

The influence of professionalism and work ethics on employee job satisfaction: A study in SMEs, Indonesia

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025, 27(01), 352-360

Publication history: Received on 26 May 2025; revised on 30 June 2025; accepted on 03 July 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.27.1.2542>

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of professionalism and work ethics on employee job satisfaction at SME CV AJAS in Surabaya, Indonesia. Using a quantitative approach with a saturated sample of 70 employees, data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Statistical analysis was performed using multiple linear regression in SPSS 26. With professionalism ($t = 3.583$) and work ethics ($t = 2.992$) significantly affecting job satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the results of the F test confirmed the simultaneous influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. These findings underline the importance of improving employee behavior and ethical standards to improve satisfaction in the workplace.

Keywords: Professionalism; Work Ethics; Job Satisfaction; Human Resource Management; Employee Behavior

1. Introduction

In the current era of organizational transformation, human resources are recognized as key assets that drive productivity and performance. Beyond technical skills and compensation systems, behavioral attributes such as professionalism and work ethics have emerged as critical determinants of job satisfaction. Organizations that fail to cultivate these attributes often face low morale, high turnover, and reduced effectiveness, particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of developing economies such as Indonesia.

Professionalism reflects an individual's commitment to job roles, adherence to standards, and responsible execution of tasks. It encompasses qualities such as dedication, autonomy, ethical behavior, and pursuit of continuous improvement [1], [2]. In practice, professional employees are more consistent, accountable, and aligned with organizational goals. Meanwhile, work ethics refer to the moral principles that guide employee conduct, including discipline, responsibility, honesty, and perseverance [3]. Strong ethical orientation fosters cooperation, trust, and a healthy work environment.

Collectively, these two elements are thought to considerably influence employee job satisfaction, an essential psychological result that indicates how pleased individuals are with their jobs. Job satisfaction, according to Robbins in [4], is an overall attitude regarding one's work, influenced by views on fairness, acknowledgment, and alignment between individual values and company policies. Content workers are often more efficient, dedicated, and better at handling stress.

Despite the importance of professionalism and ethics, empirical studies that examine their simultaneous influence on job satisfaction—particularly within the context of Indonesian SMEs—remain limited. Previous research has often focused on public organizations or examined these variables in isolation. This study addresses that gap by exploring how professionalism and work ethics affect employee job satisfaction at CV AJAS, a medium-sized company based in Surabaya, Indonesia.

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The objective of this study is to determine both the partial and simultaneous effects of professionalism and work ethics on employee job satisfaction. The findings are expected to contribute to organizational behavior theory and offer practical recommendations for human resource development, especially in private sector enterprises in emerging markets.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Professionalism

Professionalism is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct comprising technical competence, ethical conduct, dedication, and adherence to work standards. [1] emphasizes that professionalism reflects an individual's ability to consistently demonstrate integrity, skill, and responsibility in the workplace. [2] identifies five key indicators of professionalism: dedication, social obligation, autonomy, belief in rules, and affiliation with professional communities. These elements enhance intrinsic motivation and accountability, making professionalism a crucial driver of job satisfaction. Employees with a high level of professionalism tend to perceive greater meaning and value in their work, which contributes positively to their overall satisfaction and performance outcomes.

2.2. Work Ethics

Work ethics refer to the internalized moral principles and behavioral norms that guide how employees approach their duties and interact within organizations. [3] argues that work ethics are fundamental in shaping commitment, loyalty, and productivity, particularly in value-driven organizations. [5] propose five dimensions of work ethics, namely: responsibility, discipline, perseverance, positive attitude, and education. These traits foster a trustworthy, respectful, and collaborative work environment. Ethical employees tend to experience reduced work stress and interpersonal conflict, which in turn enhances job satisfaction. Conversely, a lack of ethical standards can contribute to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and organizational disfunction.

2.3. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a key psychological construct that captures an individual's emotional response to their job role and work environment. Robbins in [4] defines job satisfaction as the degree to which employees feel positively about their work, largely influenced by how well their expectations align with actual experiences. Several theoretical models underpin job satisfaction, including need fulfillment, equity, value congruence, and discrepancy theories. Key indicators of satisfaction include emotional well-being, performance motivation, organizational commitment, and harmonious workplace relationships [6], [7]. High job satisfaction has been empirically linked to lower turnover intentions, increased productivity, and improved workplace morale.

2.4. Previous Empirical Studies

Numerous empirical studies have confirmed the individual influence of professionalism and work ethics on job satisfaction. [8] reported that professional commitment significantly affects satisfaction, while [9] emphasized the role of professional behavior in enhancing employee engagement and workplace morale. [3] and [10] found that ethical behaviors such as punctuality, responsibility, and discipline correlate strongly with increased job satisfaction. However, most studies examine these variables in isolation, and there is limited research that investigates the simultaneous influence of professionalism and work ethics in private sector SMEs, especially in the Indonesian context.

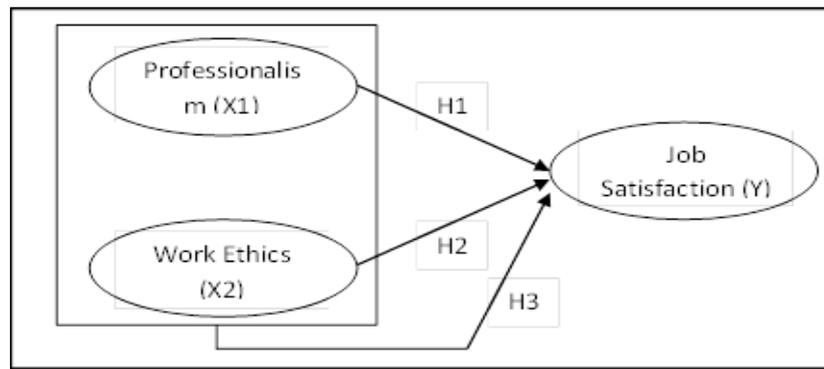
2.5. Research Gap and Framework

While existing literature demonstrates a robust relationship between individual behavioral attributes and job satisfaction, several gaps remain. Prior studies predominantly focus on public sector or educational institutions, often neglecting SMEs where human resource structures are less formalized. Moreover, many studies do not consider professionalism and work ethics in tandem, nor do they account for cultural or contextual differences in their measurement. There is also a lack of integrated models that explore their combined effect using reliable statistical analysis in Indonesian private companies. This study addresses these limitations by examining both constructs simultaneously within the same empirical model, contributing to a more holistic understanding of behavioral drivers of job satisfaction in the SME sector.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

Based on the theories and empirical findings reviewed, this study proposes that both professionalism and work ethics exert a positive influence on employee job satisfaction, either partially or simultaneously. The framework is built on the

assumption that internal behavioral characteristics contribute directly to employees' emotional and evaluative responses toward their job environment. The conceptual framework of this research as below figure 1.



Source: processed by Author

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

2.7. Hypothesis of Research

Primarily based at the problem statement and conceptual framework, there are hypotheses proposed:

- H1: Professionalism has a significant and positive influence on employee job satisfaction.
- H2: Work ethics have a significant and positive influence on employee job satisfaction.
- H3: Professionalism and work ethics simultaneously influence employee job satisfaction.

3. Method

This research utilizes a quantitative method with an associative framework to analyze the connection between two independent variables, professionalism and work ethics, and the dependent variable, job satisfaction. The associative design is suitable for hypothesis testing to assess both partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables. The study sample includes 70 employees employed at CV AJAS, a medium-sized firm located in Surabaya, Indonesia. Due to the manageable population size, a saturated sampling method was utilized, indicating the whole population was employed as the research sample for complete representation.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on validated theoretical constructs. Each item was measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The indicators for the professionalism variable were adapted from Mayang Sari (2017), covering dedication, social responsibility, autonomy, rule compliance, and professional affiliation. The work ethics variable was measured using indicators from [5], including responsibility, discipline, perseverance, positive attitude, and education. The job satisfaction variable referred to frameworks by Robbins in [4], focusing on motivational satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, supervision quality, and recognition.

To ensure the accuracy of the measurement tools, validity and reliability testing was conducted prior to full deployment of the instrument. Validity was evaluated through corrected item-total correlation, with each indicator yielding a correlation coefficient higher than the r-table value of 0.2352, indicating strong construct validity. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with all variables showing alpha values above 0.70, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency. These results confirm that the instruments used in this study were both valid and reliable for data collection and subsequent analysis.

3.1. Data Analysis Technique

This research utilized multiple linear regression analysis with IBM SPSS version 26 to analyze the data. Prior to hypothesis testing, a set of traditional assumption tests was performed to confirm the suitability of the regression model:

- Normality Test: Applied using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method to confirm that the data were normally distributed.

- Multicollinearity Test: Evaluated using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to ensure there was no high correlation between the independent variables.
- Heteroscedasticity Test: Assessed via scatterplot of residuals to check the consistency of error variance.

The general regression model used in this research is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$

Where:

- Y = Job Satisfaction
- X_1 = Professionalism
- X_2 = Work Ethics
- α = Constant (intercept)
- b_1, b_2 = Regression coefficients of X_1 and X_2
- e = Standard error (residual)

To test the proposed hypotheses, the following statistical tests were used:

- t-test: To determine the partial significance of professionalism and work ethics toward job satisfaction.
- F-test: To assess the joint or simultaneous influence of both independent variables on the dependent variable.
- Coefficient of Determination (R^2): To evaluate the model's explanatory power in predicting the variance in job satisfaction.

The threshold for significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$, with all statistical results interpreted accordingly.

4. Results

4.1. Validity Test

Table 1 Professionalism Variable

No.	Statement	r-count	r-table
1	X1.1	0.648	0.2319
2	X1.2	0.622	
3	X1.3	0.743	
4	X1.4	0.729	
5	X1.5	0.753	

Source: processed field data

In table 1, the validity assessment for the Professionalism variable (X_1) indicates that the computed r value exceeds the r table value of 0.2319, signifying that all statement items employed in this research are considered valid or appropriate for measuring data in this study.

Table 2 Work Ethics

No.	Statement	r-count	r-table
1	X2.1	0.674	0.2319
2	X2.2	0.726	
3	X2.3	0.694	
4	X2.4	0.620	
5	X2.5	0.730	

Source: processed field data

Table 2 reveals that the validity test for the Work Ethics variable (X2) indicates the computed r value exceeds the r table value of 0.2319, signifying that all statement items utilized in this research are confirmed valid or appropriate for measuring data in this study.

Table 3 Job Satisfaction

No.	Statement	r-count	r-table
1	Y1	0.703	0.2319
2	Y2	0.627	
3	Y3	0.577	
4	Y4	0.775	
5	Y5	0.415	

Source: processed field data

In table 3, the validity assessment of the Job Satisfaction variable (Y) reveals that the computed r value exceeds the r table value of 0.2319, indicating that all statement items utilized in this research are deemed valid or appropriate for measuring data in this study.

4.2. Reliability Test

Table 4 Reliability Test Result

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Cronbach Alpha Value
Professionalism (X1)	0.738	0.60
Work Ethic (X2)	0.724	
Job Satisfaction (Y)	0.615	

Source: processed field data

In table 4, the findings from the reliability test on this research data indicate that the Cronbach Alpha value for the three variables exceeds 0.60, suggesting that all variables are dependable.

4.3. Classic Assumption Test

4.3.1. Normality Test

Table 5 Normality Test Result

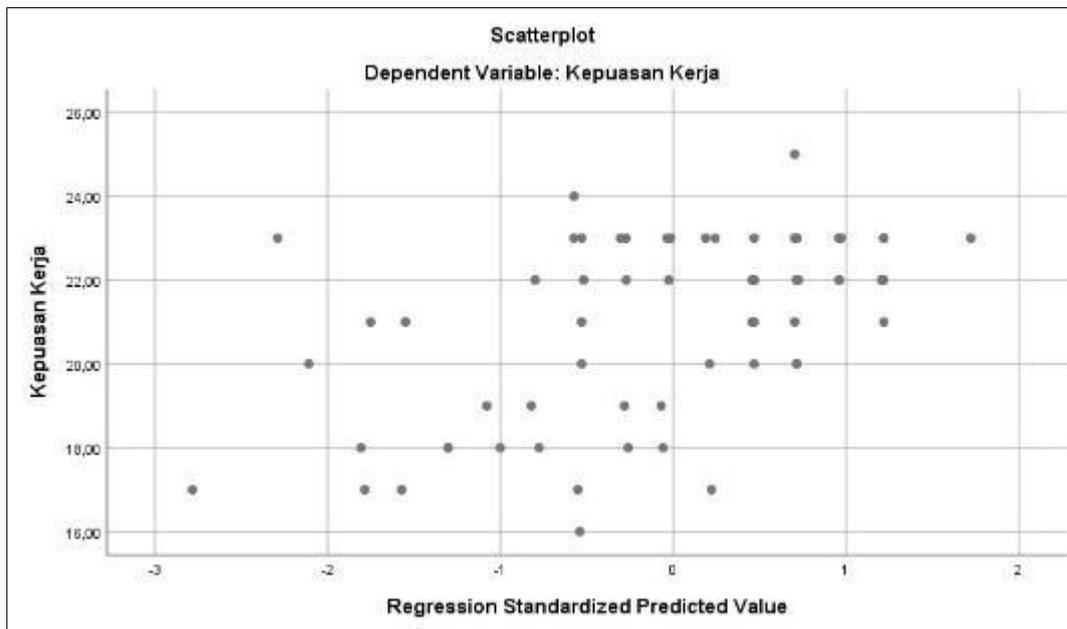
Unstandardized Residual		
N	70	
Normal Parameters	Mean	0.0000000
	Std. Deviation	1.80212301
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.068
	Positive	0.039
	Negative	-0.068
Test Statistic	0.68	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.200	

Source: processed field data

Based on the results of data analysis presented in table 5 above, the Asym-sig (2-tailed) value for residuals of 0.200 exceeds the alpha level of 5%, leading to the conclusion that all data from the examined variables adhere to a normal

distribution pattern. This indicates that the initial classical assumption has been satisfied, making the model appropriate for application as a data analysis instrument.

4.3.2. Heteroscedasticity Test



Source: processed by Smart PLS3

Figure 2 Heteroscedasticity Test Result

From Figure 2 the heteroscedasticity test above shows that the points spread randomly and do not form a certain pattern, meaning that the results of this research data show that there are no symptoms of heteroscedasticity so that this research data can be used to perform multiple linear regression tests properly.

4.3.3. Multicollinearity Test

Table 6 Multicollinearity Test Result

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	9.136	2.354		3.882	0.000		
	Professionalism	0.284	0.79	0.079	3.583	0.001	0.958	1.044
	Work Ethics	0.297	0.99	0.099	2.992	0.004	0.958	1.044

Source: processed field data

According to table 6 of the multicollinearity test results obtained from SPSS 26, the tolerance value exceeds 0.10 and the VIF value remains below 10. This indicates that the regression model of this study does not exhibit signs of multicollinearity.

4.4. Determinate Test (R²)

Table 7 Determinate Test Result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.538	0.290	0.269	1.82882

Source: processed field data

In table 7, the results of the determination test indicate that the R Square value is 0.290, signifying that 29% of the independent variables, specifically Professionalism (X1) and Work Ethics (X2), can account for the impact on the Job Satisfaction variable (Y) at CV AJAS. The remaining 71% is accounted for by additional independent variables beyond those utilized in this research.

4.5. Hypothesis Test

4.5.1. *t*-test (partial)

Table 8 Partial Test Result

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta		
Model		B	Std. Error		t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	9.136	2.354		3.882	0.000
	Professionalism	0.284	0.79	0.079	3.583	0.001
	Work Ethics	0.297	0.99	0.099	2.992	0.004

Source: processed field data

From table 8 above, it can be stated that both variables, namely Professionalism and Work Ethics, have a positive and significant influence on the dependent variable of job satisfaction, as indicated by the p-value <0.05 for both. While from the coefficient values of B and beta, Work Ethics has a relatively slightly greater influence than Professionalism on the dependent variable of job satisfaction.

4.5.2. *F*-test (simultaneous)

Table 9 Simultaneous Test Result

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	91.398	2	45.699	13.664	0.000
	Residual	224.088	67	3.345		
	Total	315.486	69			

Source: processed field data

From table 9 above, it can be stated that the regression model that includes the variables Professionalism and Work Ethics simultaneously significantly influences the dependent variable of job satisfaction, as evidenced by the large F value and p-value far below 0.05. This means that both variables together are able to explain significant variations in the dependent variable of job satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that both professionalism and work ethics significantly and positively influence employee job satisfaction. both partially and simultaneously. These results not only validate the theoretical assumptions proposed in the literature review but also provide empirical evidence aligned with previous research in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management.

First. the significant positive effect of professionalism on job satisfaction confirms the role of professional values such as dedication. autonomy. and adherence to standards as critical determinants of employee well-being. Employees who exhibit a high level of professionalism tend to view their job not merely as a task but as a meaningful responsibility. This aligns with the view of [2], who emphasized that professionalism contributes to intrinsic motivation. which in turn enhances work satisfaction. Moreover. this result supports the conclusions of [8], who found that professionalism significantly influences civil servant satisfaction by promoting discipline. responsibility. and personal growth.

Second. the impact of work ethics on job satisfaction was also found to be statistically significant. Ethical traits such as responsibility. perseverance. and discipline appear to enhance employees' sense of belonging and alignment with

organizational values. This is in line with [3], who asserted that ethical conduct fosters trust and cooperation among employees, which are key elements of a satisfying work environment. Similarly, the findings support those of [10], who concluded that a strong ethical climate contributes positively to employees' emotional connection with their work.

Interestingly, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.282$) indicates that 28.2% of the variance in job satisfaction can be explained by the combination of professionalism and work ethics. While this demonstrates a meaningful contribution of these two variables, it also suggests that over 70% of the variance is influenced by other factors, such as leadership style, compensation, organizational support, or job design. This finding is important as it opens avenues for future studies to incorporate additional psychological or contextual variables using more advanced analytical frameworks.

Furthermore, the regression model's structure and the results of the classical assumption tests confirm the robustness and reliability of the findings. The absence of multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity, along with the normal distribution of residuals, indicate that the estimated model satisfies the assumptions required for valid linear regression analysis.

The consistency of these findings with the theoretical framework proposed by Robbins in [4] also reinforces the validity of the job satisfaction construct. Robbins postulates that satisfaction results when employees perceive fairness, alignment with values, and fulfillment of needs in the workplace, all of which are directly influenced by levels of professionalism and ethical behavior.

Taken together, these results emphasize the importance of fostering professional development and instilling ethical values in organizational settings. In practical terms, organizations particularly SMEs like CV AJAS should invest in training programs, mentorship, and performance appraisal systems that not only measure technical competence but also promote values-based conduct.

Nonetheless, this study is not without limitations. The analysis is confined to a single organizational context with a relatively small sample size. Thus, while the internal validity is strong, generalizability may be limited. Further research involving multiple organizations, different industries, or comparative studies across sectors may yield deeper insights. Moreover, incorporating potential mediating or moderating variables such as job stress, organizational culture, or leadership style could provide a more holistic understanding of the mechanisms influencing job satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of professionalism and work ethics on employee job satisfaction in a private sector SME context. The findings provide strong empirical support for the hypotheses proposed. Both professionalism and work ethics were found to have significant and positive effects on job satisfaction, both independently and simultaneously. The regression analysis revealed that a combination of these two behavioral dimensions accounts for 28.2% of the variance in job satisfaction, confirming their essential role in shaping employee perceptions and attitudes toward their work environment.

These results affirm that employees who demonstrate a high degree of professionalism marked by dedication, integrity, and adherence to standards tend to experience greater satisfaction in their roles. Similarly, ethical behaviors such as responsibility, discipline, and perseverance contribute to a positive and motivating workplace climate. This supports theoretical perspectives that highlight the importance of value alignment and intrinsic motivation in job satisfaction.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to express gratitude to the management of CV. AJAS, Surabaya, Indonesia. This study received partial funding from a grant provided by the Mahardhika School of Economics.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The Authors wish to declare that none has any interest to disclose.

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