



The influence of ethical leadership, organizational justice, and work engagement on teacher loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Teacher loyalty is a crucial aspect in maintaining the stability and effectiveness of education in primary schools, as reflected in teachers' willingness to work consistently, their reluctance to easily change workplaces, and their positive attitude towards school policies. This study was motivated by the importance of creating a fair work environment and fostering ethical leadership to increase teachers' emotional and professional engagement. This study was conducted to describe and analyze the influence of ethical leadership, organizational justice, and work engagement on the loyalty of SDN teachers in West Pulaulaut Subdistrict. The research method used is a correlational method with a quantitative approach analyzed using path analysis within the framework of Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The sample consisted of 90 teachers, selected through a total sampling technique. The results showed that organizational justice and work engagement have a significant direct effect on teacher loyalty. In contrast, ethical leadership has no direct effect but an indirect effect through work engagement. The findings confirm the important role of justice and work engagement in shaping teacher loyalty, as well as the strategic position of ethical leadership as a factor that supports engagement.

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ABSTRAK

Loyalitas guru merupakan aspek penting dalam menjaga stabilitas dan efektivitas pendidikan di sekolah dasar yang tercermin dari kesediaan guru untuk bekerja secara konsisten, tidak mudah berpindah tempat kerja, serta menunjukkan sikap positif terhadap kebijakan sekolah. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya menciptakan iklim kerja yang adil dan kepemimpinan yang etis agar guru lebih terlibat secara emosional dan profesional. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menggambarkan dan menganalisis pengaruh kepemimpinan etis, keadilan organisasi, dan keterlibatan kerja terhadap loyalitas guru SDN di Kecamatan Pulaulaut Barat. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode korelasional dengan pendekatan kuantitatif yang dianalisis menggunakan path analysis dalam kerangka Structural Equation Modeling berbasis Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Sampel berjumlah 90 orang guru yang ditentukan melalui teknik total sampling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keadilan organisasi dan keterlibatan kerja memiliki pengaruh langsung signifikan terhadap loyalitas guru, sedangkan kepemimpinan etis tidak berpengaruh langsung tetapi berpengaruh secara tidak langsung melalui keterlibatan kerja. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya peran keadilan dan keterlibatan kerja dalam membentuk loyalitas guru, serta posisi strategis kepemimpinan etis sebagai faktor yang mendukung keterlibatan tersebut.

Kata Kunci: keadilan organisasi; kepemimpinan etis; keterlibatan kerja; loyalitas guru

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INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the fundamental foundation for a nation's progress, as through quality learning processes, young generations can be shaped into intelligent, skilled, and virtuous individuals. Within this context, teachers play a pivotal role as the primary agents of knowledge and value transformation. Teachers serve not merely as deliverers of instructional content, but also as learning facilitators and character builders for students. Teacher loyalty demonstrates a positive and significant influence on performance, indicating that higher loyalty correlates with improved instructional quality (Restatilah *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, teacher quality and loyalty constitute critical factors in ensuring the success of national education.

Teacher loyalty is reflected in both emotional and professional dedication to their duties, including implementing school policies and enhancing instructional quality. However, in practice, teacher loyalty in Indonesia, particularly in *Tertinggal* (disadvantaged), *Terdepan* (frontier), and *Terluar* (outermost) regions (3T) continues to face numerous challenges. This is further supported by research confirming that one of the most fundamental issues is the shortage of qualified teachers and teaching staff (Dalimunthe *et al.*, 2025). Data from the *Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* (Ministry of Education and Culture) reveal high teacher turnover rates in these regions. Indonesia is projected to face a shortage of over one million teaching staff in the near future. This issue is further compounded by findings highlighting teacher shortages, uneven distribution, and mismatches between teacher qualifications and their assigned subjects (Ibrahim & Islamiah, 2024).

Ethical leadership serves as a critical factor in fostering conducive work environments and enhancing teachers' emotional and professional engagement. Transformational school leadership has been empirically shown to directly and indirectly, through job satisfaction, improve teacher performance (Rizkie & Suriansyah, 2022). Furthermore, perceptions of organizational justice play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' attitudes and institutional commitment. This is supported by research demonstrating that organizational justice perceptions positively correlate with loyalty among teachers and professors within the education sector (Ahmad & Rochimah, 2019). Perceived fairness in workload distribution, evaluation procedures, and interpersonal relationships can strengthen teachers' loyalty to their schools. Work engagement emerges as a significant variable in this context. Job embeddedness encompasses cognitive, emotional, physical, behavioral, and social dimensions that reflect teachers' level of connection to their work, while also serving as a mediator between the work environment and loyalty (Ridho, 2023).

Previous research has demonstrated that organizational climate significantly influences teacher loyalty (Rahman *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, studies indicate that teacher empowerment positively affects loyalty (Medina *et al.*, 2023). Based on this literature review, it appears that no integrative examination has been conducted on the relationship between ethical leadership, organizational justice, and work engagement in explaining teacher loyalty. Most prior studies have only addressed two variables partially, without testing work engagement as a mediator. Therefore, this study offers scientific novelty by proposing a conceptual model that integrates all three variables, positioning work engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational justice

on teacher loyalty. This research aims to analyze the influence of ethical leadership and organizational justice on teacher loyalty, with work engagement serving as a mediating variable.

Kepemimpinan etis guru sangat penting dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan karakter dan membangun iklim organisasi yang kondusif untuk keterlibatan kerja dan loyalitas guru (Suhifatullah *et al.*, 2020). Ethical teacher leadership holds critical importance in enhancing the quality of character education and establishing an organizational climate that fosters work engagement and teacher loyalty. This approach is anticipated to yield a more comprehensive understanding of teacher loyalty dynamics, particularly within the context of elementary education in remote areas. The study specifically examines how ethical leadership and organizational justice influence teacher loyalty, along with the mediating role of work engagement in this relationship. Accordingly, the research aims to analyze the impact of ethical leadership and organizational justice on teacher loyalty among public *Sekolah Dasar Negeri* (elementary school) teachers in *Kecamatan Pulaulaut Barat* (West Pulaulaut District), with work engagement serving as a mediating variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Loyalty

Teacher loyalty constitutes a vital aspect that reflects emotional attachment, professional commitment, and dedication to the educational institution where they serve. This concept is measured not merely by length of service, but rather through consistent task execution and active participation in school activities. Organizational climate, job satisfaction, and compensation represent key factors influencing teacher loyalty (Hidayati & Hanif, 2025). For instance, research conducted among elementary school teachers in Tanjung Medan District demonstrates that teacher loyalty exerts a positive and significant influence on organizational commitment (Suprpto *et al.*, 2022). This finding confirms that teachers exhibiting high loyalty tend to demonstrate stronger commitment to institutional goals and values.

Work discipline and work commitment—these two variables are closely related to teachers' loyalty and dedication, thereby significantly influencing productivity and stability among elementary school teachers. This relationship reflects loyalty through consistent professional behavior (Oktaviani & Putra, 2021). Organizational climate, job satisfaction, and compensation serve as primary factors affecting teacher loyalty (Hidayati & Hanif, 2025). Loyal teachers do not merely remain at an institution but demonstrate integrity, enthusiastic service, and resilience in facing challenges. School leadership plays a fundamental role in cultivating a supportive work atmosphere (Sunardi & Sihab, 2023). School principals serve as catalysts for enhancing teacher loyalty by providing feedback and coaching, which strengthens teachers' sense of responsibility and discipline. A conducive, safe, and comfortable work environment directly and positively influences teacher loyalty (Nurhaedah & Kadir, 2024).

In the educational domain, teacher loyalty reflects a willingness to continuously contribute and actively participate in school activities. Loyalty extends beyond formal employment relationships, representing a profound attachment to the institution's vision, mission, and core values (Medina *et al.*, 2023). Teacher loyalty is influenced by the school principal's

instructional leadership style, which enhances teachers' self-efficacy, thereby strengthening their emotional and professional connection to the school (Adzkiya, 2021). Teacher loyalty emerges from complex interactions between personal and organizational factors, where recognition, support, and fair treatment serve as key determinants. Research confirms that strong work commitment and professional ethos, when supported by a fair and appreciative work environment, significantly enhance teacher loyalty (Patmawati *et al.*, 2025).

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership represents a management style that integrates moral values such as integrity, honesty, and justice as foundational elements in decision-making and organizational relationships. In the education sector, this approach proves essential for fostering positive and inclusive work environments. Ethical leadership encompasses minimal virtues including honesty, fairness, prudence, leaders' acknowledgment of their mistakes, and opposition to unethical practices (Mulyana *et al.*, 2023). Research concludes that school principals' culturally grounded ethical leadership has significant implications for improving school quality (Roja & Salim, 2023). Transformational leadership aligned with ethical leadership principles demonstrably enhances work climate and teacher performance (Ulfah *et al.*, 2024).

In the school context, ethical principals serve as moral exemplars for the educational community (Dimara *et al.*, 2022). Ethical leadership encompassing several aspects, being a role model, respecting all individuals, maintaining open communication, and demonstrating fairness can significantly influence teacher performance and satisfaction (Amsori & Safwandy, 2024). The implementation of ethical leadership encompasses honesty, fairness, integrity, altruism, and compassion, playing a pivotal role in fostering a culture of mutual respect and collaboration within educational institutions (Saputra, 2025). Furthermore, research emphasizes the critical importance of fairness and open communication as dimensions of instructional leadership; these factors directly influence the work climate and job satisfaction of elementary school teachers, thereby strengthening institutional loyalty and school ethos (Syahminan *et al.*, 2024).

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in implementing institutional procedures, rules, and policies grounded in integrity, equality, and ethical values. In the education sector, this concept holds particular relevance as teachers, being professionals, demonstrate acute sensitivity to differential treatment and task allocation. Within school management, implementing justice principles yields significant positive impacts on teacher job satisfaction and institutional loyalty reinforcement. Disparities in these areas trigger dissatisfaction that diminishes work engagement and fosters turnover intention.

Organizational justice, organizational culture, and job satisfaction exert positive and significant influences on organizational commitment (Pratama & Septiani, 2020). Recent research reveals that fairness in task distribution and formal procedures significantly contributes to work culture and organizational commitment (Herawati *et al.*, 2022). Justice

encompasses distributive, procedural, and interpersonal fairness, which shape organizational members' perceptions of equitable treatment, resulting in heightened loyalty and active participation in school activities (Prihandini, *et al.*, 2023). Procedural justice and open communication between teachers and school leadership enhance job satisfaction, which in turn strengthens loyalty and reduces turnover intention (Musringudin & Dinihari, 2021).

Work Engagement

Work engagement represents a positive psychological state characterized by dedication, enthusiasm, and full concentration in professional task execution. In education, this concept holds critical importance as it directly influences teaching effectiveness and teacher-student relationship quality. Work engagement manifests as a positive mental state distinguished by vigor (high energy and resilience at work), dedication (pride and motivation in one's work), and absorption (complete immersion and difficulty detaching from work tasks). This phenomenon transcends physical presence, reflecting teachers' psychological and emotional attachment to their profession. A study measuring teacher work engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic reported that educators demonstrated high average levels of dedication and absorption, along with moderate vigor, while also revealing strong positive correlations among these three dimensions (Pöysä *et al.*, 2022).

Teachers with high engagement typically demonstrate superior performance, proactive participation in school activities, and strong institutional commitment. Various studies indicate that engagement is influenced by internal factors such as personality, work values, and intrinsic motivation, as well as external factors including work climate, leadership style, organizational justice, and social support. Work engagement serves as a mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee loyalty (Naimah & Sari, 2022). Research validates that engagement enhances work satisfaction, collaborative spirit, and teachers' loyalty to educational institutions (Putra & Zusmawati, 2024). This instrument demonstrates strong psychometric properties for teachers across Indonesia (Srimulyani, 2021). Resilience levels contribute significantly to teachers' work engagement.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach utilizing survey methods to obtain numerical data from respondents, aiming to test hypotheses about variable relationships through statistical analysis. The research specifically focuses on examining the influence of ethical leadership and organizational justice on teacher loyalty, with work engagement serving as a mediating variable. The population in this study comprises all teachers at Sekolah Dasar Negeri (elementary school) teachers in Kecamatan Pulaulaut Barat (West Pulaulaut District), totaling 90 educators. Given the relatively small population size, the sampling technique employed is total sampling or census sampling, whereby all population members are included as respondents to minimize generalization error.

Data were collected using closed-ended questionnaires based on a 7-point Likert scale. The instrument was developed through an adaptation and modification process tailored to Indonesian elementary school teachers' contexts, comprising 30 items reflecting four main variables. Each variable was measured by at least three indicators to maintain structural

model stability, following established methodological recommendations. Prior to deployment in primary data collection, the questionnaire underwent validity and reliability testing with 30 teachers from Pulaulaut Tanjung Selayar District, who shared similar characteristics with the main population. Validity was assessed through factor loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while reliability was evaluated via composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. Data analysis proceeded through two main stages.

First, descriptive analysis was employed to examine respondent profiles and answer distributions for each variable. This analysis was conducted using SPSS software to obtain mean values, standard deviations, as well as frequency and percentage distributions. The second stage involved inferential analysis performed through Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) using SmartPLS version 4 software. Evaluation of the outer model included testing for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and indicator reliability.

An indicator is considered valid if it demonstrates a loading factor value above 0,70 and AVE above 0,50, while reliability is confirmed with a composite reliability value exceeding 0,70. Subsequently, the inner model is evaluated through R-square measurement, path coefficients, and effect size (f^2) to determine the strength of variable relationships. The structural model evaluation criteria are as follows: R-square values of 0.67 (strong), 0.33 (moderate), and 0,19 (weak). Additionally, mediation effect testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples to examine the significance of indirect pathways. Mediation is considered significant when the indirect path is statistically significant ($p < 0,05$), and is classified as either partial or full mediation based on the significance of the direct path. The structural relationships among variables in this study are illustrated in the following flow diagram.

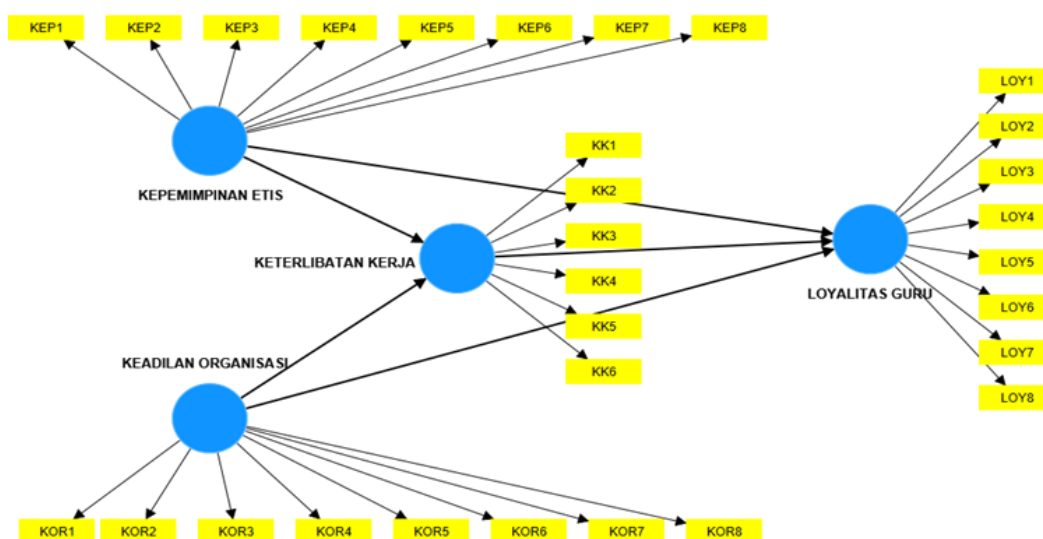


Figure 1. Flow Diagram
Source: Research Data

The relationships depicted in the diagram (see **Figure 1**) reflect the hypotheses that ethical leadership (X1) and organizational justice (X2) exert direct influences on work engagement (Z) and teacher loyalty (Y), along with indirect effects on teacher loyalty mediated through work engagement. This model systematically examines how the mediating variable amplifies

or bridges relationships between independent and dependent variables. The research methodology comprehensively outlines data collection procedures, analytical techniques, and hypothesis testing mechanisms to empirically and measurably address the study's objectives and research problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

A descriptive analysis was conducted to obtain an overview of respondents' perceptions regarding each research variable: ethical leadership, organizational justice, work engagement, and teacher loyalty. The results indicate that perceptions of all four variables fall within the moderate category. The overall mean score was 3,80 on a 1–7 Likert scale. Specifically for teacher loyalty, the average scores tended to be low, particularly regarding commitment to integrity and academic participation, where each received low-category responses from 53,3% of respondents. On the other hand, positive feelings and pride in their work as part of work engagement showed high scores (41,2%), indicating that emotional attachment remains present despite relatively low physical and cognitive involvement. The variables of ethical leadership and organizational justice received comparatively higher ratings, with the majority of teachers providing positive responses regarding leaders' openness and workload appropriateness.

Evaluation of the Outer Measurement Model

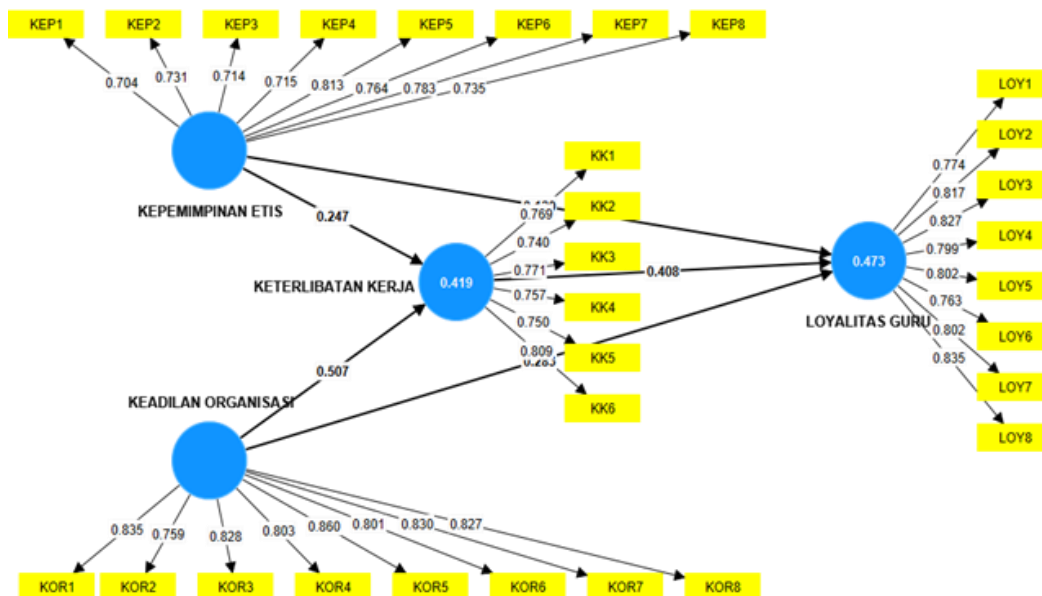


Figure 2. Output Display of the Outer Model
Source: Research Data

The outer model evaluation (shown in **Figure 2**) was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of measurement indicators. All indicators demonstrated loading factor values $\geq 0,70$, confirming convergent validity. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceeded 0,70, indicating strong internal reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all variables exceeded the

minimum threshold of 0,50. Discriminant validity was assessed through HTMT and Fornell-Larcker Criterion, where all HTMT values were <0,90 and the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other variables. Cross-loading analysis further confirmed that each indicator had its highest correlation with its intended construct rather than others. Thus, the measurement model was deemed valid and reliable.

Structural Model Testing/Hypothesis Testing

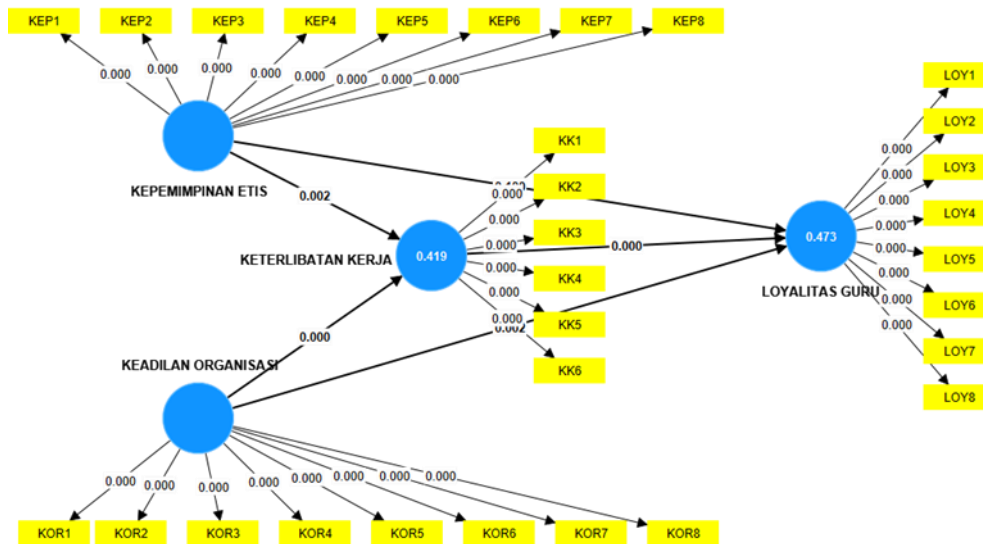


Figure 3. Output Display of the Inner Model
Source: Research Data

The structural model testing (shown in **Figure 3**) revealed no multicollinearity among variables (all VIF values < 5). Hypothesis testing results demonstrated that ethical leadership did not exert a significant direct effect on teacher loyalty ($p = 0,100 > 0,05$), while organizational justice and work engagement each showed significant effects on teacher loyalty with p -values < 0,05. Organizational justice also demonstrated a positive and significant influence on work engagement ($p = 0,000$), as did ethical leadership ($p = 0,002$). All hypotheses (except H1) were accepted. This reinforces the model's proposition that work engagement serves as a critical variable in strengthening the relationship between leadership and loyalty.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis in this study investigates whether work engagement functions as an intervening variable in the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher loyalty, as well as between organizational justice and teacher loyalty. The mediation test results using bootstrapping analysis in SmartPLS revealed that work engagement significantly mediates both pathways. For the ethical leadership → work engagement → teacher loyalty path, the indirect effect was 0,101 with a T-statistic of 2,513 and p -value of 0,012 (<0,05). This indicates that work engagement significantly mediates the indirect effect of ethical leadership on teacher loyalty. However, since the direct effect of ethical leadership on teacher loyalty was nonsignificant ($p = 0,100$), this represents a case of full mediation. This means work engagement serves as the only significant pathway explaining how ethical leadership influences teacher

loyalty. The findings indicate that school principals' ethical behaviors can only enhance teacher loyalty when educators feel genuinely engaged in their work.

Meanwhile, for the organizational justice → work engagement → teacher loyalty pathway, the indirect effect was 0,207 with a T-statistic of 3,479 and p-value of 0,001 (<0,05), indicating work engagement also significantly mediates the organizational justice-loyalty relationship. However, since the direct effect of organizational justice on teacher loyalty remained significant (p = 0,002), this represents partial mediation. This signifies that work engagement strengthens, but is not the sole pathway explaining organizational justice's effect on loyalty. In other words, teachers who perceive fair treatment will not only experience greater engagement but also demonstrate direct loyalty to their institution. These results confirm the critical role of work engagement as a psychological variable bridging organizational structural factors and behavioral outcomes like loyalty. Managerial strategies aimed at enhancing teacher loyalty should not focus solely on ethical values or justice alone, but must also ensure teachers feel genuinely involved in work processes, decision-making, and professional development at school.

Effect Size

Hair in his 2019 work *"Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) Using R: A Workbook"* states that effect size provides information about the magnitude of a variable's influence on another variable within the structural model, whether direct or indirect. Effect size is evaluated using the f^2 value, while for indirect effects (mediation), the ν value is used to assess direct effects. Based on the analysis results, ethical leadership's effect on teacher loyalty yields an f^2 value of 0,021, categorized as a low effect size. Conversely, ethical leadership's influence on work engagement demonstrates an f^2 value of 0,087, falling within the medium effect size range, indicating that leadership ethics more substantially impacts work engagement than direct loyalty outcomes. Meanwhile, organizational justice's effect on teacher loyalty demonstrates an f^2 value of 0,093 (medium), while its influence on work engagement shows an f^2 value of 0,370, categorized as a high effect size. This indicates that perceptions of justice constitute the most dominant factor in enhancing teacher engagement. Work engagement itself exerts a medium effect on teacher loyalty with an f^2 of 0,183, demonstrating this variable's pivotal role in bridging organizational factors with affective outcomes.

The mediation effects were measured using the ν metric. The mediated path ethical leadership → work engagement → teacher loyalty yielded $\nu = 0,002$, while the organizational justice → work engagement → teacher loyalty path showed $\nu = 0,013$. Both values fall within the low-effect category according to ν classification standards, which designate values <0,075 as indicating small mediation effects. Although its contribution is statistically small in structural terms, this mediating role remains substantively significant as it reveals underlying psychological dynamics not apparent in direct relationships. The interpretation of these values provides deeper insight that while certain variable relationships demonstrate statistical significance, their practical effect magnitudes remain noteworthy considerations. In managing *Sekolah Dasar Negeri* (public elementary schools), organizational justice deserves primary attention as it exerts not only substantial direct effects but also strongly enhances work engagement, ultimately fostering teacher loyalty. Meanwhile, ethical leadership remains important but should be combined with participatory approaches to amplify its impact on teacher loyalty.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide clear evidence regarding the critical role of organizational justice and work engagement in enhancing teacher loyalty, particularly in disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions. The results demonstrate that organizational justice serves as the dominant factor influencing loyalty, both directly and through work engagement as a mediating variable. Organizational justice has been proven to be a primary factor in shaping positive employee attitudes, including loyalty, as evidenced by several prior studies (Ahmad & Rochmiah, 2019; Prihandini *et al.*, 2023). In this context, teachers' perceptions of fairness—including proportional workload distribution, transparent evaluation procedures, and equitable interpersonal treatment within the school environment—significantly influence their emotional attachment to the institution. When teachers perceive fair treatment, it fosters a sense of security and appreciation, ultimately enhancing their commitment and desire to remain part of the educational institution they serve.

Work engagement emerges as a crucial psychological variable that effectively mediates the relationships between organizational justice and ethical leadership with teacher loyalty. Teachers who feel valued, involved in work processes, and given opportunities to participate in decision-making tend to demonstrate higher loyalty to their institutions. These findings align with prior research indicating that work engagement serves as a strong mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction (Naimah & Sari, 2022). In educational contexts, teacher engagement has also proven positively correlated with emotional wellbeing and career sustainability (Pöysä *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, work engagement extends beyond mere task execution, encompassing senses of ownership, work meaningfulness, and the formation of profound professional relationships among teachers, colleagues, and administrators.

Interestingly, although ethical leadership did not demonstrate a direct effect on teacher loyalty in this study, it still plays a significant role through work engagement. This implies that the ethical values internalized by leaders—such as integrity, honesty, and responsibility—will only positively impact teacher loyalty when manifested through participatory and collaborative work environments. These findings expand our understanding of ethical leadership, which is determined not only by a leader's personal qualities but also by their strategies and approaches in establishing work relationships that actively engage teachers. In this context, perceptions of fairness in treatment and decision-making within the school environment form a critical foundation for creating teachers' affective attachment, which ultimately influences their institutional loyalty (Srimulyani, 2021).

When compared to prior studies, these research findings provide significant theoretical contributions by integrating work engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between organizational factors and teacher loyalty. Most previous studies have primarily focused on direct relationships between organizational justice or leadership and loyalty, while few have comprehensively explored work engagement as the psychological pathway mediating these relationships. The conceptual model proposed in this study offers a more comprehensive approach, where teacher loyalty is influenced not only by structural elements such as organizational systems and leadership styles but also by teachers' emotional and professional engagement in school dynamics. Furthermore, the study's focus on elementary school teachers in 3T regions provides significant contextual contributions by expanding the

literature scope, which has thus far been largely limited to urban areas or schools with more adequate educational facilities.

These research findings not only reaffirm the importance of fair organizational systems and structures and ethical leadership, but also make a conceptual contribution by demonstrating that teacher loyalty is shaped through processes of value internalization, role recognition, and active participation in school activities. Teacher loyalty enhancement strategies should focus on cultivating fair, transparent, and supportive work climates, coupled with professional empowerment that fosters educators' participation in decision-making and school development. Active teacher engagement will strengthen institutional ownership, improve psychological wellbeing, and ultimately create sustainable loyalty. Future research should explore additional contextual factors that may strengthen or weaken these relationships, including transformational leadership styles, organizational culture, and local socioeconomic conditions that also influence loyalty dynamics among teachers.

CONCLUSION

Organizational justice and work engagement demonstrate significant direct effects on teacher loyalty, while ethical leadership shows no direct effect but exerts indirect influence through work engagement. Specifically, this study reveals that work engagement fully mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher loyalty, and partially mediates the relationship between organizational justice and teacher loyalty. These findings address the research hypotheses and demonstrate that teacher loyalty is influenced not only directly by leadership ethics or structural justice, but also significantly depends on the extent to which teachers feel emotionally, cognitively, and professionally engaged in their work environment. Thus, work engagement serves as a critical psychological mechanism bridging organizational conditions and teachers' affective behaviors. These results confirm that efforts to enhance teacher loyalty should prioritize creating fair work climates and implementing strategies for actively engaging teachers in work processes and decision-making.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The authors unequivocally declare that this article's publication is free from any conflicts of interest, including financial support, business relationships, or personal connections that could influence research objectivity. All content represents original work developed independently while adhering to academic ethical standards. All references have been properly cited in accordance with prevailing academic standards. This article is guaranteed free from plagiarism, duplication, or copyright infringement. This commitment to academic integrity demonstrates dedication to producing high-quality scholarly contributions that meet international publication standards and are academically accountable.

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