizational characteristics and institutional contexts may determine whether work ethic functions as an effective mediator.

From a practical perspective, school management should not focus solely on strengthening employees' work ethic. Equal attention should be devoted to creating supportive work environments, improving leadership quality, and reinforcing positive organizational values. Programs that promote religious values, together with effective human resource management practices, may contribute to improving the performance of educational personnel and ultimately support better educational service delivery.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted only among educational personnel in elementary schools in Samarinda, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or regions. Second, the model explains only a modest proportion of the variance in employee performance, suggesting that other organizational and individual factors may also play important roles. Future studies are therefore encouraged to include additional variables, such as organizational commitment, leadership style, job satisfaction, organizational culture, employee engagement, or psychological empowerment, while also expanding the research setting to different educational institutions and geographical contexts.

Acknowledgement

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Abualigah, A., Davies, J., & Harrington, S. (2021). Religiosity and work engagement: Workload as a moderator. *Stress and Health*, 37(5), 862–870. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.3042>
- Adeyemi, A. M., Thomas, K., & Boateng, F. (2022). Leadership, Work Ethic, and Job Performance: Testing the Mediating Role of Work Ethic. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 22(1), 25–38.
- Alharbi, A., Almalki, S., & Khan, S. (2021). The Role of Religious Commitment in Work Ethics: Evidence from Arab Societies. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 60(4), 2421–2435.
- Ancok, D., & Suroso, F. N. (2019). *Psikologi Islam: Solusi Islam Atas Problem Psikologi*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Arslan, M., & Roudaki, J. (2022). Exploring the Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Employee Discipline and Integrity: Evidence from Multinational Organizations. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 23(2), 113–127.
- Bakir, A., & Setiawan, B. A. (2021). Pengaruh Etos Kerja Terhadap Kinerja Guru dan Dampaknya Terhadap Prestasi Belajar Siswa di SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Jember. *Tarlim: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 3, 117–126. <https://doi.org/10.32528/TARLIM.V3I2.3946>
- Bal, Y., & Kökalan, Ö. (2021). The Moderating Effect of Religiosity on the Relationship Between Burnout and Job Satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.750493>
- Chaudry, M. M., & Riaz, M. N. (2014). Safety of Food and Beverages: Halal Food Requirements. In *Encyclopedia of Food Safety* (Vol. 3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-378612-8.00400-5>
- Citra, R. A. (2018). Etos kerja dalam organisasi pendidikan: Kolaborasi individu dan budaya kerja. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 9(2), 112–120.
- Dessler, G. (2013). *Human Resource Management* (13th Edition).
- Elrayah, M., & Semlali, Y. (2023). Sustainable Total Reward Strategies for Talented Employees' Sustainable Performance, Satisfaction, and Motivation: Evidence from the Educational Sector. *Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021605>
- Gibson, J. L., Ivancevich, J. M., Donnelly, J. H., & Konopaske, R. (2012). *Organizations: Behavior, Structure, Processes* (14th Edition).

- Girdwichai, L., & Sriviboon, C. (2020). Employee motivation and performance: Do the work environment and the training matter? *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, 9. [https://doi.org/10.9770/JSSI.2020.9.J\(4\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/JSSI.2020.9.J(4))
- Graves, L. M., & Sarkis, J. (2018). The role of employees' leadership perceptions, values, and motivations in sustainable organizations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148(4).
- Gu, Z., Chupradit, S., Ku, K. Y., Nassani, A., & Haffar, M. (2022). Impact of Employees' Workplace Environment on Employees' Performance: A Multi-Mediation Model. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.890400>
- Harkriskayani, I., & Putra, P. (2024). The Influence of Educational Background and Work Experience on Employee Work Ethic. *Human Capital and Organizations*. <https://doi.org/10.58777/hco.v1i2.176>
- Huang, Y., Wang, L., & Zhang, T. (2021). Work ethic and performance in rigid educational bureaucracy: The limits of individual initiative. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 59(4), 520–537.
- Irfani, A., & Mulyana, M. (2023). Pembinaan dan Supervisi Pegawai di SMKN 4 Bandung. *Jurnal Tata Kelola Pendidikan*. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jtkp.v4i1.61385>
- Juliarti, P. A. D., Agung, A. A. P., & Sudja, I. N. (2018). Effect of Compensation and Work Environment on Employee Performance with Employee Job Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable. *International Journal of Contemporary Research and Review*, 9(03).
- Karauwan, R., Lengkong, V. P. K., & Mintardjo, C. (2015). Pengaruh etos kerja, budaya organisasi, dan beban kerja terhadap kinerja pegawai di dinas pekerjaan umum minahasa selatan. 3(3), 1196–1207.
- Maritha, V., Harlina, P. W., Musfiroh, I., Gazzali, A. M., & Muchtaridi, M. (2022). The Application of Chemometrics in Metabolomic and Lipidomic Analysis Data Presentation for Halal Authentication of Meat Products. *Molecules*, 27(21), 7571. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/molecules27217571>
- Siregar, H. S., Nurhamzah, Munir, M., & Fikri, M. (2025). ENHANCING ISLAMIC EDUCATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION: A STUDY OF TEACHING PRACTICES IN INDONESIA. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 13(2), 959–986. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i2.1875>
- Xue, J., Zhu, D., Zhao, L., Wang, C., & Li, H. (2019). Redundancy identification and optimization scheme of branches for sustainable operation of commercial banks. *Sustainability Switzerland*, 11(15). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11154111>