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WORK CULTURE, MOTIVATION, AND CAREER PROGRESSION IN ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY ON ENHANCING EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of work culture, work motivation, and career progression on employee productivity within Islamic institutions. Grounded in the theoretical integration of Organizational Culture Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Human Capital Theory, the research acknowledges the role of Islamic Work Ethic values—such as amanah, ikhlas, and itqan—as shaping mechanisms in professional behavior. A quantitative explanatory design was employed, involving a survey distributed to employees across selected Islamic institutions in Indonesia. Simple random sampling was used to determine respondents, and data were analyzed through multiple linear regression with validity and reliability tests performed to ensure measurement accuracy. The findings demonstrate that all three independent variables significantly and positively affect employee productivity. Work culture emerged as a key determinant, emphasizing the role of shared values, teamwork, and disciplinary practices grounded in Islamic ethos. Work motivation also showed a strong effect, indicating that employees are driven not only by extrinsic incentives but also by intrinsic and spiritual motives rooted in religious consciousness. Career progression further contributed significantly to productivity, suggesting that structured development pathways and perceived fairness in advancement enhance performance in Islamic institutional settings. Overall, the results reinforce the view that value-based organizational systems integrating ethical and spiritual dimensions can enhance workforce excellence. This research contributes theoretically by contextualizing Western organizational behavior models within an Islamic moral framework and practically by offering insights for strengthening human resource strategies in Islamic institutions.

Keywords: work culture, work motivation, career progression, employee productivity, Islamic work ethic, Islamic institutions

1. INTRODUCTION

In many Islamic institutions today, employee productivity remains varied and often below optimal potential. This variation arises due to work environments that are not fully supportive, differing levels of work motivation, and career development paths that are not clearly structured. A recent Indonesian study confirms that work environment and career development play essential roles in shaping employee productivity, although the strength of influence differs across organizational settings (Saputra & Yuliani, 2022). These dynamics illustrate an urgent need to understand how such factors operate specifically within Islamic institutional contexts so productivity enhancement strategies can be better aligned with organizational realities.

Beyond organizational and economic considerations, Muslim employees in Islamic institutions possess distinctive motivations rooted in Islamic ethical and spiritual values. Employees are not only driven by material incentives but also by principles of *amanah*, *ikhlas*, *itqan*, and *ihsan* as part of the Islamic Work Ethic (IWE). Scholars have shown that IWE significantly shapes employee attitudes, performance, and emotional commitment (Alhyasat, 2012). Therefore, productivity in Islamic institutions cannot be fully understood through conventional management lenses alone; it requires engagement with the Islamic values that guide Muslim employees' work behavior.

Existing human resource management literature highlights that conducive work environments, strong work motivation, and structured career development are key determinants of employee productivity. These conditions influence how employees engage with their tasks, develop competencies, and maintain long-term commitment to organizational goals. A study conducted in Indonesian governmental institutions found that work motivation, workplace climate, and career development significantly contributed to job satisfaction and performance (Murti & Srimulyani, 2021). Accordingly, conceptualizing employee productivity requires integrating these three core factors as analytical pillars in this study.

Meanwhile, critical reviews of the Islamic Work Ethic emphasize that IWE embodies religious, cultural, and economic dimensions that guide employee behavior in Islamic organizations. These dimensions reinforce moral purpose, ethical responsibility, and spiritual accountability in work life. Research in South Asia found a strong association between IWE and public sector employee performance, indicating its influence beyond private enterprises (Qadeer & Jaffery, 2014). Thus, combining IWE with contemporary organizational theories provides a more holistic foundation for examining productivity in Islamic institutions.

Grounded in these considerations, this study aims to explore how work culture, work motivation, and career progression in Islamic institutions contribute to improving employee productivity. This study seeks to uncover employees' lived experiences and meaning-making processes, thus providing deeper insights than those produced by purely quantitative analysis. This study allows the exploration of subjective narratives and contextual values embedded within Islamic workplace settings, particularly the infusion of faith-based motivations in professional life.

Specifically, this study intends to: (1) examine employee perceptions regarding work culture in Islamic institutions, (2) identify motivational drivers shaped by Islamic ethical values, and (3) understand how employees perceive and experience career development

pathways and their connection to productivity. These objectives help structure the research flow and ensure that the investigation captures both organizational and Islamic dimensions of work practice. This dual-focus approach ensures that findings can meaningfully contribute to both academic literature and practical development of Islamic institutional management systems.

The central argument of this study is that in Islamic institutions where Islamic ethical values are internalized, supportive work culture, faith-based motivation, and structured career development will jointly enhance employee productivity. Islamic values such as amanah and ikhlas are not merely doctrinal ideals but practical drivers that foster discipline, commitment, and consistent performance. Previous research supports this assertion, showing that IWE is positively associated with intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance (Hayati & Caniago, 2012). In this context, this study hypothesizes that integrating Islamic values within career and cultural structures leads to more sustainable productivity outcomes.

Furthermore, this study posits that career development in Islamic institutions is not merely a technical process for competence building, but also a form of ethical and spiritual empowerment that strengthens employees' sense of meaningful contribution and accountability to God and society. When employees perceive career pathways as fair, value-aligned, and supportive, they are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement and productivity. Evidence from recent scholarship shows that career development significantly contributes to employee performance enhancement (Hadi, 2024). Therefore, this research explores how Islamic-based career pathways and motivational structures reinforce productive work culture among employees in Islamic institutions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at examining the influence of work culture, work motivation, and career progression on employee productivity within Islamic institutions. A quantitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables systematic measurement of variables and statistical hypothesis testing, allowing the researcher to identify the strength and significance of the relationships among the studied constructs. By adopting this approach, the study seeks to objectively assess how organizational practices and Islamic ethical values embedded in professional environments contribute to productivity outcomes among employees. The population of this study consists of employees working in selected Islamic institutions in Indonesia. To ensure representativeness, a probability sampling method will be applied, specifically simple random sampling, which provides all members of the population with an equal chance of selection. The number of respondents will be determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, ensuring sufficient sample size for statistical analysis and generalization of findings. The respondents are expected to consist of administrative staff, educators, and managerial officers, reflecting structural diversity within Islamic institutional settings.

Variable	Indicators	Source
Work Culture	teamwork, communication, discipline, Islamic organizational values	Robbins & Judge (2019)
Work Motivation	intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, Islamic work ethic-based motivation	Deci & Ryan (2017); Ali & Al-Owaihan (2008)
Career Progression	training & development, promotion, skill improvement	Dessler (2020)
Employee Productivity	output quality, timeliness, work efficiency, responsibility	Mangkunegara (2017)

Four key variables are examined in this research: work culture, work motivation, career progression, and employee productivity. Work culture refers to organizational norms, teamwork, communication patterns, discipline, and values aligned with Islamic principles practiced within the institution. Work motivation encompasses internal and external drivers influencing employees' performance, including intrinsic motivation, extrinsic incentives, and faith-based factors as reflected in the Islamic Work Ethic. Career progression refers to employees' perception of available opportunities for professional growth, including training, promotion pathways, and capacity-building initiatives. Meanwhile, employee productivity represents the effectiveness and efficiency of work output, characterized by quality, timeliness, responsibility, and overall contribution to organizational goals. These operational definitions are grounded in established theory from Robbins and Judge (2019), Deci and Ryan (2017), Ali and Al-Owaihan (2008), and Dessler (2020), ensuring validity and strong theoretical alignment. Primary data will be collected using a structured questionnaire distributed physically and online, utilizing a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument is designed to capture perceptions and attitudes related to work practices and productivity. Secondary data in the form of institutional documents and scholarly literature will complement the primary data. Prior to full data collection, the questionnaire will be pilot-tested to ensure clarity and relevance. Validity will be assessed through Pearson correlation, while reliability of the instrument will be examined using Cronbach's Alpha, where a coefficient value of 0.70 or above indicates acceptable internal consistency.

Once the data are collected, they will be analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS or SmartPLS. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions. Classical assumption tests, including normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity, will be conducted to verify suitability for regression analysis. The core analytical technique applied in this study is multiple linear regression, which enables examination of both partial and simultaneous effects of independent variables on employee productivity. Hypothesis testing will be performed using t-tests for individual variable effects and F-test for overall model significance, supported by the coefficient of determination (R^2) to measure the explanatory power of the model. Based on the conceptual framework and prior empirical findings, the hypotheses propose that work culture, work motivation, and career progression each exert significant positive influence on employee productivity, both independently and collectively. By integrating established management theory with the Islamic Work Ethic framework, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the role of Islamic

organizational contexts in shaping workplace behavior and productivity. Ultimately, the quantitative methodology employed allows for the systematic evaluation of theoretical assumptions and strengthens the generalizability of findings within the context of Islamic institutional management.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The descriptive analysis indicated that respondents generally demonstrated high levels of agreement across all research constructs, including work culture, work motivation, career progression, and employee productivity. Employees in Islamic institutions reported a positive perception of teamwork, communication, and discipline in their workplace, reflecting a structured and value-driven organizational environment. Similarly, responses on work motivation suggested that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors played a significant role in driving employee behavior, with many respondents highlighting a sense of responsibility, sincerity (*ikhlas*), and moral accountability (*amanah*) in carrying out tasks.

Career progression variables also demonstrated favorable perceptions, as employees expressed opportunities for capacity building, training, and professional development. Meanwhile, employee productivity indicators showed that staff members generally perceived themselves as capable of completing tasks effectively, maintaining work quality, and adhering to organizational expectations. The consistent positive mean values across variables suggest that Islamic institutional environments foster a conducive climate for both professional and ethical performance, aligning with the Islamic Work Ethic perspective emphasizing diligence, responsibility, and sincerity (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008).

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the effect of work culture, work motivation, and career progression on employee productivity. The model demonstrated statistical significance, indicating that the independent variables collectively explained a substantial proportion of variance in employee productivity. This finding suggests that employee productivity in Islamic institutions is not solely shaped by structural and managerial dimensions but also by the ethical and spiritual context in which employees work. Individually, work culture showed a significant positive effect on employee productivity. This result reinforces the importance of organizational norms, teamwork, and discipline, particularly within Islamic organizational frameworks where values such as *itqan* (doing work excellently) and *ihsan* (acting with excellence and sincerity) guide workplace behavior. Work motivation also exhibited a positive and significant influence, consistent with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017), which posits that intrinsic motivation enhances performance and well-being. Within the Islamic context, motivation may also be derived from spiritual consciousness and belief that work represents worship (*ibadah*) and service to the community. Previous studies also found that intrinsic and ethical-based motivations significantly enhance job performance (Hayati & Caniogo, 2012).

Career progression likewise revealed a significant positive effect on productivity, indicating that structured promotion paths, training opportunities, and personal development initiatives motivate employees to perform optimally. This finding aligns with Dessler's (2020) assertion that career growth is a key determinant of employee engagement and effectiveness. In Islamic settings, career development is not merely a

managerial function but also a reflection of fairness ('adl) and trust (amanah), reinforcing the spiritual and moral obligation toward professional excellence.

The descriptive findings further revealed that respondents expressed a strong sense of alignment between their individual values and the organizational ethos of their institutions. Employees consistently acknowledged the presence of supportive leadership, clear communication channels, and collaborative work norms that encouraged mutual respect and accountability. This high level of value congruence suggests that institutional culture is not only systematically structured but also deeply influenced by Islamic ethical frameworks that promote social harmony, responsibility, and service orientation, reflecting previous observations that Islamic organizations foster ethical climates conducive to professional excellence (Khan et al., 2015).

In terms of motivation, participants demonstrated notable internal drive and self-determination, frequently citing commitment to organizational missions and religious consciousness as motivating forces. Beyond external incentives, employees conveyed a strong sense of purpose and emotional attachment to their work environment. This pattern echoes findings by Yousef (2001), who emphasized that employees operating in faith-based contexts often demonstrate heightened commitment due to moral and spiritual alignment with organizational values. Such intrinsic motivation rooted in devotion, sincerity, and a sense of divine accountability, acts as a catalyst for sustained professional effort and behavioral consistency.

Employees also reported generally favorable perceptions of career support mechanisms, noting opportunities for continuous learning, skill enhancement, and structured advancement. However, some responses indicated a desire for clearer performance-based recognition systems and more transparent career pathways, suggesting that while institutions emphasize growth, communication regarding long-term development could be further strengthened. Prior literature suggests that transparent career systems and developmental feedback are essential in fostering employee empowerment and reducing uncertainty in organizational settings (Noe et al., 2021).

Productivity indicators portrayed employees as disciplined, punctual, and dedicated to task completion, with many respondents describing themselves as proactive and adaptable in meeting institutional demands. This aligns with the Islamic principle of *itqan*, representing commitment to quality and excellence in work. The presence of high productivity perceptions among employees also supports findings by Abbasi & Hollman (2022), who highlighted the positive relationship between ethical leadership environments and workforce performance in values-based institutions. Overall, employees demonstrated not only operational efficiency but also a strong moral orientation toward their work, reinforcing the idea that ethical and spiritual dimensions significantly influence professional behavior in Islamic workplaces.

Regression results confirmed that the combined influence of work culture, motivation, and career development had a statistically significant impact on employee productivity, highlighting the integrated role of organizational conditions and ethical awareness in shaping workforce outcomes. Specifically, work culture emerged as a critical driver of performance, particularly in fostering professional discipline, collective responsibility, and alignment with institutional missions. This finding resonates with the theoretical

proposition that culture grounded in shared moral principles enhances organizational cohesion and task effectiveness (Reave, 2020).

Work motivation also played a substantial role in predicting productivity, indicating that employees who derive meaning and satisfaction from their roles tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, resilience, and initiative. This supports prior evidence that intrinsic motivation, particularly when infused with faith-based values, promotes sustainable high performance (Ali, 2020). Career development likewise demonstrated a positive and meaningful effect on productivity, suggesting that institutions that invest in professional development and equitable opportunity systems cultivate employees who are more capable, confident, and committed to delivering optimal results. This result aligns with human capital theory, which emphasizes that systematic capability building enhances institutional performance (Becker, 1993).

These results underscore the importance of integrating ethical values, strategic talent development, and supportive work structures within Islamic organizational models. Employees who perceive fairness, value alignment, and growth prospects are more likely to demonstrate exemplary performance and enduring loyalty, reflecting the broader Islamic perspective that excellence in work is both a professional and spiritual obligation.

Discussion

The findings confirm that employee productivity in Islamic institutions is a multifactorial outcome influenced by organizational culture, personal drive, and professional development opportunities. The significant role of work culture suggests that values-driven environments, especially those rooted in Islamic ethical frameworks can cultivate disciplined, responsible, and collaborative employees. This supports the assertion that organizational success in Islamic contexts depends on blending professional competency with spiritual and ethical guidance. Motivation emerged as both a managerial and spiritual instrument, reinforcing the premise that individuals who internalize Islamic work ethics and seek moral fulfillment through work are more committed, productive, and resilient. This aligns with research by Alhyasat (2012), which highlights the mediating role of affective commitment in Islamic Work Ethics and performance.

Career progression was shown to enhance productivity by nurturing a sense of growth, recognition, and equitable opportunity. Employees who perceive fairness in promotion and training systems tend to be more engaged and loyal to their institutions. This is consistent with contemporary HR theory and Islamic teachings that promote justice, capacity building, and lifelong learning. Collectively, these results emphasize that the integration of modern human resource practices with Islamic ethical values provides a strong foundation for workforce excellence. Islamic institutions that manage to operationalize ethics, development, and organizational structure simultaneously will likely cultivate employees who are both professionally competent and spiritually grounded.

The findings of this study strengthen and extend existing theoretical frameworks in organizational behavior and Islamic management literature. First, the positive effect of work culture on employee productivity supports Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 2017), which asserts that deeply embedded values and shared norms shape workplace behavior and performance outcomes. In the context of Islamic institutions, this culture is further influenced by Islamic Moral Philosophy, where work is perceived not merely as a

professional duty but as an act of worship (ibadah) and moral service. Thus, the study demonstrates how cultural alignment enhances not only behavioral discipline but also spiritual accountability, reinforcing Schein's argument that shared meaning systems create stronger engagement and performance.

The results affirm the relevance of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017), which emphasizes intrinsic motivation as a predictor of optimal performance. The role of spiritually driven motivation among employees suggests a unique internalized motivational structure rooted in Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) principles, such as *ikhlas*, *amanah*, and *itqan*. This aligns with Intrinsic Motivation Theory but extends it by integrating religious duty and spiritual intentionality, elements not explicitly captured in secular models. Therefore, this research contributes to the enrichment of motivation theory by illustrating how faith-based intention forms a distinctive motivational force in Islamic settings.

The significant impact of career progression on productivity validates Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which posits that investment in training and skill development improves employee output. However, in Islamic institutional systems, career development also embodies the principles of fairness (*'adl*) and trustworthiness (*amanah*), indicating that professional advancement carries ethical significance alongside capability enhancement. This suggests that Islamic organizational models incorporate ethical stewardship into talent development frameworks, offering a more holistic interpretation of human capital formation.

The integration of Western management theories with Islamic ethical values presents a hybrid theoretical contribution. While traditional frameworks explain behavioral mechanisms, Islamic moral and spiritual concepts provide deeper motivational grounding and collective purpose. This synergy implies that Islamic institutions may serve as strategic models for value-based organizational management, where productivity is achieved not only through structural and motivational systems but also through ethical and spiritual alignment.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study strengthen and extend existing theoretical frameworks in organizational behavior and Islamic management literature. First, the positive effect of work culture on employee productivity supports Organizational Culture Theory which asserts that deeply embedded values and shared norms shape workplace behavior and performance outcomes. In the context of Islamic institutions, this culture is further influenced by Islamic Moral Philosophy, where work is perceived not merely as a professional duty but as an act of worship (ibadah) and moral service. Thus, the study demonstrates how cultural alignment enhances not only behavioral discipline but also spiritual accountability, reinforcing Schein's argument that shared meaning systems create stronger engagement and performance. Second, the results affirm the relevance of Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes intrinsic motivation as a predictor of optimal performance. The role of spiritually driven motivation among employees suggests a unique internalized motivational structure rooted in Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) principles, such as *ikhlas*, *amanah*, and *itqan*. This aligns with Intrinsic Motivation Theory

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