

The Influence of Quality of Work Life and Islamic Work Ethics Towards Job Performance among SMEs' Employee

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to examine the role of quality of work life and Islamic work Ethics on job performance among of employees who work at Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Kudus Regency. This study also examined the effect of quality work life on Islamic work ethics. The sample in this study was 354 employees who worked at SMEs. The results indicate that there are significant positive effects on quality of work life and Islamic work ethics on job performance. In addition, this study also found a significant effect of quality of work life on Islamic work ethics. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical benefits for the community and especially for SMEs management and for future research.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life, Islamic Work Ethics, Job Performance, SMEs

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries are a central part of the economic structure, thus they have a significant role for promoting economic development and growth (Hoque *et al.*, 2016; Tambunan, 2019; Putra and Santoso, 2020). Indonesia as a developing country, SMEs have a crucial role in its overall economic development. The Indonesian government has stimulated economic development and growth using SMEs, the total number of SMEs in Indonesia increased every year i.e. around 39.765 million units in 1997 to more than 62.9 million units in 2018 (Tambunan, 2019; ILO, 2019).

Historically, SMEs became Indonesia's major weapon and played a bigger role while enduring the 1998 economic crisis. Despite being managed in a simple manner, they had already taken a significant role at that time;



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they truly served as a support and an important option for the community to live in a more prosperous life (Kristiningrung *et al.*, 2021). However, many Indonesian SMEs are traditional enterprises with lower productivity (Putra and Santoso, 2020). They largely produce basic, low value-added goods for local markets. Nevertheless, various realities in the field showed that there were several SMEs found closed down and stopped their operations because they faced various obstacles, especially related to the professionalism of human resources (HR). Human resources play a key role in the management of organizations including SMEs.

This challenge is what triggers SMEs to be more professional in managing resources in a professional manner, including having to pay attention to the quality of work-life (QWL) of its employees in order to improve work professionalism, which ultimately has a direct impact on their performance. The concept of QWL emerged with Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model. This model tried to understand how psychological growth needs of the employees affected their internal motivations to perform effectively on the job and thereby their QWL. QWL is a multidimensional construct that refers to overall satisfaction with work-life along with a cumulative sense of belonging to a working group and being worthy and respectable (Morin and Morin, 2004). The effect of QWL on a person's feelings about every dimension of work including economic rewards, and benefits, security, working conditions, organizational and interpersonal relations, and its intrinsic meaning of a person's life (Wyatt and Wah, 2001; Kheradmand, *et al.*, 2010; Bharati, *et al.*, 2010; Bolhari *et al.*, 2011; Thakur and Sharma, 2019; Agus and Selvaraj, 2020).

Besides QWL, an individual's work ethic is also likely to influence his or her job performance. Several studies have highlighted that work ethic has a significant effect on job performance. In fact, previous research has focused on the effect of Islamic work ethic (IWE) on work outcomes such as Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention (Rokhman, 2010; Ali, 1988, 1992; Yousef, 2000; Murtaza *et al.*, 2016; Mohamed *et al.*, 2010; Gheitani, *et al.*, 2019; Husin and Kernain, 2020), organizational citizenship behaviour, organizational change, intrinsic motivation, innovation capability (Kumar and Rose, 2010), productivity, organization competence, quality of organization and HRM practices (Abuznaid, 2009; Mellahi and Budhwar, 2010; Gheitani, *et al.*, 2019).

However, there is a lack of research regarding the effect of IWE on employees' performance (Mohammad *et al.*, 2018) and also very limited

research found that discussed the relationship between QWL and IWE. Thus, this study is expected to examine the impact of QWL and IWE on job performance in order to understand the linkage. In addition, the study will also be beneficial for researchers and business owner in the area of SMEs. Furthermore, the result of this study is likely to advance researchers' knowledge of the crucial role of IWE in boosting employees' attitude and behavior at the workplace, thus motivating more research in this area of work ethic and QWL. Hence, the paper will be organized as follows. The first section reviews relevant literature. Followed by a brief description of the methodology of the research, then the results of this study. In the last section, conclusion, suggestion and limitation are provided.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality of Work Life and Job Performance

QWL is a picture of the quality of personal relationships with overall working conditions (Sheel, *et al.*, 2012). It is a multidimensional concept that covers various aspects of work that have an impact on SME's overall performance. Hackman and Oldham (1976) stated that the psychological aspects of work were seldom considered important, but they were the ones that contributed most to improvements in the intrinsic motivations of the employees, which ultimately resulted in superiors' job performances.

Quality of work life is an important issue of the organization to achieve a competitive advantage; this is caused by the view that QWL is considered capable of increasing the participation and contribution of organizational members. Sheel, *et al.* (2012) define QWL as a process in which an organization responds to the needs of employees by developing mechanisms by involving them in designing work-life whereas with other definitions, is a pleasant working condition that supports and increases the satisfaction of employees by providing rewards, job security, and opportunities for growth. According to Beloor *et al.* (2019), QWL comprised of six components, namely: compensation, work environment, relation and cooperation, facilities, job security, training and development.

Furthermore, Riady (2007) grouped various variables in the QWL some of which can be illuminated as follows: first, compensation is the element that pays attention to justice and is competitive, meets the needs of life, if professionally managed, it encourages employees to be more productive. Second, encouraging employees to progress by providing adequate training, offering opportunities and prospects for promotion in an objective, clear

career path, providing facilities that encourage employees to progress. Third, conducive work environment: safe, comfortable, healthy work conditions, good working relationships with customers, and supportive work facilities. Fourth, organizational values: a clear vision and mission of the organization, respect for the role of employees, in accordance with employees themselves and their environment, respect for other employees. Fifth, job characteristics: produce clear work outputs, important and proud tasks. Sixth, good leadership, shows commitment to the organization's mission and empowers employees.

The factor highlighted above are significant motivators derived from the QWL. Thus, it is indicated that QWL had a strong link with work motivation that ultimately improves employees' performance. The results of various previous studies indicate the influence of quality of work-life with various dimensions of work outcomes (Wyatt and Wah, 2001; Kheradmand, *et al.*, 2010; Bharati, *et al.*, 2010; Bolhari *et al.*, 2011; Thakur and Sharma, 2019; Hermawati and Puji, 2019; Agus and Selvaraj, 2020). For example, a study in Singapore conducted by Wyatt and Wah (2001) discovered four dimensions in QWL, namely the atmosphere of work, career development, support from management, appreciation for employees and all these factors influence employees' routine jobs. Recently, researchers found that QWL has a significant positive impact on the tasks the employees perform, the context they are in and their overall job performance Thakur and Sharma (2019), at the same time, employees experience better QWL, when they have adequacy of resources, support, power and opportunity at the workplace (Nayak, *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, looking at the relationship observed, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 1: Employees' Quality of work life relates positively to their job performance.

Islamic Work Ethic and Job Performance

The study also reveals that there are several factors that affect Muslims' ethical behaviour, including legal, organizational, and individual aspects. According to Husin and Kernain, (2020), implementation of the IWE values is highly influential to positively affect not only the performance of employees as individuals but also organization. Studies also disclose factors that affect the manager's unethical behavior; for example, stage of moral development, family influence and peer influence. The paper outlines some of the ethical guidelines that should be manifested in a Muslim manager, such as being

trustful, honest, and consultative. Besides that, the paper also highlights some of the moral issues that seem to be common between Islam and other religions such as no lying, stealing, fraud, or deceit (Abuznaid, 2009). Islam is a complete way of life. Ethics are therefore applicable to every aspect of Muslims' life including administration.

Furthermore, previous research reveals that work ethic is also likely to influence individual job performance. A study found that work ethic has a significant positive effect on job performance. Meanwhile, work in Islam has clearly been distinguished from other beliefs. Islam views work as an integral part of worship to Allah. Within this view, every Muslim will envision his work in a twofold manner: as a source of financial support and achieving good worldly life (*al-falah fi al-dunya*), as well as a means of serving Allah and preparing for the success of life hereafter (*al-falah fi al-akhirah*) (Ibrahim and Kamri, 2017).

As mentioned above, most of the previous studies have mostly focused on the effect of IWE on a number of work outcomes, namely: Job satisfaction, organizational commitment (Rokhman, 2010), turnover intention (Ali, 1988, 1992; Yousef, 2000; Murtaza *et al.*, 2016; Mohamed *et al.*, 2010); organizational citizenship behaviour, organizational change, intrinsic motivation and organization commitment (Gheitani, *et al.*, 2019), innovation capability, productivity, quality of the organization and HRM practices (Abuznaid, 2009; Gheitani, *et al.*, 2019). Very few studies dedicated to the impact of IWE on job performance. Thus, to explore the relationship, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

Hypothesis 2: *Employees' Islamic work ethics relates positively to their job performance.*

Quality of Work Life and Islamic Work Ethics

As described by Mohamed Branine and Pollard (2010), principles of work ethics in Islam derive from the Holy Quran, the sayings and practices of Prophet Mohamed. Many verses of the Quran speak about justice and honesty in trade, and courtesy and fairness in employment relationships, and also encourage humans to learn new skills and to strive to do good work that benefits both the individual and the community, furthermore, work-life/condition in Islam pays strict attention that workers should not be exploited and that working conditions must be good including a reasonable and affordable workload for the employee to perform. It is exactly in line

with what the modern researches claimed that employees' job satisfaction can be seen as a key motivator (player) of human behaviour in the workplace (Shah, Irani, and Sharif, 2017); a key driver in supporting the attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Alegre *et al.*, 2016; Rayton and Yalabik, 2014; Topolosky, 2000). Hence, job satisfaction has always been crucial to the happiness or unhappiness of employees at the time of work (Zheng *et al.*, 2014) and it is obviously the overall quality of individuals' feeling about different aspects of their jobs (Shooshtarian *et al.*, 2013). According to Al-Aidaros, Shamsudin, and Idris (2013), IWE is comprehensive, realistic and moderate, therefore, it is not about just a matter of religious morality in certain acts but it covers all facets of life in the physical, spiritual, moral or emotional sphere, which is related to intellectual, emotional, individual and collective aspects of employees (Yaken, 2006). Some researchers even claim IWE plays a significant role in mitigating the negative consequences of adverse work conditions, such as family-to-work conflict (De Clercq *et al.*, 2017) or perceptions of organisational politics (Rawwas, Javed, and Iqbal, 2018). Thus, assuming IWEs ensure QWL of individuals in the organization, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 3: *Employees' Quality of work life relates positively to their Islamic work ethics.*

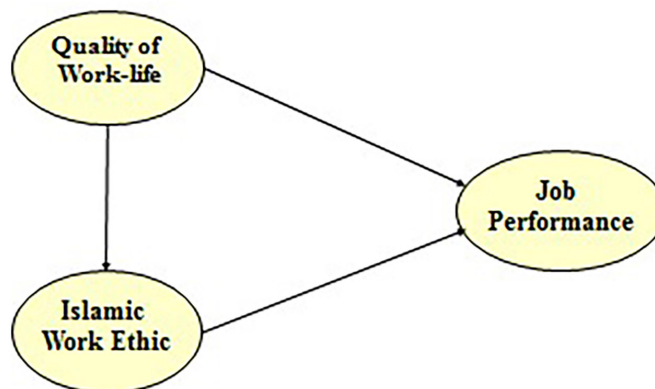


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

The sample in this study was employees who worked at Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Kudus Central Java, Indonesia. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. This is a sampling technique that

is used by determining certain criteria used to determine the suitability of a population member to be a research sample. This study used the criteria that: the employees participated in this study had worked for at least 1 year at SMEs, so they could feel about the Quality of work life and work ethics of Islam practiced in the organization.

Table I
The Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
• Male	149	42%
• Female	205	58 %
Age		
• Less than 20 years	101	28 %
• 20 – 30 years	208	59 %
• 31 – 40 years	32	9 %
• More than 41 years	13	4 %
Education background		
• Elementary school	22	6 %
• Junior high school	92	26 %
• Senior high school	210	59 %
• University	30	9 %
Business Sector		
• Handicrafts	49	14 %
• Culinary	81	23 %
• Fashion Industry	52	15 %
• Trading	80	22 %
• Service Business	25	7 %
• Others	67	19 %
Job Tenure		
• 1 - 2 year	204	58 %
• 3 - 6 year	113	32%
• 7 year and above	37	10 %
Salary per-month		
• Less than one million Rupiah	188	53 %
• 1 – 2 Million Rupiah	144	41 %
• 2- 4 Million Rupiah	19	5 %
• More than 4 Million	3	1 %

Respondents in this study are employees who work as permanent employees at SMEs in Central Java, Indonesia. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, about 369 were returned with a response rate of 92%. However, 12 questionnaires were regarded incomplete and could not be used for further analysis because there were many items not properly filled in as well as there were four respondents who worked less than one year; thus, they did not meet the requirements of the sample in this study. The following is a general description of respondents related to gender, age, education, age, business sector, job tenure, and salary per month:

Variable Measurement

Measurement variables in this study include 'quality of work-life', measured by using 19 items of modified questions from the instruments developed by Walton (1982), Vanpariya and Ganguly (2010) with Cronbach Alpha consistency reliability of 0.85. The 'Islamic work ethic' is measured with the instrument modified from the version of Ali (2005) and Rokhman (2010). This instrument consists of 17 items with Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. 'Job performance' is measured using 9 question items modified from Borman and Motowidlo's (1993) and Yang and Hwang (2014) with Cronbach Alpha consistency reliability of 0.79. Thus, reliabilities for all variables are valid because the values are more than 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2010, 2017). All the instruments employed were in a form of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

RESULTS

Table II below presents descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and correlations of the study variables, i.e. the quality of work life, Islamic work ethic and job performance. The correlations among the variables provided initial support for the proposed hypotheses. All the variables show the satisfaction level to be more than 3. The correlations among the variables provided initial support for three proposed hypotheses.

Table II
Cronbach's a, Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation between Variables

Variable	Alpha	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Quality of work life	.861	3.76	0.44	1.00	
2. Islamic work ethic	.677	4.09	0.29	.385**	1.00
3. Job Performance	.696	4.00	0.37	.379**	.360**

Notes: **=significant at $p < 0.01$, *=significant at $p < 0.05$

To address the purpose of the study, the proposed hypotheses were tested using regression analyses. The results of the regression analyses are summarized in Table III. As expected (H1), the regression results revealed that the QWL is a significant predictor of job performance, as hypothesised ($R^2 = 0.216$, $p < 0.01$). The finding also supported H2, which predicted a positive relationship between the IWE and job performance. The IWE scores explained about 34.6% of variance ($F = 23.79$, $p < 0.01$) in the perception of job performance. The results of this study are clearly in line with the research conducted by Mohamed *et al.* (2010) and Gheitani, *et al.* (2019) who found a significant influence of quality of work-life on job performance.

Table III
The result of regression analysis; the QWL and IWE as predictor of Job Performance

Variables	Job Performance		
	R ²	F change	B
Quality of Work Life	.216	43.12**	0.214*
Islamic Work Ethics	.346	23.79**	0.358*

Note: * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

DISCUSSION

The finding reveals that there is a positive significant relationship between employees' QWL and their overall job performance of permanent employees in SMEs. Thus, this outcome reaffirmed the finding of Rai and Tripathi (2015) who indicated a positive and significant relationship between QWL and Job Performance. According to them, the stronger the QWL in an organization, the more significant impact on job performance is observed. Similarly, Chaturvedi and Yadav (2012) also supported that there was a positive relationship between job satisfaction and quality of work-life, especially work environment (Dhamija *et al.*, 2019); if the quality of work-life increased then employees' satisfaction increased proportionately.

The study also uncovered the assumption on the significant contribution of employees' IWE and job performance. As described, IWE reflects moral values rooted in Islam, which distinguishes what is right from what is wrong (Beekun, 1997). Previous researches indicated that an employee with a strong IWE perceives the workplace as a place for cooperation, dedication and hard work (Ali, 1992; Husin and Kernain, 2020) and fulfils required job responsibilities (Khan *et al.*, 2015), covers a broad range of values with direct impacts on how employees behave at work (Khan *et al.*, 2015; Murtaza *et al.*, 2016; Husin and Kernain, 2020). Thus, the result was fully supported and reassured by De Clercq *et al.* (2017) that employees with a strong IWE likely achieve better performance, psychological wellbeing (Raja *et al.*, 2019; Al-Douri *et al.*, 2020) because they put in more effort to fulfil their duties, which they perceive as a religious obligation, regardless of the job environment. Besides, IWE also play a critical role in increasing citizenship and knowledge sharing behaviour at the workplace (Murtaza, *et al.*, 2016).

Here, the finding asserted that employees' quality of work-life positively relates to the Islamic work ethics practice in particular organizations specifically, SMEs. Obviously, IWE places more focus on intention rather than on results, emphasizing justice and generosity in the workplace and considers the involvement in economic activities as an obligation. Work ethics plays a strategic role in an organization because it creates positive outcomes to the performance of an organization through values, commitment, satisfaction and profit (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Al-Douri *et al.*, 2020) whereas IWE considers work as an obligatory activity that shows as a desirable quality of the person; it can be used by individuals as strength in his/her social life (Ali, 1988; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). Thus, as long as employees feel satisfied

with their jobs (Shah, Irani, and Sharif, 2016), they are motivated to do the jobs and show good behaviour in their workplace (Alegre, Mas-Machuca, and Berbegal-Mirabent, 2016; Rayton and Yalabik, 2014; Husin and Kernain, 2020; Al-Douri *et al.*, 2020). Quality outcomes, in other words, QWL will be delivered if the employees are appreciated and satisfied (Shooshtarian, Ameli, and Amini Lari, 2013). Hence, the results of the study were very much in line with the previous findings. QWL is a construct that is more holistic than job satisfaction, which involves workplace influences on job satisfaction that directly linked with the equality and values constitute in the IWE.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to determine the effect of work-life quality and Islamic work ethics on job performance of SMEs in Kudus Central Java, Indonesia. The result of this study showed that there is a significant positive effect between Quality of work and job performance. So, the higher the quality of work-life of each individual is, the greater the job performance that can be cultivated. Besides, the study showed that IWE has a significant effect on job performance. Thus, the study confirmed that the better the QWL and IWE in the workplace, the higher the job performance of employees in the organization.

The findings of the current study have certain implications. Based on the results of the analysis, this study has two implications, namely the theoretical and the practical implications. The following segment explained the implications of this research: first, as theoretical implication, the relationship seems extremely positive and established between employees' quality of work-life in their daily work environment and their overall job satisfaction on the job, which thus, reaffirmed that the greater the quality of work-life employees enjoyed in the organization, the better the organizational performance contributed by the particular employees. As for practical implication, the result of this study can be reflected in all SMEs, around the country as well as in the region particularly, by the managers and practitioners who need to increase their attention to the quality of work-life of their employees simply because it is found to be one of the key contributing factors that push employees to perform better. Therefore, it's a hardcore element that the SMEs owners required to take it seriously to improve the quality of work-life in their organizations.

From the results obtained in this study, some shortcomings found to be important and need to address here in order to gain better results in

future research. The limitations and suggestions are as follows: firstly, the questionnaire was distributed to and data was collected only from SMEs in Kudus Central Java, so the scope of the study was quite narrow. This causes the level of generalizability of the study is lacking. Therefore, further researches should take bigger samples at a broader level such as from the whole Java and beyond so that the results can be better generalized. Secondly, the variables involved in the study are limited, thus, further research should include more variables, so that the scope of the study is wider. Lastly, this study utilizes cross-sectional primary data alone, which is taken at one time only; so further research should try longitudinally through long-term observations so that it will produce more comprehensive outcomes.

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