



## **The Influence of Leadership, Interpersonal Communication, and School Culture through Work Ethic on Teachers' Professionalism at SMP Negeri 1 Kaloran**

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### **Abstract**

Teachers' professionalism is the result of the teacher's work performance or achievements based on their ability to manage the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Many factors influence teachers' professionalism, including interpersonal communication, school culture, leadership, and work ethic. The objective of this research was to analyze the influence of interpersonal communication, school culture, and leadership on teachers' professionalism through work ethic as an intervening variable at SMPN 1 Kaloran. A quantitative approach was determined for this research. The population in this research consisted of 40 teachers, all from SMPN 1 Kaloran. The sampling technique used in this research was the total sampling method. The research instrument used was questionnaire, for which the validity and reliability have been tested beforehand. The data analysis for hypothesis testing used path analysis and Sobel test to find out the mediating variable. The findings showed that interpersonal communication, school culture, and leadership all have significant influence on work ethic. Interpersonal communication, school culture, and leadership also influenced teachers' professionalism mediated by work ethic. Based on these findings, teachers' professionalism can be improved through enhancements in interpersonal communication, school culture, leadership, and work ethic.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesian national education, as regulated in Law No. 20 of 2003, aims to create a learning process capable of developing individual capacity, shaping character, and building a civilized nation. Our education is directed toward developing students' potential to become faithful, devoted, noble, physically and mentally healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, independent, and responsible democratic citizens (Mualif, 2023).

To achieve this goal, the school principal must possess quality leadership and interpersonal communication shaping positive school culture while directly influencing teachers' professionalism. The role of the principal is crucial in improving education quality, particularly by strengthening his or her leadership capacity, including managerial functions and mastery of essential skills, knowledge, and attitude as the leader of education (Fitriyah &

Santosa, 2020; Duryat, 2021). However, in practice, various issues still arose related to low effectiveness of leadership. Several principals had been dismissed and then reassigned as teachers due to their failure in maintaining infrastructure, addressing sanitation, implementing character education, and properly overseeing BOS fund management.

Several researches showed that leadership style and interpersonal interaction are closely linked to the achievement of educational goals. These aspects shape teachers' morale and professionalism. Still, other challenges would remain in the field, such as low Teacher Competency Test (TCT) results and a lack of innovation in implementing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs. For example, at SMP Negeri 1 Kaloran, only about 25% of the 40 teachers are able to utilize information technology for online learning. This circumstance suggests that the teacher's ability to achieve professional standards is limited.

The research by Juliardin et al. (2024) found a positive relationship between principal leadership and professionalism on teacher performance, in line with the findings by Kusumah et al. (2023) indicating that the principal's leadership style had influence on teacher performance at public junior high schools in Bandung. In addition, amenities and infrastructure has helped teachers to perform better. Therefore, the principal's leadership is critical to improving teachers' professionalism.

Aside from leadership, school culture also has a tremendous influence on professional development. An educational institution's culture is shaped by its members' mindsets, responsibility, commitment, and active participation. In educational setting, culture represents the school community's shared norms, which include methods of thinking, acting, and behaving, as well as ideals conveyed via both tangible and symbolic behaviors (Widodo, 2021). School culture refers to collective activities that serve as a behavioral guide for members of the school community (Bhoki et al., 2025). A healthy and supportive organizational setting can improve work ethic and have direct influence on

institutional performance (Yunivan, 2024). Hariyanti's (2024) research also shows that school organizational culture influenced teacher performance.

However, a research gap still exists in the relationship between work ethic and teachers' professionalism. Fina's (2022) research shows that an Islamic values-based work ethic has a direct influence on employee performance; the higher the work ethic, the better the performance. Tampenawas et al. (2023) reported similar findings, stating that work ethic is a significant element in increasing personnel performance at the Public Works Office of Regency of South Minahasa. However, several other studies have found that the influence of work ethic was not always significant creating new critical questions that may require additional researches.

Based on this background, this research was designed to examine the influence of principal leadership, interpersonal communication, and school culture on teachers' professionalism, with work ethic as a mediating variable. This research seek to investigate both the direct and indirect relationships between the three external variables and teachers' professionalism, as well as the role of work ethic in shaping professional teachers.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to educational management theory, notably in relation to transformational leadership, organizational justice, and achievement-oriented work ethic on teacher performance through mediating variable for work confidence. Furthermore, the findings from this research may be used to ground a path analysis approach, as well as used for reference future researches on teacher effectiveness. Practically, this research is expected to provide recommendations for policymakers and school supervisors to improve teacher performance through coaching programs and the development of a supportive organizational climate.

## **METHOD**

This research was quantitative research with an ex post facto approach that seeks to examine the effects of principal leadership, interpersonal communication, school culture,

and work ethic on teachers' professionalism, either directly or indirectly. This research used non-experimental design, meaning the researcher did not apply any specific treatment to the subjects but collected the data based on existing conditions using questionnaire as the instrument. The questionnaire contained statements that reflect respondents' perceptions of each studied variable.

Specifically, this research was classified as explanatory research, aimed to test hypotheses or theories to strengthen, develop, or refute previous findings. This design was also correlated, with the goal of determining the number of correlations between variables in the population. The relationships among variables are illustrated through a path analysis framework, as shown in Figure 1.

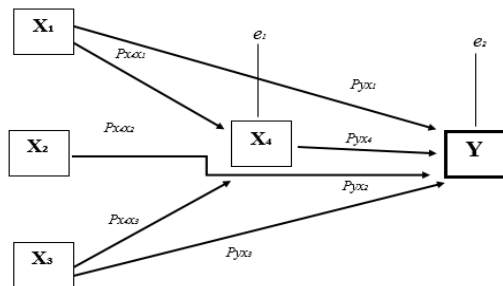


Figure 1. Research Analytical Framework Using Path Analysis

For example, the path  $P_{X_4X_1}$  shows the influence of school principal leadership ( $X_1$ ) on work ethic ( $X_4$ ), while  $P_{YX_4}$  shows the direct influence of work ethic ( $X_4$ ) on teachers' professionalism ( $Y$ ).

The population in this research consisted of all 40 teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Kaloran. This population also serves as the sample, for then a total sampling technique was chosen, as the number of individuals was fewer than 100 (Sugiyono, 2021). Referring to Sugiyono (2020:37), the research variables consist of: (1) dependent variable, teachers' professionalism ( $Y$ ); (2) independent variables, principal leadership ( $X_1$ ), interpersonal communication ( $X_2$ ), and school culture ( $X_3$ ); and (3) intervening variable, work ethic ( $X_4$ ). The development of the research instrument was predicated on the operationalization of each variable into certain indicators.

The data collection technique and instrument involved questionnaire by implementing Likert scale with five response options: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) (Sugiyono, 2020). To enhance validity, the researcher also conducted observations and interviews with relevant respondents. Instrument validity was tested using Karl Pearson's Product Moment correlation, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. An instrument is considered reliable if the Alpha value is  $>0.60$  (Sugiyono, 2020). Data analysis was carried out through:

- 1) Descriptive Statistics, to describe the data of each variable using the formula:  $P = n/N \times 100\%$  (Sugiyono, 2021).
- 2) Classical assumption tests, including normality tests (One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test,  $p > 0.05$ ), multicollinearity tests ( $VIF < 10$ , tolerance  $> 0.1$ ), heteroscedasticity tests (Glejser), and linearity tests (ANOVA, sig.  $< 0.05$ ).
- 3) Path Analysis approach was used to investigate the direct and indirect influence of the independent factors on teachers' professionalism, with work as the mediating variable. The path equations used were:

$$EK = b_1 KKS + b_2 KI + b_3 BS + e_1$$

$$PG = b_5 KKS + b_6 KI + b_7 BS + b_4 EK + e_2$$

#### Description:

*Etos kerja (EK)* = Work Ethic,

*Profesionalisme Guru (PG)* = Teachers' Professionalism

*Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah (KKS)* = Principal Leadership

*Komunikasi Interpersonal (KI)* = Interpersonal Communication

*Budaya Sekolah (BS)* = School Culture

$b_1$  = Path coefficient from KKS  $\rightarrow$  EK

$b_2$  = Path coefficient from KI  $\rightarrow$  EK

$b_3$  = Path coefficient from BS  $\rightarrow$  EK

$b_4$  = Path coefficient from EK  $\rightarrow$  PG

$b_5$  = Path coefficient from KKS  $\rightarrow$  PG

$b_6$  = Path coefficient from KI  $\rightarrow$  PG

$b_7$  = Path coefficient from BS  $\rightarrow$  PG

$e_1$  = Error on structure 1

$e_2$  = Error on structure 2

- 4) Sobel Test, used to measure the mediating influence, following the Baron & Kenny method as cited in Ghozali (2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### RESULT

#### 1. Descriptive Analysis Results of Research Variables

##### a. Teachers' Professionalism

Teachers' professionalism reflects the capacity to perform duties in accordance with educational quality standards. It was measured using 17 validated items, with an average score of 68.70, which falls into the "Good" category. A total of 55% of respondents fell into this category.

##### b. Interpersonal Communication

Refers to the interaction between the principal and teachers. This variable was measured using 19 validated items and showed an average score of 69.80 ("Good" category); 72% respondents fell into this category.

##### c. Principal's Leadership

Describes the principal's approach in guiding and empowering members of the school community. The analysis result showed a mean of 79.45, which fell into the "Very Good" category.

##### d. School Culture

School culture reflects the values, behaviors, and habits within the school environment. A mean score of 78.38 indicated that 55% of teachers rated the school culture with "Good" category.

##### e. Work Ethic

Work ethic reflects the positive behavior in carrying out duties. Measured with 19 items, the results showed an average score of 78.85, with 57.5% of teachers having a "High" level of work ethic.

#### 2. Classical Assumption Test / Analysis Prerequisites

##### a. Normality and Homogeneity Tests

The data distribution met the normality requirement, with a skewness of -0.074 and a kurtosis of -1.179. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed a p-value of  $>0.05$ , indicating test

showed a p-value of  $>0.05$ , indicating normal data.

##### b. Linearity Test

All pairs of independent and dependent variables showed linear connections. For instance, interpersonal communication and professionalism had a significant value of  $0.667 > 0.05$  (Ghozali, 2013:166).

##### c. Multicollinearity Test

No multicollinearity was found because all the VIF values was  $<10$  and tolerance was  $>0.1$  (Gujarati, 2012:127).

##### d. Heteroscedasticity Test

The scatterplot showed a random pattern of residues without any specific shape, indicating no heteroscedasticity.

##### e. Hypothesis Testing

###### 1) Hypothesis 1

"Interpersonal communication has a positive influence on the work ethic of teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Kaloran." The regression results showed a combined coefficient of 0.807, indicating that the three independent variables ( $X_1$ ,  $X_2$ ,  $X_3$ ) collectively contributed to 65.10% of work ethic ( $0.807^2$ ). T-values for each:

Interpersonal Communication: 3.606, sig = 0.001

Leadership: 3.746, sig = 0.001

School culture: 2.220, sig = 0.033

All values  $t > 2.021$  (at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ), therefore the three variables had partially significant influence on work ethic.

###### 2) Hypothesis 2

"Leadership has a positive influence on teachers' work ethic." Regression coefficient: 0.416, contributed 17.3% ( $0.416^2$ ).  $t$  calculated = 3.746  $> 1.684$  ( $t$  table  $\alpha = 0.05$ ), and sig = 0.001  $< 0.05$ , therefore had significant influence on work ethic.

###### 3) Hypothesis 3

"School culture had a positive influence on teachers' work ethic." Regression coefficient: 0.236, contributed 5.56% ( $0.236^2$ ).  $t$  calculated = 2.220  $> 1.684$ , and sig = 0.033  $< 0.05$ , therefore school culture had significant influence on work ethic.

The determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) for the three variables:  $0.803 \rightarrow 80.3\%$  contribution, and the remaining  $19.7\%$  was contributed by other factors. According to Ghozali (2013:166), a linear relationship is required to ensure the validity of a regression model.

#### 4) Hypothesis 4

"Interpersonal communication had a positive influence on teachers' professionalism through work ethic." Direct Influence:  $0.292^2 = 8.52\%$ . Indirect Influence:  $(0.368 \times 0.760) = 27.97\%$ . Total Influence:  $36.49\%$  Path analysis model using the Standardized Coefficients Beta approach, thus it does not use intercepts. Residual value calculation:  $\sqrt{(1 - R^2)} = \sqrt{(1 - 0.803)} = 0.444$ .

#### 5) Hypothesis 5

"Leadership influences teachers' professionalism through work ethic." Direct Influence:  $0.333^2 = 11.09\%$ , Indirect influence:  $(0.416 \times 0.760) = 31.62\%$ , Total influence:  $42.71\%$ .

#### 6) Hypothesis 6

"School culture has a positive influence on teachers' professionalism through work ethic." Direct Influence:  $0.296^2 = 8.76\%$ . Indirect Influence:  $(0.236 \times 0.760) = 17.94\%$ . Total Influence:  $26.70\%$ .

#### 7) Hypothesis 7

"Work ethic affects the professionalism of teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Kaloran." Coefficient of influence:  $0.760 \times 0.760 = 0.577$  or  $57.70\%$ , with  $\text{sig} = 0.000$ , which means significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

#### f. Sobel test

The Sobel test showed that work ethic significantly mediates the relationship between:

- 1) Interpersonal communication and teachers' professionalism ( $z = 2.99$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ),
- 2) Teacher leadership and professionalism ( $z = 3.04$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ),
- 3) School culture and teachers' professionalism ( $z = 2.84$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ).

Thus, work ethic played a crucial role in mediating the influence of the three variables in improving teachers' professionalism.

#### Discussion

##### 1. The Influence of Interpersonal Communication on Teachers' Work Ethic

Good interpersonal communication between the principal and teachers contributed to the development of open and solution-oriented relationships. The regression results showed an influence of  $13.54\%$  with significance of  $0.001 (< 0.05)$ , indicating positive and significant influence on teachers' work ethic. This research supported the findings of Habibi et al. (2016), who stated that interpersonal communication played a role in shaping teachers' readiness to develop learning tools. The most significant influence was seen in teachers' ability to design curriculum, syllabus, and instructional strategies to support work ethic development. This result also aligns with Tsauri (2025), who states that communication skills reflected teachers' pedagogical competence and contributed to higher work motivation.

##### 2. The Influence of Leadership on Teachers' Work Ethic

The regression results showed that principal leadership had positive influence on teachers' work ethic, with a coefficient of  $17.31\%$  and significance level of  $0.018$ . This finding reinforced Alfonso's (2011) view that instructional supervision influenced teacher behavior in achieving their learning objectives. The principal needs to deeply understand aspects of work ethic to ensure that the policies they implement effectively promote teachers' professionalism. This finding is also consistent with Ekowati (2012) and Nisa's (2021) findings, who emphasized the importance of planning, implementation, and follow-up in supervisory practices to enhance teachers' commitment and professional responsibility.

##### 3. The Influence of School Culture on Teachers' Work Ethic

School culture had a positive influence with a coefficient of  $5.56\%$ , although its contribution was less than the other variables. This result

remained significant with  $t$  value of 2.220 and  $Sig = 0.033$ . However, high workloads were an external factor that reduced the influence of school culture on teachers' work ethic. According to the Job Demand-Control Model (Karasek, 1990), any imbalance between job demands and control over work could trigger stress, which negatively affects work motivation. Therefore, educational institutions need to ensure a balance between workload management and the strengthening of school culture.

#### **4. The Influence of Interpersonal Communication on Teachers' Professionalism through Work Ethic**

Work ethic proved to be a significant mediating variable. The direct influence of interpersonal communication on teachers' professionalism was 8.53%, whereas the indirect influence through work ethic was found to be 27.97%, resulting in a total influence of 36.49%. This means that good interpersonal communication skills could, in turn, improve work ethic and had an influence on teachers' professionalism. This research is consistent with the findings by Suprianto (2019) and Saepudin (2012), who concluded that interpersonal communication skills could help teachers construct learning strategies and increase their professional accountability.

#### **5. The Influence of Leadership on Teachers' Professionalism through Work Ethic**

Work ethic also mediates the relationship between leadership and teachers' professionalism with an indirect influence of 31.62% and a total influence of 42.71%. This result proves that effective supervision by school principals could improve teachers' professionalism through a strong work ethic. According to Aguslani and Suryadi (2018:53), educational supervision could help improve the quality of teaching and learning, while maintaining harmony between individual needs and institutional goals. Internal work ethic (intrinsic motivation) and external work ethic (recognition, compensation) were the main drivers for teachers' professionalism.

#### **6. The Influence of School Culture on Teachers' Professionalism through Work Ethic**

The regression results showed that school culture had direct influence of 8.76% and an indirect influence of 17.94% through work ethic on teachers' professionalism, with a total influence of 26.70% ( $Sig = 0.031$ ). This means that school culture, both directly and through work ethic, had significant influence on teachers' professionalism. Positive school culture that values independence, collaboration, compliance, and mutual respect could promote higher professionalism among teachers, especially when accompanied by a strong work ethic. Ansar & Masaong (2011:187) stated that "school culture influenced the work method and behavior of the entire school community."

This research supported the conclusions of Elfridauli (2018) and Pramono (2025), who concluded that school culture had a beneficial influence on professionalism. Uno (2016:71) claimed that "work ethic is an important element in shaping professionalism". Thus, a strong school culture would reinforce teachers' work ethic and supported their professional development.

#### **7. The Influence of Work Ethic on Teachers' Professionalism.**

This research showed that work ethic had a positive and significant influence on teachers' professionalism. Teachers who had strong work ethic—motivated by both internal and external factors—were more likely to accomplish their jobs well. According to Uno (2016:71), "work ethic is a determining factor of a person's professionalism" because it motivates behavior towards achieving educational goals.

According to Robbins (2013), "purposeful work behavior strengthens the professional performance of individuals in organizations." In this research, internal work ethic characteristics such as responsibility, independence, and work ethic had greater influence on professionalism, while external characteristics such as promotion and rewards also contributed positively.

Syamra (2016) found that work ethic had a direct influence of 26.41% on teachers' professionalism, and thus they were also influenced by financial compensation by 51%. This is supported by Sumadi Suryabrata (2016:6),

who differentiated between intrinsic and extrinsic work motivations; both of which were equally important in improving professional performance.

Similar findings from Agustina (2020) confirmed that work ethic, both from internal and external sources for the teachers, contributed directly to their increased professionalism. Thus, the better a teacher's work ethic, the higher their level of professionalism would be, as seen by their commitment, responsibility, and job achievements.

## CONCLUSION

Below are the conclusions in this article:

1. **Interpersonal Communication and Teacher Work Ethic**, the principal's interpersonal communication with teachers was beneficial, with a 13.54% influence on teacher work ethic. Open and supportive communication boosted teachers' morale and sense of responsibility.
2. **Teacher Leadership and Work Ethic**, good principal leadership had a 17.30% influence on teacher work ethic. Leaders who set an example and provided guidance would encourage teachers to work more professionally.
3. **Teacher Leadership and Work Ethic**, good principal leadership had a 5.57% influence on teacher work ethic. Albeit small, school culture remained important in fostering teachers' work ethic.
4. **Interpersonal Communication on Teachers' Professionalism through Work Ethic**, interpersonal communication had a total influence of 36.49% on teachers' professionalism, especially by improving their work ethic.
5. **Leadership on Teachers' Professionalism through Work Ethic**, principal's leadership had a total influence of 42.71% on teachers' professionalism, demonstrating the importance of leadership in supporting teacher quality.
6. **School Culture on Teachers' Professionalism through Work Ethic**, School culture had a total influence of 26.70% on teachers' professionalism. The collective

values established at school would shape professional work ethic.

7. **Work Ethic and Teachers' Professionalism**, Teachers' work ethic had the greatest influence on professionalism, at 57.76%. The higher the work ethic, the more professional teachers were in carrying out their duties.

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