

WORK REWARDS AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT IN INDONESIAN PRIVATE SCHOOLS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK ETHIC

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Keywords: Teachers' Professional Commitment; Work Rewards; Work Ethic; Educational Management; Private Schools	Abstract: This study examined the relationship among work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment among private junior high school teachers in East Bogor Regency, Indonesia. The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design involving 178 teachers selected through multistage proportional random sampling from 23 private junior high schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires measuring work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling with SmartPLS 3 software. The findings demonstrated that work rewards positively and significantly influenced work ethic and teachers' professional commitment. Work ethic also demonstrated a positive and significant relationship with teachers' professional commitment. In addition, work ethic served as a significant partial mediator in the relationship between work rewards and teachers' professional commitment, indicating that work rewards enhanced teachers' professional commitment both directly and indirectly through work ethic. The coefficient of determination analysis demonstrated moderate explanatory power for the proposed structural model. The study contributes theoretically to educational management literature by strengthening empirical understanding regarding the relationship among organizational appreciation, professional behaviour, and teachers' professional commitment within private educational institutions. Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of developing institutional strategies that combine organizational appreciation, professional support, and sustainable professional development to strengthen teachers' professional commitment.	
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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions require teachers who are not only capable of carrying out instructional responsibilities but also willing to maintain long-term professional dedication toward the teaching profession. Teachers' professional commitment reflects the extent to which they uphold professional values, fulfill their educational responsibilities, and maintain professional attachment despite institutional challenges. Teachers' professional commitment indicates their strong motivation to engage consistently in professional tasks, including teaching preparation, pedagogical practice, subject expertise, and instructional implementation (Bastian & Widodo,



2024). Teachers' professional commitment is a dynamic and multidimensional construct reflecting teachers' dedication to their profession, students, and educational goals, which is shaped by personal attributes, institutional support, and external factors, and plays an important role in teacher retention, student achievement, and educational quality (Byun & Jeon, 2023; Diş & Demirkasımoğlu, 2025).

Professional commitment is essential in education as it enhances instructional consistency, fosters teacher persistence, promotes organizational stability, and ultimately leads to greater educational effectiveness (Arviv Elyashiv & Rozenberg, 2024; Singh et al., 2025; Su, 2024). By nurturing a culture of commitment among educators, schools can create a more supportive and productive learning environment for both teachers and students. Teachers who demonstrate stronger professional commitment generally show greater participation in professional activities, stronger instructional engagement, and greater willingness to maintain professional standards in educational practice (Geletu & Mihiretie, 2024; Ma et al., 2026; Richter et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2025). Therefore, educational institutions increasingly place professional commitment as an important component of teacher professionalism and institutional sustainability. Despite its recognized importance, maintaining teachers' professional commitment has become an increasing global challenge. Many education systems continue to experience increasing teacher shortages, heavy workloads, declining job satisfaction, and rising teacher attrition, all of which threaten teachers' long-term commitment to the profession (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2025). These challenges highlight the need to identify organizational factors that can strengthen teachers' professional commitment and support educational sustainability.

Among the organizational factors that can strengthen teachers' professional commitment, work rewards have received considerable attention in educational research. In educational settings, work rewards refer to organizational appreciation provided through both financial and non-financial forms of recognition intended to strengthen teachers' motivation, professional behavior, and institutional attachment. Financial rewards include salaries, incentives, and benefits, whereas non-financial rewards include professional recognition, participation in decision-making, institutional support, promotion opportunities, and professional development opportunities (Kulwa & Mwila, 2022; Mahardika et al., 2023). Appropriate rewards may strengthen teachers' perceptions of fairness, professional value, and organizational support for their professional performance. Previous studies have indicated that organizational rewards are associated with stronger work engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational attachment among employees and educational personnel (Ahmed & Arabi, 2025; Raghavendra & Kamaraj, 2024). Similarly, recent studies by Hardianto et al., (2025) Hejazi et al., (2025) Widodo et al., (2025) have shown that supportive reward systems positively contribute to teachers' professional attitudes and organizational participation.

Nevertheless, organizational appreciation alone may not fully explain the formation of teachers' professional commitment. Teachers' internal attitudes toward work also play an important role in shaping professional consistency and persistence. One important internal factor is work ethic. Teachers' work ethic reflects their discipline, professional responsibility, dedication, perseverance, and ethical commitment in carrying out instructional duties and professional obligations (Ladica & Osias, 2024). Teachers with a stronger work ethic generally maintain greater consistency in instructional activities, stronger commitment toward professional



standards, and greater persistence in facing educational challenges. Previous studies have emphasized that work ethic positively contributes to professional behavior and organizational attachment, as individuals with a stronger work ethic tend to demonstrate greater responsibility and persistence in performing professional duties (Grabowski et al., 2025; Haider, 2023; Vergara-Morales et al., 2025). In educational institutions, work ethic becomes increasingly relevant because teachers frequently face instructional pressures, administrative responsibilities, and institutional demands that require professional consistency.

The issue of teachers' professional commitment remains relevant in Indonesian educational contexts, particularly within private educational institutions. Private schools frequently encounter organizational limitations related to institutional resources, professional support systems, workload distribution, and employment stability. Such conditions may influence teachers' professional attachment and professional persistence. Teachers who perceive limited organizational appreciation may exhibit lower professional engagement, whereas those with a stronger work ethic may remain professionally committed despite institutional limitations. Consequently, examining the relationship among work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment becomes important for understanding how organizational and behavioral factors contribute to teacher professionalism within private educational settings.

Previous studies have reported that organizational rewards contribute positively to teachers' professional commitment and organizational attachment (Hambali et al., 2023), while work ethic has been associated with employee commitment, organizational behavior, and professional consistency within educational institutions (Tacadena & Muico, 2022). Other studies have also linked teachers' professional commitment with variables such as job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and collective efficacy (Sunitha, 2023; Zhang, 2022). However, empirical studies that specifically examine teachers' professional commitment as a distinct construct within educational contexts remain relatively limited.

The relationship among work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment can also be understood through the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, which emphasizes that individuals tend to reciprocate positive organizational treatment with positive professional attitudes and behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 1972). Within educational institutions, teachers who perceive organizational appreciation, professional recognition, and supportive reward systems are more likely to develop stronger professional responsibility, work consistency, and commitment toward their profession. Organizational appreciation may therefore function not only as an external motivational factor but also as a psychological mechanism that strengthens teachers' professional attachment and professional behavior within educational environments. In addition, studies positioning work ethic as an intervening variable in the relationship between work rewards and teachers' professional commitment remain underexplored, particularly among private junior high school teachers in Indonesia. Therefore, this study offers a different perspective by examining the mediating role of work ethic within the relationship between work rewards and teachers' professional commitment using a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling approach.

Based on these considerations, this study aimed to examine the relationship model among work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment among private junior high school teachers in East Bogor Regency, Indonesia. Specifically, this study examined the mediating



role of work ethic in the relationship between work rewards and teachers' professional commitment. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by strengthening educational management perspectives concerning teacher professionalism, organizational appreciation, and professional behavior. In practice, the findings are expected to provide empirical information for educational institutions on the importance of professional reward systems and the strengthening of teachers' work ethic in supporting sustainable professional commitment. Accordingly, the hypotheses proposed in this study were: (H1) work rewards are positively associated with work ethic; (H2) work ethic is positively associated with teachers' professional commitment; and (H3) work rewards are positively associated with teachers' professional commitment through work ethic.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship among work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment. Work rewards were positioned as the independent variable, work ethic as the intervening variable, and teachers' professional commitment as the dependent variable. The study was conducted in private junior high schools located in East Bogor Regency, Indonesia, covering the districts of Cileungsi, Gunung Putri, Jonggol, and Klapanunggal.

The population comprised 321 teachers from 23 private junior high schools, and the final sample comprised 178 teachers selected through multistage proportional random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The work rewards instrument consisted of indicators related to participation in decision-making, personal development, salary, incentives, benefits, and promotion. The work ethic instrument included indicators of hard work, work centrality, time efficiency, integrity, responsibility, ethical compliance, and proactive attitude. Meanwhile, the teachers' professional commitment instrument consisted of indicators related to emotional attachment, career satisfaction, active involvement, professional responsibility, professional values, compliance with professional standards, intention to remain in the profession, and sustainable professional plans. These indicators were developed by adapting the multidimensional concept of professional commitment, encompassing affective, continuance, and normative dimensions, and contextualized to reflect teachers' professional commitment in educational settings. Before the main survey, the instruments were tested for validity and reliability using respondents outside the research sample. The final instruments demonstrated Cronbach's Alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3 software. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for analyzing complex structural models involving latent variables and mediation effects, while providing robust parameter estimates under relatively small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis included measurement model evaluation through convergent validity, discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha testing, followed by structural model evaluation using coefficient of determination (R^2), direct and indirect relationship testing, and bootstrapping procedures. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level. The following flowchart presents the systematic research procedure employed in this study, beginning with preliminary



observations and culminating in conclusions and research implications via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling analysis.

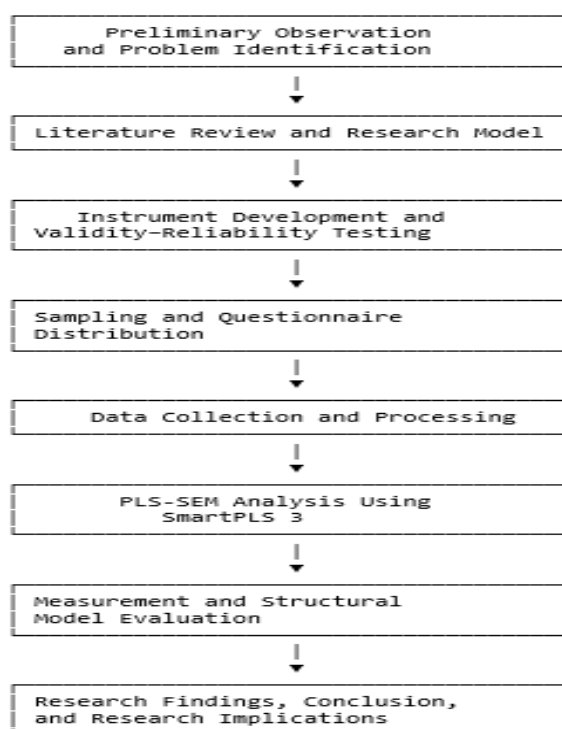


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Systematic Research Procedure

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions regarding work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment. The descriptive statistical results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Work Rewards	129.56	23.30	62	175
Work Ethic	135.19	21.70	86	179
Teachers' Professional Commitment	158.16	14.56	124	180

Table 1 shows that teachers' professional commitment obtained the highest mean score among the three variables. These findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrated relatively strong professional attachment, professional responsibility, and willingness to maintain professional standards. Work ethic also showed relatively high scores, particularly on indicators of discipline, responsibility, and professional dedication. Meanwhile, work rewards were generally perceived positively by respondents, especially non-financial rewards such as professional recognition, institutional support, and opportunities for professional participation. Overall, the descriptive findings indicate that teachers in private junior high schools tended to

maintain positive professional attitudes despite the institutional limitations frequently encountered in private education.

The measurement model was evaluated for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach in SmartPLS 3. The reliability and convergent validity results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Information
Work Rewards	0.640 – 0.866	0.897	0.918	0.654	Valid and Reliable
Work Ethic	0.811 – 0.917	0.941	0.952	0.740	Valid and Reliable
Teachers' Professional Commitment	0.703 – 0.832	0.888	0.911	0.563	Valid and Reliable

Table 2 demonstrates that all constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. In addition, all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Outer loading analysis further confirmed that all retained indicators possessed loading values above the recommended threshold (>0.50). Discriminant validity testing was conducted using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. The HTMT results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Construct	WE	TPC	WR
Work Ethic (WE)	—		
Teachers' Professional Commitment (TPC)	0,684	—	
Work Rewards (WR)	0,628	0,580	—

Table 3 demonstrates that all HTMT values remained below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity among constructs. These findings indicate that the measurement model fulfilled the validity and reliability requirements necessary for structural model evaluation.

Table 4 Model Fit Evaluation

Model Fit Index	Value	Criteria	Interpretation
SRMR	0.083	< 0.10	Acceptable
NFI	0.797	> 0.70	Moderate Fit

Model fit evaluation demonstrated that the structural model achieved acceptable fit criteria. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.083, indicating an acceptable model fit, as it remained below the recommended threshold of 0.10. In addition, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.797, indicating a moderate model fit.

Table 5 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1	Work Rewards $\rightarrow$ Work Ethic	0.628	15.537	0.000	Supported



Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H2	Work Ethic → Teachers' Professional Commitment	0.479	6.811	0.000	Supported
H3	Work Rewards → Teachers' Professional Commitment	0.246	2.975	0.003	Supported
H4	Work Rewards → Work Ethic → Teachers' Professional Commitment	0.301	4.699	0.000	Supported

Table X demonstrates that all hypothesized relationships in the structural model were positive and statistically significant. Work rewards had a positive and significant relationship with work ethic ($\beta = 0.628$; $t = 15.537$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that greater organizational appreciation was associated with stronger professional discipline, responsibility, and work consistency among teachers. Work ethic was also positively and significantly related to teachers' professional commitment ($\beta = 0.479$; $t = 6.811$; $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that teachers with a stronger work ethic tended to demonstrate greater professional attachment and commitment toward professional values and standards. Furthermore, work rewards demonstrated a positive and significant direct relationship with teachers' professional commitment ($\beta = 0.246$; $t = 2.975$; $p = 0.003$). Furthermore, the indirect effect of work rewards on teachers' professional commitment through work ethic was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.301$, $t = 4.699$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that work ethic served as a significant partial mediator in the relationship between work rewards and teachers' professional commitment. Overall, the findings indicate that work rewards strengthen teachers' professional commitment both directly and indirectly through work ethic, highlighting the important mediating role of work ethic in the proposed structural model.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Work Ethic	0.395	Moderate
Teachers' Professional Commitment	0.438	Moderate

Table 6 demonstrates that the coefficient of determination (R^2) value for Work Ethic was 0.395, indicating that work rewards explained 39.5% of the variance in teachers' work ethic. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for Teachers' Professional Commitment was 0.438, indicating that work rewards and work ethic jointly explained 43.8% of the variance in teachers' professional commitment. These findings indicate that the proposed structural model possessed moderate explanatory power for teachers' professional behavior and professional commitment in private junior high school contexts. The remaining unexplained variance suggests that additional organizational and psychological variables may also contribute to teachers' professional commitment.



Discussion

These findings indicate that teachers who perceived stronger work rewards demonstrated stronger work ethic, as reflected in greater responsibility, efficient time management, integrity, and adherence to professional ethics, proactive attitudes, and a stronger orientation toward work as an important professional responsibility. In educational institutions, work rewards function not only as financial compensation but also as non-financial recognition of teachers' professional contributions. The findings support organizational behavior perspectives suggesting that employees who perceive reward systems as fair and supportive generally develop stronger professional attitudes and greater work engagement. Previous studies similarly reported that organizational rewards positively contribute to employee motivation, professional behavior, and organizational participation (Bano et al., 2020; Chang & Chang, 2025; C. Huang & Chang, 2024). Within educational contexts, supportive institutional appreciation may strengthen teachers' perceptions of professional value, institutional fairness, and organizational support, which subsequently encourages a stronger work ethic and professional consistency.

The findings also demonstrated that work ethic was positively and significantly related to teachers' professional commitment. This finding indicates that teachers with stronger discipline, integrity, perseverance, and professional responsibility tended to demonstrate greater attachment toward their profession and stronger willingness to maintain professional standards. Teachers who possess a stronger work ethic generally maintain greater persistence when facing instructional challenges and demonstrate greater commitment to professional responsibilities despite institutional limitations (Ahakwa, 2024; Leung & Lam, 2025). These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that work ethic contributes positively to professional attachment, professional persistence, and organizational commitment (Due, 2024; Triguero-Sánchez, 2026). In private educational institutions, work ethic becomes increasingly important because teachers frequently face administrative pressures, limited institutional resources, and heavy workloads that demand professional consistency and personal dedication. Consequently, teachers with a stronger work ethic may remain professionally committed even when institutional conditions are less supportive (Byun & Jeon, 2023; Hornyák, 2025; Koltói & Kiss, 2024).

Furthermore, the study found that work rewards had a positive and significant direct relationship with teachers' professional commitment. These findings suggest that organizational appreciation directly strengthens teachers' emotional attachment, professional responsibility, and commitment to professional values. Teachers who perceive greater institutional appreciation may develop stronger perceptions of organizational fairness and professional recognition, which subsequently enhance professional attachment to the teaching profession. These findings support previous studies indicating that organizational reward systems positively influence professional commitment and organizational attachment among educational personnel (C. Huang & Chang, 2024; Mansour & Al-Khalayleh, 2026; Widodo & Gunawan, 2020). Within private school contexts, organizational rewards may also serve as institutional mechanisms for maintaining teacher retention and professional sustainability, particularly in environments with limited institutional stability and professional support systems.

The indirect relationship analysis further demonstrated that work rewards significantly influenced teachers' professional commitment through work ethic. These findings indicate that



work ethic served as an important mediating mechanism linking organizational appreciation to teachers' professional commitment. Organizational rewards may encourage teachers to demonstrate stronger discipline, professional responsibility, and instructional consistency, which in turn strengthen their professional attachment and commitment to the profession. These findings reinforce the perspective that professional commitment is shaped not only by external organizational support but also by internal professional behavior developed within educational environments. The mediating role of work ethic also suggests that organizational reward systems become more effective when they simultaneously encourage positive professional values and behavioral consistency among teachers (Hardianto et al., 2025; S. Huang et al., 2024; Sheridan et al., 2025; Widodo et al., 2025).

The coefficient of determination analysis demonstrated moderate explanatory power for the proposed structural model. Work rewards explained a moderate proportion of variance in work ethic, while work rewards and work ethic jointly explained a moderate proportion of variance in teachers' professional commitment. These findings indicate that teachers' attachment toward the teaching profession is influenced not only by organizational appreciation and work ethic but also by broader organizational and psychological factors. Factors such as professional identity, leadership support, organizational climate, institutional trust, career development opportunities, and job security may also contribute significantly to teachers' professional commitment within private educational contexts. Therefore, strengthening teachers' professional commitment requires comprehensive institutional strategies that combine organizational appreciation, professional development opportunities, supportive leadership, and sustainable professional environments.

The findings of this study contribute theoretically to the educational management literature by strengthening the empirical understanding of the relationship among work rewards, work ethic, and teachers' professional commitment within private educational institutions. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focused on organizational commitment or job satisfaction, this study specifically examined teachers' professional commitment as a professional construct within educational contexts and positioned work ethic as an intervening variable within the structural relationship model. In practice, the findings emphasize the importance of developing institutional policies that not only provide organizational appreciation but also strengthen teachers' professional discipline, professional values, and instructional consistency to sustain teachers' professional commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that work rewards and work ethic play important roles in strengthening teachers' professional commitment in private junior high schools. The findings demonstrate that work rewards positively influence both teachers' work ethic and professional commitment. Furthermore, work ethic serves as a significant partial mediator in the relationship between work rewards and teachers' professional commitment, indicating that work rewards strengthen teachers' professional commitment both directly and indirectly through work ethic. These findings theoretically reinforce educational management perspectives emphasizing that teachers' professional commitment is shaped not only by external organizational support but also by internal professional behavior developed through positive institutional experiences. The study also contributes to the educational management literature by demonstrating that work



ethic functions as a significant partial mediating mechanism in the relationship between work rewards and teachers' professional commitment.

In practice, the findings suggest that educational institutions should develop comprehensive strategies to strengthen teachers' professional commitment by combining fair organizational reward systems with sustainable professional development and supportive institutional environments. Educational leaders are encouraged to implement structured financial and non-financial reward systems, including fair salaries, incentives, benefits, professional recognition, participation in decision-making, promotion opportunities, and professional development, to strengthen teachers' work ethic and professional commitment. Nevertheless, this study was limited to private junior high school teachers within four districts in East Bogor Regency and employed a cross-sectional survey design. Therefore, future studies are recommended to include broader educational contexts, larger sample sizes, and additional organizational or psychological variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' professional commitment within educational institutions. In addition, the use of self-reported questionnaires may increase the possibility of subjective response bias. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to combine quantitative approaches with qualitative exploration to obtain a more comprehensive understanding regarding teachers' professional commitment and professional behavior.

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