

The Mediating Function of Islamic Work Ethics in the Association Between Ethical Leadership and Job Performance in Islamic Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how healthcare professionals' performance in Islamic hospitals after the COVID-19 epidemic is affected by Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) and Ethical Leadership. Descriptive statistical analysis and a quantitative approach were employed in this study. A stratified random sample of healthcare professionals from Kudus Regency's Islamic hospitals was collected. A total of 157 respondents completed a standardized questionnaire that was used to gather the data. The suggested linkages and data analysis were tested using SmartPLS. This study found that IWE and ethical leadership significantly impact healthcare professionals' job performance. Furthermore, ethical leadership positively affects the IWE, and the IWE partially mediates the relation between ethical leadership and job performance. Only healthcare professionals working in Kudus, Jawa Tengah's Islamic hospitals, are included in this study. Therefore, future studies may involve experts from a larger range of industries to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. This study presents a fresh viewpoint by investigating the concurrent relationship between IWE, job performance, and ethical leadership in Islamic hospitals. Additionally, this study focuses on Islamic hospitals, which uniquely integrate Islamic values into workplace practices, especially in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: *Job Performance, Ethical Leadership, Islamic Work Ethics, Healthcare Worker, Post-pandemic COVID-19.*



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge to global healthcare systems (WHO, 2021), placing healthcare professionals at the forefront in providing essential medical services (Baluszek et al., 2023). The crisis has affected practitioners' personal and professional lives, particularly in terms of work-related stress. A recent thorough review of nurses' mental health during COVID-19 revealed high rates of anxiety, stress, depression, PTSD, and insomnia (Varghese et al., 2021). Furthermore, during the pandemic, nurses' physical and mental health declined, detrimental to the standard and security of patient care (An et al., 2020). In order for healthcare executives and other interested parties to continue to deliver safe and effective patient care in the face of hardship, it is morally necessary that they help their staff become more resilient (Adams & Walls, 2020; Dewey et al., 2020). Many healthcare professionals still felt prolonged fatigue, even after the pandemic. Therefore, focusing on improving the performance and well-being of healthcare professionals is a very relevant issue (Franczukowska et al., 2021).

This study is grounded in the intersection of leadership ethics, work motivation, and religious values within healthcare organizations, particularly Islamic hospitals. Islamic hospitals have unique characteristics based on Islamic principles that influence all their activities and management. Healthcare professionals often face heavy workloads, limited resources, and high emotional stress, which can hinder the implementation of these ethical values (Rafferty et al., 2013). Additionally, aligning individual values with organizational values poses a challenge, particularly when healthcare professionals have discrepancies in views or interpretations of Islamic values (Beekun & Badawi, 2005). Prior research has extensively examined ethical leadership and its outcomes using frameworks such as Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which explains how leaders influence followers through modeling and reciprocity. The display of normatively acceptable behavior by one's behavior and interpersonal interactions is known as ethical leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006), has been shown to enhance organizational commitment (Walumbwa et al., 2011), trust (Jabeen & Rahim, 2021), and job satisfaction (Sharma & Sharma, 2024). However, Sugianingrat et al. (2019) research's concluded that ethical leadership had no visible impact on employee performance. Most existing studies also focus on Western-centric, secular organizational settings, with

limited exploration of religious or value-based ethical mediators, particularly in healthcare environments.

Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) offers an alternative and culturally embedded construct derived from Islamic principles such as honesty (ṣidq), responsibility (amānah), sincerity (ikhlās), and justice (‘adl) (Ali, 1988). IWE is distinct from general work ethics in its orientation toward religious accountability and spiritual purpose, framing work as both a moral obligation and a form of worship (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). Many empirical works have associated IWE with positive job outcomes, including job satisfaction (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020), organizational citizenship behavior (Mubarak et al., 2022), and performance (Aftab et al., 2022; Dogbe et al., 2024; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Mohammad et al., 2018; Qasim et al., 2022). Its mediating role, however—most notably in connecting ethical leadership to job performance—is still not well-studied.

Compared to other conventional mediators such as organizational commitment or empowerment, IWE introduces a value-based and faith-infused element of motivation that is especially relevant in Islamic healthcare settings. This mediating role aligns with Social Learning Theory, which posits that employees internalize modeled behaviors reinforced through shared social norms. At the same time, from a Social Exchange perspective, IWE can be seen as a reciprocal expression of employees’ moral and spiritual alignment with ethical leadership. This dual-theory positioning offers a nuanced explanation of why employees perform well, not just due to transactional motivations, but also because of spiritual and ethical alignment with leadership values.

Despite a growing interest in value-based leadership, previous literature tends to lack integration between ethical leadership, religious work values, and performance, particularly in healthcare sectors that serve diverse patient populations. International studies, such as those by Hofstede (1980, 2001, 2011) on cross-cultural values, and Fry and Cohen (2009) on spiritual leadership in hospitals, provide foundational insights but have not explicitly linked Islamic ethics with leadership and outcomes in a post-pandemic healthcare context. This study addresses that gap by synthesizing Eastern (Islamic) and Western (ethical leadership) perspectives and testing them empirically through a structural equation model in an Indonesian Islamic hospital.

To clarify the novelty and avoid duplication, the following literature synthesis table illustrates the comparative position of this study:

Table 1. *Literature Matrix*

No	Author(s) & Year	Context / Sample	Mediator	Methodology	Key Finding	Gap Identified
1	Walumbwa et al. (2011)	US Organization	Organizational Commitment	SEM	Ethical leadership improves performance via commitment	No spiritual/religious values considered
2	Shafique et al., 2018)	Pakistan Islamic Banks	Job Satisfaction	Regression	Ethical leadership affects performance via satisfaction	Lacks theoretical integration of IWE
3	Fry & Cohen (2009)	U.S. Healthcare Systems	Spiritual Leadership	Qualitative	Spiritual leadership improves morale and performance	Not Islamic based, lacks an empirical SEM model
4	This Study (2025)	Islamic Hospital (Indonesia)	IWE	SEM-PLS	IWE partially mediates the Ethical leadership and Job performance relationship	Integrates a faith-based mediator in healthcare

Source: Author's Work

This comparative framework demonstrates that the present study contributes a novel synthesis by testing a culturally specific, religiously grounded mediator (IWE) in the context of healthcare leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This study draws upon two foundational theoretical frameworks to explain the mechanisms linking ethical leadership, IWE, and job performance among healthcare professionals in Islamic hospitals. First, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) provides a basis for understanding how employees adopt ethical and Islamic values by observing and modeling the behavior of their leaders. Ethical leaders who consistently demonstrate fairness, honesty, compassion, and integrity serve as moral role models whose actions are internalized by employees. In this context, ethical leadership fosters a value-driven work environment in which employees are encouraged to embrace

IWE, such as sincerity (ikhlas), trustworthiness (amanah), and justice (adl), not merely as formal expectations but as internalized behavioral standards.

Second, this article applies the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) to explain how ethical leadership and IWE influence job performance based on the theory of reciprocal exchange. If workers believe that they are being respected and treated fairly and ethically by their leaders, then they will be more likely to reciprocate with good organizational behaviors such as greater motivation, commitment, and work performance. Similarly, when employees internalize IWE, they see work not just as a professional obligation but also as a religious fulfillment and become more committed to excellence. The combination of both theories enables this study to provide a comprehensive explanation of how leadership behavior grounded in ethics and religion impacts work attitude and performance outcomes in the context of an Islamic organizational setting.

Job Performance

Job performance is essential in studies of organizational behavior and human resource management (Kundi et al., 2020; Ogbonnaya & Messersmith, 2019; Oravee et al., 2018; Otoo, 2024; Turek, 2022). An organization's success or failure is determined by the performance of its employees (Jabeen & Rahim, 2021). Campbell (1990) emphasized that job performance is not the result of an action, but the action itself. Schmitt and Chan (1998) define work performance as the degree of employee motivation to carry out duties and the knowledge and abilities needed. The ability to accomplish particular tasks within the framework of one's knowledge, abilities, and job needs is what Guan and Frenkel (2018) define as an employee's job performance. Accordingly, job performance is viewed as a behaviorally determined effect, a direct and observable result of behavior (Cao et al., 2025). Therefore, maintaining employee performance is important for managers (Kwahk & Park, 2018).

Ethical Leadership

Leadership involves influence (Yukl, 2002). The notion of ethical leadership has slowly evolved since Treviño et al. (2000) first proposed it. Trevino and colleagues proposed that ethical leadership encompasses more than just ethical behavior; it also involves being a values-driven and

people-focused leader. This entails creating, disseminating, and upholding moral principles within the company, often utilizing tools such as open communication and incentive programs. Ethical leaders are distinguished by personal attributes such as honesty, integrity, dependability, fairness, transparency in decision-making, and responsible behavior. Ethical leadership is demonstrated by leaders modeling morally righteous behavior in daily interactions and intimate interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 2005). These behaviors are then promoted among followers through participative decision-making processes, open two-way communication, and supportive leadership practices that encourage employees to internalize and emulate those ethical norms. Accordingly, this definition emphasizes three essential characteristics of a successful ethical leader: (1) a person who aspires to live up to their beliefs, (2) believes in justice, and (3) effectively communicates important information. Additionally, moral leaders promote moral and equitable treatment of their subordinates by fostering a cooperative and upbeat workplace where staff members are concerned about others' welfare and offer assistance for professional growth. This encourages their subordinates to act morally toward their company similarly (Aftab et al., 2022; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Sarwar et al., 2020; Walumbwa et al., 2017).

Islamic Work Ethics

According to Ali (1988), the importance of work in Islam stems from the intention associated with working, rather than from the work results. In the faith of Islam, a person who struggles to provide for his family is regarded as someone who is struggling in the "path of Allah" with all the benefits that come with his efforts (Raies, 2022). Islamic principles are applicable in every aspect of life since they are, in fact, universal. Islamic virtues include sincerity, competence, honesty, patience, self-reflection, keeping one's word, and simplicity (Javed et al., 2020). Beekun (2004) identifies the three core precepts of the Islamic religion as *akhlaq*, *ibadah* (submission and obedience to Allah), and *aqidah* (firm belief in Allah's unity). IWE is a component of morals (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020).

IWE is a set of moral guidelines that establishes what is good and wrong in the context of Islam. It is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, closely related to Islamic values, beliefs, and practices (Arslan, 2001). IWE is complete, practical, and reasonable (Al-Aidaros et al., 2013). According to Yaken (2006), ethics encompasses all facets of existence, including the

moral, spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, and communal domains, in addition to religious morality in particular acts. Along with encouraging collaboration and direction, IWE emphasizes the importance of work-related devotion as a virtue and encourages dedication, cooperation, loyalty, and abstaining from unscrupulous and unethical employment methods such as bribery, theft, fraud, and dishonesty (Qasim et al., 2022). IWE emphasizes the value of working for the benefit of others and promotes integrity and commitment in the workplace (Mohammad et al., 2018).

Ethical Leadership and Job Performance

According to Aftab et al. (2022), employees' job performance is significantly improved when leadership is treated fairly and ethically. Additionally, in Italian SMEs, corporate social responsibility considerably mediates the relationship between employee job performance and ethical leadership. This suggests that managers who act morally care more about their workers' dignity and can establish and preserve a moral and socially conscious work environment. Employees gain confidence in their ability to complete challenging jobs as a result, which improves job performance (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Dogbe et al., 2024; Hamzah & Yuswar Zainal, 2021; Kalshoven et al., 2011). Furthermore, Walumbwa et al. (2017) stated that self-efficacy and leader-subordinate interaction fully attenuate the beneficial relationship between ethical leadership and employee job performance. Thus, ethical leadership promotes positive connections by being generous, considerate, and treating subordinates fairly (Lin & Liu, 2017). Therefore, job performance may benefit from ethical leadership. We suggest the following initial hypothesis considering the appropriate subjects above:

H1: Ethical Leadership has a direct and positive influence on Job Performance.

Ethical Leadership and Islamic Work Ethics

According to Udin (2024) and Faliza et al. (2023), IWE benefits from moral leadership (Abdelwahed et al., 2025). Aini (2020) also indicates that IWE is positively impacted by Islamic leadership. According to Kessi et al. (2022), Islamic leadership raises employee morale by positively affecting emotional intelligence. According to Hayati and Caniago (2025), whereas ethical leadership has little direct impact on task performance, it has a considerable impact on contextual performance. Both performance categories

and ethical leadership are mediated by IWE, suggesting that they strengthen the beneficial impact of ethical leadership on worker performance. Given the foregoing, it is presumed that:

H2: Ethical leadership has a positive impact on IWE.

IWE and Job Performance

According to Badar et al. (2023), IWE positively impacts organizational performance and employee relations climate. By encouraging diligence, commitment, and focusing on the bigger picture, IWE can increase employee enthusiasm, commitment, and productivity. This may favorably affect how the organization's performance is perceived. Additionally, IWE may assist companies in building a strong brand identity and increasing their attractiveness to stakeholders, such as customers, investors, and employees. According to Berrone et al. (2007), organizations with ethical ideals see positive externalities and intangible advantages, which boost organizational performance and return on investment. Previous studies have explored IWE, which positively impacts competitive advantage and performance (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Hamzah & Yuswar Zainal, 2021; Saadatyar et al., 2020). Job satisfaction and organizational dedication correlate positively and significantly with IWE (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020). Because IWE promotes the notion that people can attain riches and a reasonable living level through labor and commerce, employees will understand that the company aims to "succeed by doing good" (Qasim et al., 2022). In light of these reasons, we suggest:

H3: IWE has a positive impact on job performance.

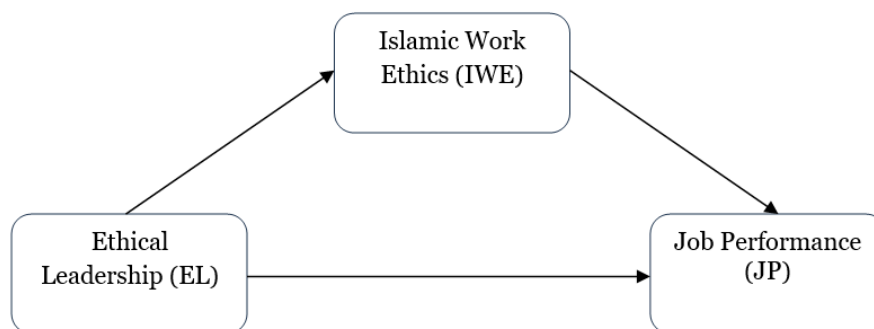
Mediation Effect

It seems sensible to suggest that IWE contributes significantly to the increment of employees' organizational commitment and sense of job satisfaction. Leaders within an organization are responsible for guiding and influencing their subordinates to elevate their levels of dedication and contentment in their roles. These two psychological outcomes—commitment and satisfaction—are widely acknowledged as critical drivers that substantially contribute to an organization's overall performance and are essential for ensuring the sustainable functioning and long-term success of departmental units (Shamsudin et al., 2010). Furthermore, according to empirical evidence

provided by Javed et al. (2020), effective management practices have been positively correlated with transformational leadership, which prioritizes inspiration, vision, and personal development, and transactional leadership, which is based on explicit expectations and exchanges. Importantly, the study also discovered that IWE acted as a mediating factor, enhancing the relationship between different leadership philosophies and management success. In light of these results, we suggest the following:

H4: IWE mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and job performance.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Model*



RESEARCH METHOD

Sample Design and Data Collection

The study is explanatory research, which aims to elucidate the location of the observed variables and their relationship with other factors (Sugiyono, 2013). This study used a quantitative methodology, testing pre-formulated hypotheses with quantitative data tools and analysis (Creswell, 2014). The study's population consisted of healthcare professionals employed by Islamic hospitals in Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia. Stratified random sampling, a technique appropriate when healthcare professionals in each Islamic hospital have distinct characteristics, such as profession (doctor, nurse, or administration), length of service, or educational attainment, was employed in this study. With stratified random sampling, the population of healthcare professionals in each hospital is divided into several groups or strata, and samples are randomly selected from each stratum. This ensures that each

group of healthcare professionals is represented in proportion to its size. A total of 157 respondents completed the research questionnaire, which was collected using a Google Forms online questionnaire.

Measures and Instruments

Job Performance: Koopmans et al. (2014) conceptualize individual job performance as comprising three dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. The level of job performance can be evaluated through four core determinants: proficiency in completing tasks, adherence to work discipline, continuous improvement efforts, and the ability to embrace innovation (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Kwahk & Park, 2018). This study adapted a seven-item measurement scale from Ramos-Villagrasa et al. (2019) to assess employees’ job performance (see Table 1). **Ethical Leadership:** To assess the construct of ethical leadership, this study employed a modified six-item scale originally developed by Brown et al. (2005). This tool records how staff members view their leader’s moral behavior and decision-making (see Table 1). **IWE:** The IWE was measured using a six-item scale adapted from Aboramadan et al. (2022). This scale assesses how employees incorporate Islamic values into their work behavior and mindset (see Table 1).

Table 2. *Research Instrument*

Research Instrument	Reference
<p>Ethical Leadership My leader pays attention to what staff members have to say My leader leads an ethical personal life My leader looks out for the interests of the workers My leader makes decisions that are reasonable and well-rounded My leader can be trusted My leader exemplifies moral conduct</p>	Brown et al. (2005)
<p>Islamic Work Ethics Honesty and Integrity are key to excellence at work What is prohibited and what is halal should be used to evaluate work Work should be accompanied by good intentions and clear goals Laziness in the workplace should be avoided Humility at work fosters cooperation Nepotism (wasta) should be avoided</p>	Aboramadan et al. (2022)

Job Performance

I focused on the outcomes I needed to attain at work
 I completed my work quickly and effectively
 When there were difficult tasks available, I took them on
 I made an effort to stay current with my job-related
 knowledge and abilities
 I solved novel problems in a creative way
 I was always looking for new challenges at work
 I took an active part in consultations and/or meetings

Ramos-Villagrasa
 et al. (2019)

Source: Author's Work

Data Analysis

Small to medium sample sizes, the use of formative or reflective indicators, and PLS-SEM's appropriateness for exploratory research involving complex relationships led to its selection (Hair et al., 2021). Building on traditional multiple regression, PLS is an advanced multivariate analytical technique that allows for the simultaneous evaluation of intricate relationships between multiple constructs (Badar et al., 2023). According to Hair et al. (2019), this approach is beneficial for resolving problems about the model's complexity and the dataset's characteristics. PLS has become widely used in various domains, such as human resource studies, tourism research, and strategic management (Ali et al., 2018; Ringle et al., 2020). PLS handles ordinal data and measurement errors better than covariance-based SEM (Rademaker et al., 2019; Schuberth et al., 2018). This study employed the PLS approach to evaluate the direct and indirect effects among variables, thereby comprehensively testing the proposed research hypotheses.

RESULTS**Respondent Profile**

It comprises 157 respondents, categorized by gender, age, educational level, tenure, and division (see Table 2).

Table 3. *Respondent Profiles*

	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21 - 30	52	33%
	31 - 40	81	52%
	41 - 50	18	11%
	> 50	6	4%

Gender	Male	68	43%
	Female	89	57%
Tenure	Diploma/Bachelor	145	92%
	Master	9	6%
	Doctor	3	2%
	1 - 5	48	31%
Division	6 - 10	63	40%
	11 - 15	24	15%
	> 15	22	14%
	Medical	93	59%
	Administrative	64	41%

Source: Primary data processed

Measurement Model Assessment

The item loadings were evaluated using the PLS technique. Convergent validity at the construct level was supported by Table 3, which shows that all items had loadings greater than 0.702 (IWE4, IWE6, and JP4 were excluded). The average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.50. Additionally, composite dependability (CR) values showed good internal consistency, surpassing the threshold of 0.70. Furthermore, the constructs' reliability was validated because Cronbach's alpha values were higher than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, Table 4 shows that all heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios dropped below 0.85, the cutoff point recommended by Henseler et al. (2015), indicating that the measurement model's discriminant validity was sufficient.

Table 4. *Item loading, Cronbach Alpha, CRs, and AVEs*

Item	Code	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
Ethical Leadership				0.925	0.674
Listening to employees	EL1	0.714			
Ethical personal life	EL2	0.784			
Putting employees' interests first	EL3	0.917	0.903		
Fair and balanced decisions	EL4	0.837			
Trusted leadership	EL5	0.864			
Being an ethical role model	EL6	0.796			

Islamic Work Ethics

Honesty and integrity are the keys to work	IWE1	0.713
Work assessment based on halal and haram	IWE2	0.757
Good intentions must accompany work results	IWE3	0.761
Avoid laziness	IWE4	0.625
Humility creates cooperation	IWE5	0.761
Rejecting nepotism	IWE6	0.535

0.835
0.560
0.756

Job Performance

Focus on work results	JP1	0.704
Effective and efficient at work	JP2	0.715
Willingness to take on challenges	JP3	0.770
Updating work knowledge and skills	JP4	0.673
Creative problem solving	JP5	0.702
Seeking new challenges at work	JP6	0.735
Active participation in meetings/ consultations	JP7	0.783

0.805
0.864
0.561

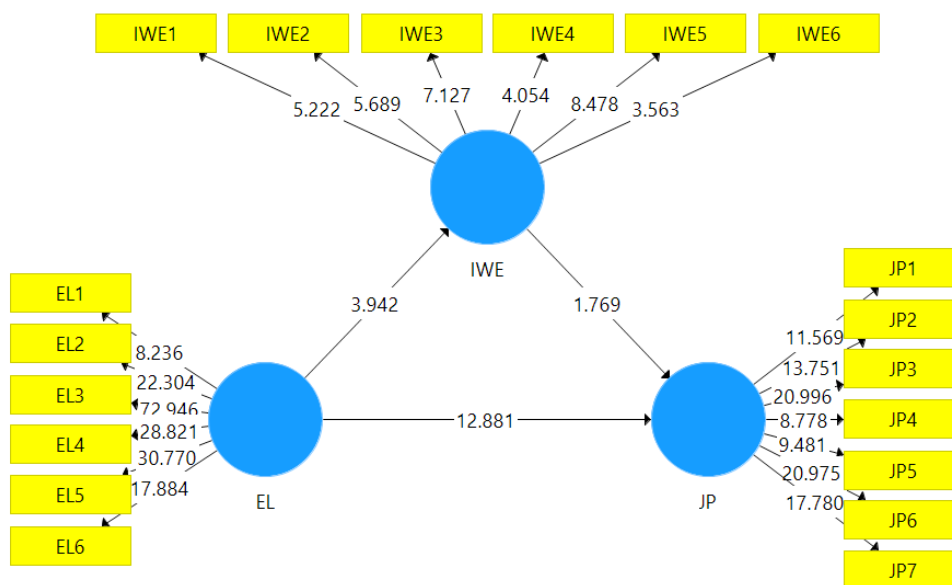
Source: SmartPLS output

Table 5. Discriminant validity (HTMT ratio)

Construct	EL	IWE	JP
Ethical Leadership (EL)	0.821	-	-
Islamic Work Ethics (IWE)	0.255	0.697	-
Job Performance (JP)	0.680	0.266	0.727

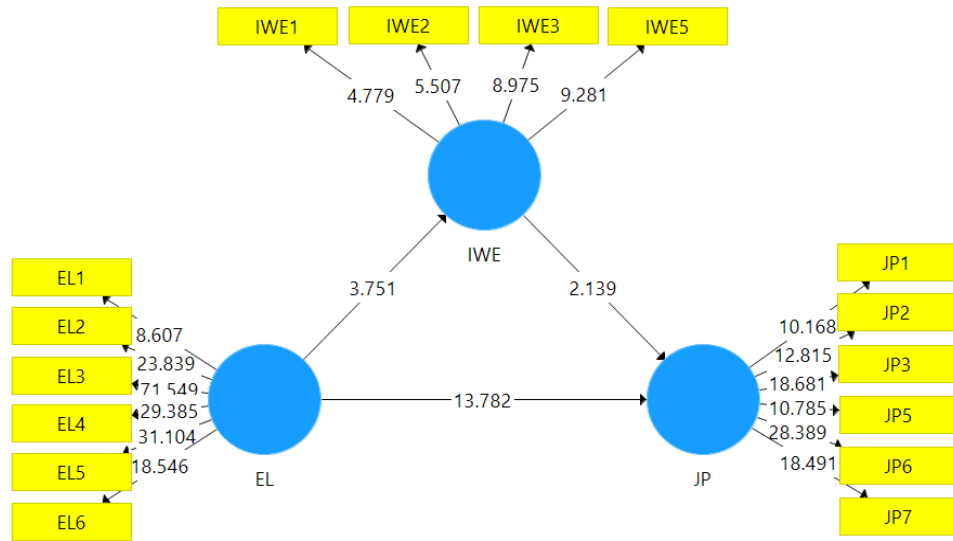
Source: SmartPLS output

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model (Before Eliminating 3 Indicators)



Source: SmartPLS output

Figure 3. *Structural Equation Model (After Eliminating 3 Indicators)*



Source: SmartPLS output

Hypothesis Testing

The model's predictive relevance and fit were assessed prior to testing the study's hypothesis. Evaluating a structural model's validity often involves assessing how well the model fits the data. This is done by determining whether the model demonstrates a good or poor fit (Abdelwahed et al., 2025). Henseler et al. (2015) propose that an SEM demonstrates a good fit when the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) falls below 0.08. Additionally, Lohmöller (1989) indicates that a normed fit index (NFI) value approaching or exceeding 0.90 is considered acceptable. In this research, the SRMR value was recorded at 0.082—slightly above the recommended threshold—while the NFI was reported at 0.83, which is reasonably close to the benchmark value of 0.90 (Pangesti et al., 2016). Consequently, the model can still exhibit an acceptable level of fit. The primary analysis employed SEM, using SmartPLS 3 to investigate both direct effects and mediating relationships within the proposed framework. This technique facilitated examining how ethical leadership and IWE influence job performance through path analysis. Furthermore, hierarchical regression modeling was incorporated within the SEM structure to assess the direct associations and the mediating effect of IWE on the relationship between ethical leadership and job performance (refer to Table 5).

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Effects	Std (β)	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Findings
EL -> JP	0.676	0.680	0.050	13.782	0.000	H1 Supported
EL -> IWE	0.268	0.285	0.071	3.751	0.000	H2 Supported
IWE -> JP	0.126	0.132	0.048	2.139	0.009	H3 Supported
EL -> IWE -> JP	0.034	0.037	0.017	1.969	0.050	H4 Supported

Source: Authors' computation using SmartPLS

The analysis's conclusions support H1 by showing that moral leadership positively and significantly affects healthcare professionals' job performance. Furthermore, ethical leadership positively and significantly impacts IWE, which supports H2. IWE has been demonstrated to positively and significantly impact job performance, supporting H3. Additionally, IWE supports H4 by partially moderating the association between ethical leadership and job performance.

DISCUSSION

Ethical Leadership and Job Performance

The empirical results indicate that ethical leadership has a strong and statistically significant impact on job performance ($\beta = 0.676$, $p < 0.001$). This confirms that when leaders consistently act with integrity, fairness, and care, employees respond with higher levels of motivation, engagement, and output. The strength of the effect highlights the crucial role of leadership behavior in influencing employees' willingness to exceed minimum standards, particularly in highly ethical and value-driven environments such as Islamic hospitals. This finding aligns with prior literature and underscores that, beyond technical competence, ethical leadership promotes psychological safety and moral commitment, which are crucial drivers of performance in service-oriented sectors.

According to the test results, the hypothesis that ethical leadership has a positive and significant impact on the job performance of healthcare professionals at the Islamic Hospital in Kudus is accepted. Numerous theories of leadership and organizational behavior highlight the significance of leaders' moral conduct in fostering better job performance, which is empirically supported by this conclusion. The relationship between ethical leadership and job performance can be theoretically explained by the Social

Exchange Theory, which posits that when workers believe their superiors are fair, trustworthy, and concerned, they are motivated to reciprocate by performing better, being more loyal, and making valuable contributions to the organization.

Furthermore, based on the organizational behavior approach, ethical leaders can serve as role models who provide moral direction and set expected work behaviors. When leaders consistently demonstrate high work ethics, social responsibility, and fair treatment, employees internalize these values in their daily tasks and responsibilities. This result is consistent with other research demonstrating the positive relationship between ethical leadership and several performance metrics, including productivity, effectiveness, inventiveness, service quality, and organizational commitment (Aftab et al., 2022; Alkhadra et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Dogbe et al., 2024; Saragih et al., 2020; Shafique et al., 2018, 2020; Sharma & Sharma, 2024; Ullah et al., 2021; Walumbwa et al., 2011, 2017; White & Rezania, 2019; Yang & Wei, 2017). In this context, ethical leadership emerges as a strategic factor contributing to the sustainable achievement of organizational goals by enhancing individual performance. Thus, these results reinforce the position of ethical leadership as a leadership approach that is relevant from moral and value perspectives and has a tangible impact on achieving high work performance in a modern organizational environment.

Ethical Leadership and Islamic Work Ethics

The analysis also indicates a positive and significant influence of ethical leadership on IWE, suggesting that ethical leaders play an instrumental role in promoting Islamic moral values in the workplace. The strength of this path, though moderate, aligns with the principles of Social Learning Theory, where employees observe and internalize the behaviors and attitudes of their leaders. In this context, the leader becomes a supervisor and a moral educator, modeling behaviors that encourage values such as honesty, responsibility, and sincerity. This dynamic is particularly relevant in Islamic institutions where leadership is expected to embody religious values that extend beyond procedural management.

According to the test results, the premise that ethical leadership has a positive and significant impact on the IWE of healthcare professionals at the Islamic Hospital in Kudus is accepted. Ethical leadership encourages employees to embody IWE values by fostering pro-organizational behavior,

a supportive work environment, and a commitment to achieving good outcomes in both this life and the next. Core attributes such as kindness, fairness, compassion, honesty, friendliness, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility are key traits of ethical leadership and IWE. These qualities significantly influence employees' perceptions and motivate them to strive for high-performance standards across all levels of the organization. By strengthening employees' IWE, ethical leadership also contributes to their sense of meaningfulness and satisfaction in fulfilling their job responsibilities (Udin, 2024; Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025).

Furthermore, universal values in ethical leadership, such as justice and honesty, have a common ground with the principles in IWE. The compatibility of these values creates psychological and spiritual resonance that encourages employees to internalize IWE. Thus, it can be said that ethical leadership not only has a structural impact on the organization but also has a cognitive and affective impact on the formation of IWE at the individual level. This finding also strengthens previous literature that emphasizes the importance of leaders in fostering a moral and spiritual work culture (Ali & Al-Owaidan, 2008; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Therefore, ethical leaders in organizations operating in an Islamic cultural environment become increasingly important because they manage the work process and facilitate internalizing religious values that support productivity and meaningful work behavior.

Islamic Work Ethics and Job Performance

IWE is also shown to positively influence job performance, albeit with a relatively small coefficient ($\beta = 0.126$). While the effect is statistically significant, its magnitude suggests that IWE may not be the primary factor directly influencing performance. Rather, it acts as an underlying motivational resource that reinforces employee commitment and work quality. This suggests that while internalized religious values contribute to ethical and consistent work behavior, their standalone effect on performance is likely influenced or constrained by other organizational factors, such as leadership quality, work environment, and institutional support.

The hypothesis that IWE has a positive and significant impact on the job performance of healthcare professionals at the Islamic Hospital in Kudus is accepted based on the test results. These findings support the idea that the moral and spiritual aspects of work ethics, derived from Islamic teachings, have real-world applications in determining how well people perform at

work. IWE provides employees with a solid foundation of values, enabling them to perform their jobs with complete dedication and integrity. These values include honesty (ṣidq), hard work (jihād fi sabīlillāh), responsibility (amānah), sincerity (ikhlāṣ), and justice (‘adl). The intrinsic work value approach posits that individuals who work from spiritual and ethical values are more likely to exhibit high levels of internal motivation, positive attitudes toward their jobs, and a deeper sense of purpose in their work. It can theoretically explain this relationship. With the encouragement to work as a form of worship and contribution to society, employees focus on the result and the correct and meaningful work process. This contributes to improving the quality of performance both quantitatively and qualitatively.

This study strengthens the results of previous studies (Aini, 2020; Badar et al., 2023; Chaudhary et al., 2021; Faliza et al., 2023; Hamzah & Yuswar Zainal, 2021; Javed et al., 2020; Kumar & Che Rose, 2010; Mohammad et al., 2018; Nasution & Rafiki, 2020; Qasim et al., 2022; Raies, 2022; Shamsudin et al., 2010), which found that IWE is positively correlated with increased work outcomes, such as performance, productivity, job satisfaction, knowledge sharing, organizational commitment, innovation capability, motivation, and employee loyalty. In addition, IWE values can create harmony between organizational goals and employees’ personal goals, thus encouraging the development of work behavior oriented towards quality, honesty, and pride in results. Thus, theoretically, it can be concluded that IWE functions as an effective internal driver in improving job performance. Therefore, organizations that adopt and internalize IWE values in their work culture will create higher-performance, more ethical human resources that contribute positively to the organization’s long-term goals.

Islamic Work Ethics as a mediation

The mediation analysis reveals that IWE partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and job performance, but the effect size is notably small ($\beta = 0.034$). This suggests that while ethical leadership influences performance through IWE, the indirect pathway accounts for only a minor portion of the total effect. The low magnitude may reflect several contextual realities: employees might be more directly influenced by their leaders’ behavior than by abstract ethical values, or the operationalization of IWE in this setting might lack the behavioral specificity to predict performance outcomes strongly.

Although IWE only partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and the job performance of healthcare professionals at the Islamic Hospital in Kudus, the test results support the hypothesis that IWE mediates this relationship. IWE mediates some of the influence of ethical leadership, but it still has a direct impact on job performance. The results of this study are supported by Hayati and Caniago (2025), who find that ethical leadership significantly impacts contextual performance but does not directly influence task performance. They claimed that IWE strengthens the beneficial impacts of ethical leadership on employee performance by mediating the relationship between ethical leadership and both performance characteristics. IWE have also been shown in other studies to improve the correlation between moral leadership and output (Chaudhary et al., 2021; Mubarak et al., 2022).

IMPLICATION

Theoretical Implications

This study provides significant theoretical implications by validating and expanding the applicability of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) in the context of Islamic-based healthcare organizations. The findings indicate that morally grounded leadership practices can act as both cognitive models and motivational triggers for moral and productive behavior. Ethical leadership was found to have a significant impact on both IWE and job performance. The internalization of IWE as a partial mediator further demonstrates that the transmission of values from leader to employee does not occur in isolation but is reinforced by employees' spiritual frameworks and perceptions of fairness.

Additionally, by presenting IWE as a psychological process that connects leadership with observable job results rather than just a cultural element, this research advances the theoretical development of IWE. In contrast to previous research, which often viewed IWE as a direct predictor, this study reveals that it plays a mediating role in modern professional settings, such as hospitals. This lends credence to the idea that IWE is a novel concept that merits theoretical exploration, particularly in the context of performance, motivation, and leadership in the organizational behavior literature. Western and Islamic theories are linked through integrating IWE into widely used leadership and performance frameworks, opening new avenues for cross-cultural theoretical development.

Practical Implications

The study's findings have several applications for hospital managers, particularly those working in institutions with an Islamic or religious focus. First, leadership development courses must address ethical leadership as a core competency. Managers and supervisors who demonstrate justice, openness, empathy, and integrity have a significant impact on the work behavior and values of their teams. These attributes not only foster a more tranquil work environment but also inspire employees to exceed expectations and go above and beyond their duties. Programs for developing leaders should incorporate aspects of spiritual leadership, ethical communication, and moral decision-making that align with Islamic principles.

Second, the study demonstrates how IWE can be applied practically to enhance job performance. This implies that HR departments ought to incorporate IWE-based behavioral indicators into employee development plans and performance evaluation systems. Behaviors such as rewarding sincere effort, encouraging mutual trust, and fostering a sense of accountability and spiritual significance in the workplace can all enhance individual motivation and team cohesion. It is also proposed that hiring practices could benefit from assessing value congruence between an organization's ethics and an employee's moral orientation to ensure cultural fit and long-term performance sustainability.

Policy Implications

The study's findings have significant implications for the development of institutional policies in Islamic healthcare facilities. Specifically, the demonstrated influence of IWE and moral leadership on work output supports the need to formally integrate these ideas into HR and leadership policies. Hospital administrators and legislators can translate these findings into concrete policies by developing ethical leadership guidelines, integrating value-based standards into performance reviews, and enshrining IWE principles—such as honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness—in regulations governing employee conduct. This policy change would ensure that ethical behavior is not only encouraged but also deeply ingrained in the governance structure of Islamic hospitals.

Regulatory bodies, such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) or Indonesia's Ministry of Health (Kemenkes), may

also consider adding IWE indicators and ethical leadership to accreditation requirements for Islamic hospitals at the national or sectoral level. For instance, leadership development initiatives supported by governmental or religious organizations could be created with an emphasis on both ethical leaderships based on Islamic principles and professional competence. The results of this study would also be more institutionalized with the support of policies that encourage ongoing ethical audits, spiritual mentoring programs, or IWE-based continuing professional development. In addition to enhancing employee performance, these policy tools can help Islamic hospitals stand out as hubs for moral behavior and high-quality healthcare.

Societal Impact

This study promotes goals that extend beyond the organizational level and toward broader social objectives by emphasizing the importance of ethics and Islamic values in enhancing the quality of public services, particularly in the healthcare sector. When hospital systems operationalize IWE and ethical leadership, patients are more likely to receive compassionate, trustworthy, and morally sound care. This helps to build community trust in Islamic hospitals in a post-pandemic environment where moral behavior from medical professionals is expected to be higher. A more ethical workplace culture among healthcare professionals has several advantages, including enhancing patient dignity, reducing conflict, and fostering a more hospitable and respectful care environment for diverse demographics.

The study also presents a social narrative that refutes the erroneous division between professionalism and spirituality. The results confirm that faith-based values can promote effectiveness, accountability, and service quality, as evidenced by the improvement in job performance. This has the potential to gradually recast Islamic healthcare facilities as socially conscious, professionally capable, and religiously compliant. This alignment could impact public perceptions of faith-based services, encourage similar value integration in other public service areas, such as social welfare or education, and support policy reform in sectors with religious affiliations.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between healthcare professionals' job performance and ethical leadership in an Islamic hospital

setting, using IWE as a mediating mechanism. The study, based on the theories of social learning and social exchange, demonstrated that moral leadership not only encourages moral behavior among employees but also enhances performance outcomes. It has been demonstrated via the Social Learning Theory that moral leadership fosters IWE by setting an example of conduct consistent with Islamic values. According to Social Exchange Theory, both IWE and moral leadership, in turn, produce favorable behavioral reciprocity, which enhances job performance.

The results, which were analyzed using PLS-SEM and a quantitative explanatory approach, validated the proposed connections between the core constructs. Ethical leadership demonstrated both a significant direct impact on job performance and a significant impact on the growth of IWE. Even though IWE had a positive impact on job performance, its mediating role was only partial and statistically insignificant. This suggests that although ethical leadership fosters a work environment rich in values, it also has an impact on performance through the internalization of ethics.

These findings highlight the significance of integrating Islamic work values and ethical leadership into organizational structures as scientifically validated performance enhancers and motivators, in addition to being normative principles. Institutional integrity, employee engagement, and performance quality may all benefit over time from leadership development and HR strategies that promote faith-aligned ethics and value-based management, particularly in Islamic workplaces.

LIMITATION

It is critical to acknowledge the numerous limitations of this study. The study's representativeness and generalizability to other healthcare settings may have been affected by the fact that it was executed at a single Islamic hospital in a particular region and used a non-random and demographically limited sample. Second, the research model only included a few variables, omitting more general organizational components such as work climate or interpersonal dynamics that may also influence how ethical leadership affects attitudes and job performance.

Third, the structural model did not include demographic data (e.g., age, gender, tenure, education, and division) in order to keep things as straightforward as possible. The absence of control variables may restrict the explanatory reach because they have the potential to change or influence

perceptions of leadership, work ethics, and performance. Lastly, although IWE was found to have a significant mediating role, its effect size was comparatively small. This implies that the relationship may also be mediated or moderated by additional factors, such as organizational commitment or intrinsic motivation. It is recommended that future studies investigate contextual moderators and apply the model to various organizational and cultural contexts in order to confirm and improve its applicability.

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