

# Relationship Between Work Ethics and Organizational Commitment Among Employees at Furniture Manufacturer in Johor

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between work ethics and organizational commitment among employees at a furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor. It investigates four objectives: identifying the level of work ethics and organizational commitment, analyzing their relationship, and determining the most dominant dimension of work ethics influencing organizational commitment. Four dimensions of work ethics (benevolence, integrity, prudence, and respect) and three dimensions of organizational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative) were measured. The study involved 209 respondents, using questionnaires and SPSS Version 22.0 for data analysis. Descriptive analysis was employed for demographic data, while Pearson Correlation and Regression Analysis were used to explore relationships and influence, respectively. Results indicated high levels of work ethics and organizational commitment, with a strong positive correlation between them ( $r=0.871$ ). Benevolence emerged as the most dominant dimension of work ethics influencing organizational commitment ( $\beta=0.786$ ). These findings underscore the critical role of benevolence in enhancing organizational commitment, suggesting that fostering an environment that emphasizes kindness and goodwill among employees can significantly strengthen their loyalty and commitment to the organization.

## 1. Introduction

Work ethics and organizational commitment are two important elements in human resource management that play a critical role in determining the success of an organization. In the context of the furniture manufacturing industry in Johor, the relationship between work ethics and organizational commitment is an important aspect to be researched considering that this industry is one of the significant economic sectors in the state. Work ethics refers to the moral principles and values that guide the behavior and actions of employees in performing their duties and responsibilities (Banks, 2020). A high work ethic is usually associated with discipline, diligence, and honesty, which in turn can increase productivity and work quality (Dewantara & Damayanti, 2021).

Organizational commitment refers to the level of loyalty and dedication of employees to the organization where they work (Ahad et al., 2021). This commitment is often measured by employees' desire to remain in the organization, their willingness to work hard to achieve the organization's goals, and the extent to which they identify with the organization's values and objectives. Previous studies have shown that employees with a high work ethic tend to show a stronger commitment to their organization (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020; Romi et al., 2020). This is because they not only strive to achieve excellent performance, but also show a positive attitude toward their social and professional responsibilities.

Recent statistics in Malaysia show a troubling increase in corruption among employees, reflecting a broader issue of ethical degradation in the workplace. The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) reports a rising trend in corruption offenses from 2016 to 2018, underscoring the urgent need for stronger integrity and ethical standards among employees. This research aims to explore the relationship between work ethics and organizational commitment in the private sector, investigating dimensions of both ethics (benevolence, integrity, prudence, and respect) and commitment (affective, continuance, and normative) to understand how ethical behavior influences organizational outcomes and contributes to national development goals.

## 2. Problem Statement

The furniture manufacturing industry in Johor plays an important role in the state and national economy, contributing to job opportunities and economic development (Akbar, Bon & Wadood, 2020). However, furniture manufacturers in Johor face various challenges related to human resource management, especially in maintaining a high level of organizational commitment among employees. Low organizational commitment is often associated with issues such as increased employee turnover rates, decreased productivity, and the inability to achieve the company's strategic goals (Guzeller & Celiker, 2020). This situation causes great concern for managers and leaders in the furniture industry, as it can hinder the development and competitiveness of the company.

One of the factors considered to affect organizational commitment is the work ethic of employees (Husin & Kernain, 2020). Work ethics involves moral principles and values that guide the behavior and actions of employees in carrying out their duties. Values such as discipline, honesty, diligence, and responsibility are important elements in good work ethics. Research into work ethics has become increasingly prevalent, highlighted by studies that probe the relationship between ethical conduct and organizational outcomes. Work ethics serve as a fundamental criterion influencing organizational success, where a lack of serious engagement with ethical standards can lead to significant organizational problems (Romi et al., 2020; Mostafa, Nourbakhsh, and Noorbakhsh, 2014). This concern is echoed in studies focusing on Islamic Work Ethics and their impact on organizational commitment, with notable contributions from local and international researchers such as Husin & Kernain (2020), Nasution & Rafiki (2020), Hanafi (2018), Salahudin et al. (2016), and Rokhman (2010), among others. These studies consistently underscore the potential of strong work ethics to enhance job performance and organizational commitment.

This backdrop sets the stage for the current study at furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor., aimed at dissecting the influence of work ethics on organizational commitment. The research objectives are designed to ascertain the levels of work ethics and organizational commitment, analyze their interrelationship, and identify the dominant ethical dimensions that drive organizational commitment. This inquiry is driven by the need to address gaps in existing literature, particularly in the private sector, and to clarify the extent to which ethical practices shape organizational outcomes, as influenced by factors such as job satisfaction and turnover retention (Komari and Djafar, 2013; Hayati and Caniago, 2012; Mostafa, Nourbakhsh, and Noorbakhsh, 2014).

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Work Ethics

Work ethics, as elucidated by Banks (2020), Anastasia (2016), Salahudin et al. (2016), and Kim and Miller (2008), are fundamentally moral principles that guide employees' behaviors in the workplace, influencing their commitment and job performance. Ethical environments, perceived by employees, foster satisfaction and enhance their dedication to organizational goals. Mostafa, Nourbakhsh, and Noorbakhsh (2014) further emphasize that work ethics instill moral values that significantly boost job performance. Similarly, Badar et al. (2023) and Khosravi (2012) argues that a strong ethical foundation not only enhances performance but also strengthens employee commitment, a sentiment echoed by Komari and Djafar (2013) and Valentine et al.

(2011), who highlight the importance of ethical climates in fostering productivity and loyalty within an organization.

The practical application of work ethics in fostering an ethical climate is vital as it directly impacts employee behavior and organizational success. According to Valentine and Barnett (2007) and Othman et al. (2004), the presence of a robust ethical climate in organizations leads to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These findings underscore the importance of integrating formal and informal ethical policies that guide employee behavior and enhance their professional conduct. The effectiveness of these policies is reflected in employees' adherence to ethical standards, which in turn contributes to the overall governance and ethical stature of the organization.

The Meara, Schmidt, and Day Model (1996) identifies four key virtues—benevolence, integrity, prudence, and respect—that are essential to cultivating a productive and ethical organizational culture. Benevolence involves altruism and kindness, integrity encompasses honesty and moral uprightness, prudence relates to wise and thoughtful decision-making, and respect involves consideration for others' rights and dignity. These virtues not only foster a positive work environment but also enhance job satisfaction, employee engagement, and commitment to organizational goals, thereby contributing to the overall success and stability of the organization.

In conclusion, the interplay of these ethical principles within the workplace is critical for fostering an environment where employees are motivated, engaged, and committed. Organizations that effectively implement and uphold these ethical standards are likely to see enhanced employee performance and reduced turnover rates, which are crucial for long-term success. By promoting a culture of respect, integrity, prudence, and benevolence, organizations can ensure a fair and engaging work environment that supports both individual growth and corporate objectives.

### 3.2 Commitment

Organizational commitment is crucial for the success of any organization, as it influences employee performance, retention, and the overall health of the organization (Ridwan, Mulyani & Ali, 2020). Col (2004) and Huang (2014) note that a committed workforce is more enthusiastic and effective at collaborating towards enhanced performance and reduced turnover and absenteeism. The genesis of organizational commitment theory can be traced back to Becker's side-bet theory (1960), which posits that employees stay committed to an organization due to investments they have made, which would be lost upon leaving. This concept has evolved over time to include psychological factors that strengthen employees' ties to their organizations, as illustrated by Porter's theory (1974) on strong acceptance, participation, and loyalty to organizational goals and values.

Meyer and Allen's three-component model of commitment (1991) extends the understanding of organizational commitment into affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Affective commitment involves an emotional attachment to the organization, where employees stay because they want to, often influenced by their satisfaction and sense of belonging within the organization (Jaros et al., 2009). Continuance commitment reflects the costs associated with leaving, where employees weigh personal sacrifices against potential alternatives (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Lastly, normative commitment is driven by a moral obligation to stay, often rooted in early socialization and cultural influences (Dixit & Bhati, 2012; Wolowska, 2014), emphasizing loyalty and reciprocation of commitment.

The implications of these dimensions are profound. Organizations that foster affective commitment can enhance job satisfaction and employee retention by aligning personal and organizational goals and providing meaningful work environments. For continuance commitment, recognizing and mitigating potential employee sacrifices can help in managing turnover rates effectively. Enhancing normative commitment involves cultivating a culture that values loyalty and ethical behavior, which not only promotes longevity but also fortifies the organization's ethical standards. Overall, understanding and strategically addressing these dimensions allows organizations to effectively navigate challenges related to employee commitment and retention, ultimately contributing to their success and longevity.

## 4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative correlation research design to explore the relationships between various variables, aiming to achieve the objectives outlined through efficient and objective methodologies. Khanday et al. (2023) describes research design as a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to effectively address the research problem, which in this case involves distributing questionnaires to a target population of 470 employees at furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor. The sampling technique employed is based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table, selecting 209 employees to participate, ensuring each has an equal chance of selection, hence promoting the validity of the findings on work ethics and commitment levels.

Data collection is executed via primary and secondary methods. Primary data is gathered directly from respondents through questionnaires, designed to probe into aspects of work ethics and organizational commitment, following the Likert scale approach by Likert (1932). Secondary data supplements this by reviewing relevant literature from various databases such as Emerald and Science Direct, providing a robust framework for understanding the research context. The questionnaire sections are categorized based on models by Meara, Schmidt and Day (1996) for work ethics, and Meyer and Allen (1991) for organizational commitment, both of which are substantiated by past reliability tests indicating acceptable consistency levels.

Data analysis comprises both descriptive and inferential statistics, employing tools like SPSS to articulate the connections and influence between variables. Descriptive statistics visualize data characteristics, while inferential methods like Pearson Correlation Analysis and Regression Analysis, referenced from Guilford and Fruchter (1973) and Chatterjee and Hadi (2012), respectively, quantify relationships and predict influences of work ethics on organizational commitment. The process is preceded by a pilot study with 30 employees from XYZ Kilang Kayu Sdn Bhd to validate the reliability of the questionnaire, showing promising Cronbach's alpha values indicative of high reliability and internal consistency.

## 5. Result and Finding

### 5.1 Demography of Respondents

The demographic analysis of the respondents at furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor provides insights into the backgrounds and characteristics of the participants. The workforce predominantly consists of male employees (89.8%), with a significant representation in the age group of 26 to 35 years (38.9%). Ethnically, the respondents are diverse, comprising 32.4% Malay, 17.6% Chinese, 1.9% Indian, and a substantial 48.1% from other ethnicities, including foreign workers from Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal. Educationally, most local workers hold an SPM certificate (32.4%), followed by diplomas (13.9%) and degrees (5.6%), while foreign workers primarily hold certificates from their countries (48.1%). In terms of departmental distribution, a majority of the respondents work in the production department (78.8%), with smaller proportions in marketing (8.3%), purchasing (5.6%), maintenance (3.7%), accounting (2.8%), and human resources (0.9%).

### 5.2 Level of work ethics and organizational commitment

At furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor, the study highlighted a robust adherence to work ethics among employees, with an overall mean score of 5.44 indicating a high level across all dimensions—benevolence, integrity, prudence, and respect—as defined by Meara, Schmidt, and Day (1996). Integrity scored the highest at 5.70, reflecting a strong commitment to confidentiality and ethical conduct, followed by prudence at 5.43, showcasing responsible decision-making and foresight, and respect at 5.25, which underscores effective collaboration and mutual consideration in the workplace. Although benevolence scored the lowest at 5.16, it still represented a high level, indicating that while some respondents viewed it as less critical, there remains a strong overall commitment to kindness and support for others. These findings affirm that the Meara, Schmidt, and Day (1996) model is effectively applicable, illustrating that employees uphold substantial work ethics that foster trust and engagement within the organization.

At furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor, the study reveals a high overall mean score of 4.82 for organizational commitment, reflecting strong adherence to the Meyer and Allen (1991) model of affective, continuance, and normative commitment dimensions. Normative commitment scored the highest at 5.21, indicating a robust allegiance to organizational norms, followed by continuance commitment at 4.90, and affective commitment at 4.42, which, despite being the lowest, still indicates a significant emotional attachment to the organization. Such high levels of commitment are crucial as they are known to reduce withdrawal behaviors like absenteeism and turnover, and foster acceptance of organizational changes, enhancing overall performance (Hunjra, 2010). This is consistent with findings from other researchers like Irefin and Mechanic (2014), and Samudi, Slambolchi, and Mobarakabadi (2016), who have identified strong correlations between employee commitment and organizational outcomes such as retention and job performance.

### 5.3 Relationship between work ethics and organizational commitment

**Table: Relationship between Work Ethics and Organizational Commitment**

Variable	Dimension	Pearson Correlation	Level
<b>Work Ethics</b>	Benevolence	0.858	High Correlation
	Integrity	0.443	Low Correlation
	Prudence	0.661	Moderate Correlation
	Respect	0.682	Moderate Correlation
<b>Overall: Relationship between Work Ethics and Organizational Commitment</b>		<b>0.871</b>	<b>High Correlation</b>

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson Correlation Analysis conducted at furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor revealed a predominantly positive correlation between work ethics and organizational commitment, with a significant overall correlation coefficient (r) of 0.871, indicating a strong relationship between these variables. Specifically, the dimension of benevolence showed a high correlation of 0.858, while integrity displayed a lower correlation at 0.443. Prudence and respect exhibited moderate correlations of 0.661 and 0.682, respectively. These findings underscore the significant impact that work ethics have on enhancing organizational commitment, suggesting that employees with higher ethical standards tend to exhibit stronger allegiance and dedication to their organization.

These insights collectively emphasize the pivotal role of work ethics in shaping organizational commitment. By fostering a strong ethical climate, organizations can enhance commitment levels across various dimensions, thereby improving overall organizational health and employee alignment with organizational goals. This relationship is crucial for organizations aiming to leverage ethical conduct as a foundational element for building a committed and productive workforce (Jhamb & Karlson, 2020).

### 5.4 Dominant dimension of work ethics that influences the organizational commitment

**Table: Multiple Regression of Work Ethics and Organizational Commitment**

DV	Organizational Commitment			
IV	Benevolence	Integrity	Prudence	Respect
<b>Standard Coefficients Beta</b>	<b>0.786</b>	<b>0.390</b>	<b>0.493</b>	<b>0.548</b>
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.126</b>	<b>0.063</b>	<b>0.223</b>
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.818 (81.8%)</b>			

Multiple regression analysis highlighted that benevolence is the most influential dimension of work ethics affecting organizational commitment. The analysis revealed that benevolence had the highest correlation beta ( $\beta=0.786$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), significantly outperforming other dimensions such as integrity, prudence, and respect. This suggests that benevolence is a critical driver of organizational commitment, with the adjusted r<sup>2</sup> of the model at 0.818, indicating that 81.8% of the variance in organizational commitment is explained by variations in work ethic dimensions. Ma'amor et al. (2012) describe benevolence as behavior focused on the well-being of others, highlighting its role in fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment. Similarly, Doney and Cannon (2011) and Atuahene-gima and Li (2002) emphasize that benevolence enhances trust and protects the interests

of others within the organization, ultimately boosting organizational commitment. It was also discovered that benevolent leaders enhance worker's performance by stimulating positive feelings (Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, Gumusluoglu & Scandura, 2020).

The findings stress the importance of nurturing benevolence within the workplace to promote higher organizational commitment. Benevolence leads to increased cooperation among employees and creates a harmonious working condition, pivotal for achieving organizational goals. The substantial impact of benevolence on organizational commitment underscores its role in not only enhancing interpersonal relationships and trust but also in ensuring the overall success and stability of the organization. Hence, fostering a culture that values benevolence can significantly influence the commitment levels of employees, contributing to the long-term success of the organization (Chaudary et al., 2023).

## 6. Conclusion And Recommendation

The analysis at a furniture manufacturer in Muar and Segamat, Johor, highlights a robust link between work ethics and organizational commitment. Employees show a strong adherence to ethical values, especially benevolence, alongside deep commitment in affective, continuance, and normative aspects. This study confirms that ethical conduct is crucial in boosting organizational commitment, which in turn positively influences key organizational metrics, including employee retention and performance, and promotes a healthier work environment.

Therefore, this study suggests two actions and strategies that can be proposed to organizations to strengthen commitment to the organization through work ethic among employees; The marked impact of benevolence on organizational commitment suggests that the company should focus on enhancing this quality among employees. Development programs that focus on empathy, mutual support, and teamwork can be pivotal. Activities like group projects, mentoring opportunities, and community engagement should be encouraged. Further, acknowledging and rewarding compassionate behavior among employees can integrate benevolence more deeply into the company's culture. Secondly focus on Integrity and Respect. While benevolence stands out, the roles of integrity and respect are also critical and should not be neglected. The establishment of explicit ethical standards and consistent ethics training sessions will help raise these values. Additionally, fostering a work environment where open dialogue is encouraged and every employee feels valued and heard will strengthen both respect and integrity at the workplace. This approach will not only improve organizational commitment but also enhance the overall organizational wellbeing.

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## Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

## Author Contribution

*The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: study conception and design: Farahwahidah Mohd Yusof, Fadillah Ismail; data collection: Fadillah Ismail; analysis and interpretation of results: Nur Amalina Mohd Rosli, Farahwahidah Mohd Yusof; draft manuscript preparation: Fadillah Ismail. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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