


Building a Culture of Work Ethic: The Influence of Leadership, Discipline, and the Work Environment in Indonesian Senior High Schools

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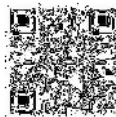
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ABSTRACT

Budaya etos kerja di lingkungan pendidikan, khususnya di jenjang sekolah menengah atas, memegang peranan penting dalam membentuk karakter, tanggung jawab, dan produktivitas warga sekolah. Namun, masih banyak SMA di Indonesia yang menghadapi tantangan dalam menumbuhkan nilai-nilai etos kerja yang kuat dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara mendalam pengaruh kepemimpinan kepala sekolah, kedisiplinan warga sekolah, dan lingkungan kerja terhadap pembentukan budaya etos kerja. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi literatur dari sumber-sumber ilmiah yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 hingga 2024. Data dianalisis secara tematik dengan mengidentifikasi hubungan antarvariabel melalui sintesis konsep dan teori. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah sangat berpengaruh dalam membangun komitmen terhadap etos kerja. Kedisiplinan yang konsisten serta lingkungan kerja yang mendukung turut memperkuat penerapan nilai-nilai kerja seperti integritas, ketekunan, dan tanggung jawab. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa budaya etos kerja terbentuk melalui interaksi sistemik antara gaya kepemimpinan, pelaksanaan aturan, dan kondisi lingkungan kerja. Diperlukan intervensi strategis melalui pelatihan kepemimpinan, penguatan sistem disiplin pendidikan, serta peningkatan kualitas sarana prasarana dan iklim kerja sekolah guna mewujudkan budaya kerja yang berkarakter.

The culture of work ethic in the educational environment, especially in high school, plays an important role in shaping the character, responsibility, and productivity of school residents. However, there are still many high schools in Indonesia that face challenges in fostering strong and sustainable work ethic values. This study aims to examine in depth the influence of school principal leadership, school community discipline, and work environment on the formation of a work ethic culture. The research uses a qualitative approach through literature studies of scientific sources published from 2020 to 2024. The data were analysed thematically by identifying the relationships between variables through the synthesis of concepts and theories. The results of the study show that the transformational leadership of school principals is very influential in building a commitment to a work ethic. Consistent discipline and a supportive work environment strengthen the application of work values such as integrity, diligence, and responsibility. These findings show that work ethic culture is formed through systemic interactions between leadership style, rule implementation, and work environment conditions. Strategic intervention is needed through leadership training, strengthening the educational discipline system, and improving the quality of school facilities and work climate to realise a work culture with character.



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INTRODUCTION

Modern education is not only required to produce academically superior graduates, but also has a responsibility in shaping strong character and work values. One of the important values that needs to be instilled from an early age is a work ethic, which is a mental attitude that reflects enthusiasm, discipline, responsibility, and integrity at work. This value is essential in shaping the young generation who are ready to compete in the world of work and community life.

During the challenges of globalisation and rapid technological development, the world of work demands human resources who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have a strong work character. Work ethics are an important indicator in assessing individual quality, both in terms of productivity, perseverance, and reliability. Therefore, schools as formal educational institutions have a central role in forming a healthy work culture from an early age.

Unfortunately, the phenomenon of low work ethic is still found in the school environment, especially at the high school (SMA) level in Indonesia. Low discipline, tardiness, lack of seriousness in completing tasks, and weak motivation to excel are symptoms that reflect a lack of a strong work culture. This problem not only occurs in students, but also in some educators who have not shown an example in their work.

A work ethic culture is not something that arises instantly, but rather the result of a social process that takes place continuously in an institution. In the context of schools, the formation of work culture is influenced by various internal factors that interact with each other and form common norms. Among these factors, the principal's leadership, the discipline of school residents, and the conditions of the work environment are three key elements that are often mentioned in various educational studies.

The leadership of the principal has a strategic position in creating the direction and vision of the school's work culture. Effective leaders can be role models, inspirers, and facilitators of value change in the school environment. According to (Wahjosumidjo, 2021), good leadership is not only a matter of administrative mastery but also of the ability to make a positive impact, move subordinates, and instill work ethic values consistently.

On the other hand, discipline is the basic foundation in the formation of work habits and culture. Discipline that is applied fairly, consistently, and educatively will form a pattern of behaviour that supports academic and non-academic success. (Raharjo, 2022) emphasised that a transparent discipline system based on clear awards and sanctions can foster a sense of responsibility and integrity in school residents, especially students.

Faktor penting lainnya adalah lingkungan kerja, baik fisik maupun psikologis, yang dapat mempengaruhi kenyamanan dan produktivitas kerja. Lingkungan yang bersih, tertata, aman, dan mendukung aktivitas belajar mengajar akan meningkatkan semangat dan motivasi kerja seluruh warga sekolah. Penelitian (Putra & Lestari, 2023) menunjukkan bahwa sekolah yang memiliki iklim kerja positif cenderung lebih sukses dalam membangun kerja tim, kolaborasi, dan loyalitas terhadap institusi.

These three factors, leadership, discipline, and work environment, are all part of the interconnected school system. However, although each factor has been extensively researched separately, there are still limited studies that integrate all three simultaneously in the framework of forming a work ethic culture in schools, especially at the high school level in Indonesia. The interaction of these three factors holistically determines the success of the work culture that is to be formed.

Thus, there is a need for a more in-depth and integrated study to understand how these three factors contribute to shaping a work ethic culture. This understanding is important as a basis for policy-making at the school level and the education office in order to be able to build a work climate that supports the improvement of the character and performance of students and educators in a sustainable manner.

Therefore, this article aims to: (1) identify the leadership role of school principals in shaping a culture of work ethic; (2) examine the influence of discipline on strengthening work values in the school environment; and (3) assess the extent to which the work environment supports the creation of a positive and productive work ethic culture at the high school level. It is hoped that the results of this study can make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of work culture in the world of education.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on library research to examine in depth the relationship between principal leadership, discipline, work environment, and the formation of a work ethic culture in high schools (SMA) in Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate to examine complex social and educational phenomena by considering the context and meaning inherent in them (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data in this study is sourced from scientific literature obtained from indexed national and international journals such as SINTA, Google Scholar, and DOAJ. The literature used was selected based on criteria: (1) relevant to the research topic; (2) published between 2020 and 2024; and (3) have a methodology that can be scientifically accounted for. Source types include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and research reports of official institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.

The analysis method used is thematic coding analysis, as developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2021), which aims to identify conceptual patterns that emerge from various sources. This process involves reading, open coding, categorisation, and thematic interpretation of the literature that has been collected.

To ensure the validity of the findings and arguments in this study, the researcher used theoretical triangulation and cross-confirmation between literature sources. Theoretical triangulation is carried out by comparing the perspectives of various relevant theories, such as transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006) ergonomic work environment theory (Robbins & Judge, 2020) and educational character approaches (Lickona, 2020). Confirmation between sources is carried out by examining the suitability and consistency between the results of previous studies and the researcher's interpretation of the data.

With this systematic approach, the research is expected to be able to provide a holistic understanding of the dynamics of the formation of a work ethic culture in the high school environment as a result of the interaction between organisational structure, individual behaviour, and work environment conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Leadership in Building a Work Ethic

The principal holds a strategic position as the main actor in the process of forming the school's organisational culture, especially in instilling the values of work ethic. As an education leader, the role of a principal is not only administrative, but also transformational, which includes the ability to inspire, motivate, and build collective commitment among school citizens. The transformational leadership model is considered most relevant in this context because it focuses on cultural change through example, charismatic influence, and human resource empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006)

According to (Susanto, 2021), school principals who are able to be moral and professional role models will create positive psychological effects for teachers and students. Examples in terms of discipline, work ethics, and commitment to the quality of education will be contagious and stimulate similar behaviour in the school environment. When leaders show integrity and consistency, work ethic values such as responsibility, hard work, and perseverance will be more easily internalised in the daily practices of school residents.

Furthermore, effective leadership is also characterised by its ability to create a clear, transparent work system and can encourage innovation and collaboration. Principals who are willing to listen to input, open spaces for dialogue, and involve teachers and students in decision-making will foster a sense of ownership of the school's work culture (Leithwood et al., 2020). This engagement is important to foster loyalty, discipline, and commitment to a common goal.

Studies (Yusuf & Handayani, 2023) show that schools led by principals with a visionary and participatory leadership style show higher levels of discipline, a more conducive work environment, and better academic achievement than schools with an authoritarian leadership style. This strengthens the argument that leadership quality has a great influence on the quality of school work culture, both structurally and culturally.

In the context of Indonesian education that increasingly demands adaptation to global dynamics and social complexity, the leadership of school principals is required to be not only managerial but also oriented towards changing organisational culture. This transformation must start from leadership that is

able to align the school's vision with strong work values, including integrity, collaboration, and innovation. Thus, the principal is not only an administrative manager, but also an agent of change in the work culture in the educational unit.

Discipline as a Pillar of Work Culture

Discipline is a fundamental component in forming and maintaining a sustainable work ethic culture in the school environment. In the context of educational organisations, discipline not only applies to students, but also includes teachers, education staff, and school leaders. Discipline that is consistently applied serves as a normative framework that shapes positive work behaviours, such as punctuality, responsibility for tasks, compliance with regulations, and commitment to quality of work (Robbins & Judge, 2020).

According to (Kurniawan, 2020), an effective disciplinary system not only relies on sanctions but also includes a fair and measurable mechanism. Schools that consistently implement this system tend to show improvements in character aspects, learning motivation, and work performance of teachers and students. Strengthening positive behaviour through rewards and controlling negative behaviour through punishment will instil an intrinsic awareness of the importance of personal rules and responsibilities.

In addition, participatory disciplines have been shown to be more effective than authoritative approaches. When all elements of the school, including students, teachers, and staff, are involved in the process of drafting, socialising, and evaluating disciplinary policies, the level of compliance and belonging to the rules tends to increase (Handoko, 2022). This approach forms an organisational culture that values order, transparency, and accountability in carrying out educational functions.

Furthermore, the application of discipline must pay attention to the principles of justice, consistency, and education. The sanctions given should not be punitive in a repressive manner, but must contain learning values that build character and responsibility. In line with that, (Lickona, 2020) emphasises that discipline in education is not solely a tool of control, but also a medium for the formation of individual character and morality in a social context.

Discipline is also closely related to the formation of a conducive school climate. When norms and standards of behaviour are enforced fairly, a sense of security, order, and focus will be created in the learning environment. This is important in creating a productive and professional workspace for all school residents, while reflecting work ethic values such as perseverance, responsibility, and integrity (Suparno & Rahayu, 2021).

Thus, discipline must be seen as the main pillar in building a superior work culture. Not only as a controlling tool, but also as a cultural strategy that contributes to the formation of professional attitudes and work ethics of school citizens as a whole. Therefore, it is important for each educational unit to design a discipline system that is holistic, inclusive, and character-oriented in order to support the creation of a school environment with integrity and high ethics.

A Work Environment That Supports Productivity

A supportive work environment is one of the essential elements in creating and maintaining a healthy and productive work ethic culture in the school environment. The work environment in this context includes two main aspects: the physical environment and the social-psychological environment. Both have a significant influence on the motivation, comfort, and performance of all school residents.

A clean, safe, and well-organised physical environment plays a role in creating a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere. Adequate facilities such as ventilated classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, up-to-date educational technology facilities, and ergonomic teachers' workspaces are the main supporters in increasing teacher work productivity and student learning concentration (Schneider, 2020). An inadequate physical environment can cause work stress, demotivation, and decreased effectiveness of the learning process.

In addition to the physical aspect, the social environment also contributes greatly to shaping the school's work culture. The social environment includes interactions between individuals in schools, both between teachers and students, between fellow teachers, and between teachers and school leaders. A social climate based on harmonious interpersonal relationships, mutual respect, and two-way communication will create a sense of psychological security and togetherness in achieving institutional goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2021).

A study conducted by (Lestari & Nugroho, 2022) confirms that a positive school climate, characterised by open communication, trust, and collaboration between school elements, has been shown to increase teacher job satisfaction and student learning enthusiasm. This environment reinforces a sense of collective responsibility, emotional involvement, and commitment to the quality of education.

Furthermore, a school organisational culture that supports active participation, staff empowerment, and recognition of individual and group achievements will form a high morale and loyalty to the institution. This is in line with Herzberg's theory of work motivation, which states that working conditions (hygiene factors) and motivational factors (motivators) such as recognition, achievement, and personal growth play an important role in building work morale (Herzberg, 2020).

Thus, the creation of a supportive work environment, both physically and socially, is a prerequisite for building a strong work ethic culture in schools. Schools as social institutions must actively manage and develop a healthy, collaborative, and inspiring environment to foster productive, moral, and professional work behaviour in all school residents.

Interaction of Three Factors in Creating a Work Ethic Culture

The formation of a work ethic culture in the school environment is not the result of a single variable, but the fruit of a complex and synergistic interaction between several systemic elements. The three main factors that have proven to have a crucial role in this process are leadership, discipline, and work environment. The three complement and strengthen each other in creating a productive and characterful educational ecosystem.

Leadership, especially in the transformational form, provides strategic direction, inspiration, and builds a shared vision in educational institutions. A visionary and inclusive principal not only serves as a manager but also as an agent of change who instils the values of hard work, responsibility, and integrity (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, discipline serves as a reinforcing structure that forms routine, consistency, and collective awareness of rules and responsibilities. Discipline that is applied fairly and participatory increases the internalisation of work ethic norms and values in the daily behaviour of school residents (Kurniawan, 2020).

On the other hand, the work environment, both physical and social, provides a context in which the values of the work ethic are carried out. A comfortable, safe, clean environment, supported by a respectful and collaborative work atmosphere, becomes a space for the actualisation of these values in concrete actions (Hoy & Miskel, 2021; Lestari & Nugroho, 2022).

Schools that are successful in building a positive work culture generally show the integration of all three aspects. School leaders not only formulate policies but also implement them consistently in the management of disciplines as well as create an environment that supports the professional growth of teachers and students. This approach is known as a holistic approach, which not only relies on the strengths of the individual but also pays attention to the systems and ecosystems that underpin them.

According to (Schein, 2021), organisational culture is formed through a constant pattern of interaction between the values promoted by the leader, the behaviour reinforced by the disciplinary system, and the symbols or artefacts that exist in the work environment. In the context of schools, these three variables influence each other and together encourage the birth of a culture of sustainable work ethic.

Thus, efforts to form a work ethic culture cannot be done partially or sectorally. Systemic interventions, including strengthening leadership capacity, reformulating fair discipline policies, and improving the overall work environment, are important strategies in creating schools that excel not only in achievement but also in character and integrity.

CONCLUSION

The culture of work ethic in Indonesian high schools is greatly influenced by the leadership of the principal, the discipline of the school community, and the work environment. These three factors cannot stand alone, but must be developed synergistically. Inspirational and communicative leadership, a fair and consistent disciplinary system, and a conducive work environment are empirically proven to support the formation of a productive and characterful work ethic.

Recommendations that can be given are: 1) There is a need for strategic leadership training for school principals to form a transformational leadership style. 2) Schools need to strengthen an

educational and fair reward and punishment system. 3) The local and central governments need to support the improvement of the quality of the work environment through the allocation of infrastructure funds and the procurement of learning facilities.

The next study is recommended to use a quantitative approach with primary data in order to statistically measure the influence of each variable on the work ethic culture in various types of schools and regions.

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