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Beyond the Motive: Lessons Learned from Work Commitment Based on *Pesantren*

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Abstract

Educators' performance in Pesantren is often measured by the salaries they receive. The salaries of educators and administrative staff at Pesantren are often below the minimum wage. Thus, work motivation arises not from the fulfilment of biological needs, but from the operation of higher values of life's meaning. This research aimed to understand the forms of pesantren-based work motivation and the factors that shape it. The research employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the forms of motivation rooted in Pesantren values that influence the commitment to work of teaching and educational staff. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis in traditional Pesantrens in East Java. Data analysis was carried out using MAXQDA. The research results showed that the forms of Pesantren-based work motivation consisted of ruhul jihad, sincerity of intention, management of responsibility, self-control, and spirit of service. The research results also showed that the factors that form Pesantren-based work motivation consisted of qasd al-Amal (intention to work), vertical and horizontal balance, tabarrukan, career sustainability and job security, and interpersonal connectedness. These values, deeply embedded in the Pesantren environment, contribute to a strong work commitment that is intrinsic and enduring.

Keywords: Motivation; Work Commitment; Pesantren; Values.

A. Introduction

The quality of teaching and administrative staff is in line with the quality of education. These quality demands require measurable professionalism to ensure that teaching and administrative staff align with their profession (Đorđević et al., 2022). However, the demands for professionalism are often inversely proportional to the actual conditions of educational institutions. Educators often view “teaching” as an activity solely for earning a living or merely to obtain a salary and food and clothing for short-term physical survival, which is undoubtedly different from educators who view their profession as a professional calling and a trust for which they must be held accountable before God (Mundiri, 2016). Thus, the feeling and attitude toward viewing work as a calling or something else that stems from values and beliefs are a differentiating factor from material motivation.

Fulfillment of biological needs often does not lead to increased work motivation (Guillén et al., 2015; Losoncz, 2017). Therefore, material fulfillment doesn't necessarily lead to a stronger work commitment than someone who focuses on vertical relationships. *Pesantren* values are considered to be able to form a more competent work commitment even without looking at the feedback that will be obtained because *Pesantrens* are a source of values that show the relevance and richness of local traditions that can provide innovative solutions to the challenges of work commitment in the *Pesantren* environment (Mundiri, 2016; Mundiri & Manshur, 2020; Sutomo et al., 2024). This can be proven by the performance of teaching staff in *Pesantrens*, who tend not to pay attention to the amount of their salaries. The salaries of teaching and education staff in *Pesantrens* are far below the minimum wage (Mundiri, 2016; Nadhif et al., 2024). Thus, it can be said that the spiritual values taught in *Pesantrens* can increase work commitment and productivity by prioritizing psycho-spiritual motivation over biological needs.

Research on *pesantren* and the dynamics that occur within them has long been a topic of considerable interest among researchers. These studies include lifelong commitment and austere living conditions (Nilan, 2019). The study also explains that *pesantren* offer a unique perspective on work commitment that goes beyond financial motives. They demonstrate how traditional institutions can adapt and thrive in a modern context while maintaining their core values and commitments (Abubakar et



al., 2025; Mundiri, 2016). Sodikin (2025) adds that work commitment rooted in the value of *ihsan* (good deeds) can foster a spirit of dedication and ethical behavior at work. Similarly, research conducted by Baharun et al., (2025), Shivolo (2024), and Prasojo et al., (2025), states that *kyais* (religious leaders) play a central role in shaping work commitment. Their authority and legitimacy significantly influence community preferences and levels of commitment. Likewise, communal support in *pesantren* can foster a strong sense of belonging among fellow students, ultimately increasing affective work commitment (Rozaki & Izudin, 2025; Sabarudin et al., 2024).

The description above indicates a research gap. The concept of *Ihsan* does not adequately describe how it triggers motivation (Sodikin, 2025). Other values, such as sincerity in work, a sense of responsibility, a belief in the value of worship, and Islamic ethical principles, can be strong motivators for educators to perform their duties more effectively (Losoncz, 2011). In these values, individuals are bound by a long-term commitment to fulfill their duties in accordance with Islamic teachings. Similarly, the limited articulation of transcendental values and devotion in *pesantren* makes these studies appear not to have specifically studied motivation in such schools. Thus, most research still focuses on *pesantren* as institutions and on the normative values they embody, without delving deeply into how these values operate as sources of work motivation for educators.

Educators and educational staff in *Pesantren* environments have different motivational characteristics when compared to teaching staff or employees in a company (Istighfarany & Firdaus, 2023; Haryanto et al., 2025). The form of motivation that occurs in *Pesantrens*, which is owned by teaching and education staff, is firmly rooted in values closely associated with *Pesantren's* characteristics. This motivation has nothing in common with motivation that grows and begins with biological needs. *Pesantrens* hold values such as the spirit of *jihad*, independence, and others, which stem from their core values and beliefs. On the other hand, Maslow stated that motivation is understood as a complex construct influenced by internal and external factors. Maslow also stated that human motivation moves in stages, starting from the most fundamental needs to the need for self-development. Thus, existing studies still focus on normative-materialist aspects rather than forms of motivation rooted in the operation of spiritual values, such as the need for a vertical rather than a horizontal orientation, and the factors that shape them.



This study aims to understand the form of *pesantren*-based work motivation that integrates spiritual aspects with professional responsibilities. In the context of *pesantren*, work motivation cannot be understood solely in terms of biological needs. However, there are other, invisible but tangible dimensions that are intertwined with the performance of the teaching staff within the boarding school. Likewise, this study seeks to understand the factors shaping *pesantren*-based work motivation by exploring how *pesantren* core beliefs and values become determinants in its formation.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to explore and understand the lived experiences and underlying meanings of *pesantren*-based work motivation. The phenomenological approach was chosen to capture the intentionality and intersubjective meanings embedded in the work behaviors of teaching and educational staff, acknowledging that each individual's motivation is shaped by distinct experiential, social, and cultural contexts. The research process focused on transforming participants' narrated experiences into an articulated essence of experience through systematic and structured analytical procedures.

The primary data sources consisted of teaching and educational staff, *pesantren* caregivers, students, and alumni who were directly involved in or closely connected to the daily institutional life of *pesantren*. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives and depth of experiential knowledge. This process was subsequently extended through a snowball technique to reach additional participants who met the established criteria and could enrich the data with diverse perspectives.

Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to capture social interactions, work dynamics, and everyday practices within the *pesantren* environment as they naturally occurred. In-depth interviews were carried out using a structured interview guide to ensure consistency in exploring forms of work motivation and the factors shaping them, including cultural values, social relations, caregiving patterns, and institutional norms. Documentation was used to complement observational and interview data and included historical records, internal *pesantren* policies, activity reports, and other institutional documents relevant to understanding the work context and motivational environment.



All interview data were transcribed verbatim, while observation notes and documents were systematically compiled into a unified data corpus. Data analysis began with repeated readings to achieve immersion and contextual understanding, accompanied by analytical memo writing to support reflexive interpretation. Initial coding was conducted using the MAXQDA application by identifying and marking meaningful segments across transcripts, observation notes, and documents. The codes were then reviewed, refined, and organized to ensure consistency across data sources. Subsequently, related codes were grouped into categories, from which themes were developed by identifying recurring patterns, contrasts, and relationships. In the final stage, the emerging themes were reviewed against the raw data to ensure analytical coherence and fidelity to participants' experiences.

To ensure ethical compliance, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and pseudonyms were used throughout the research process. The presentation of findings was conducted in an aggregate and selective manner to prevent indirect identification and to protect participants and institutional integrity.

C. Results and Discussion

This research explores more deeply how *Pesantren's* values can shape and strengthen sustainable work motivation. Through in-depth research, we found that factors such as sincerity, simplicity, and obedience taught in *Pesantrens* play an essential role in building strong work commitment. This finding is supported by the theory of intrinsic motivation, which states that motivation that arises within a person tends to be more effective and long-lasting. The implications of this research show that by integrating *Pesantren's* values into organizational culture, companies can create a more harmonious work environment, increase employee loyalty, and reduce turnover. In the following discussion, we will outline the main findings, their implications, and why this approach is essential in the context of modern human resource management.

1. Results

a. *Pesantren*-based Forms of Work Motivation

Pesantren-based work motivation combines the spirit of devotion, internalization of religious values, and social tolerance to create a work environment



that is not only productive but also full of spiritual and ethical values, ensuring high dedication and commitment to quality in every aspect of work. The following research data shows that *Pesantren*-based forms of work motivation consist of.

Table 1. Interview data on *pesantren*-based forms of work motivation

Interview Data/ Observation	Description	Code
Caretaker of the Traditional <i>Pesantren</i> "Every task given at the <i>Pesantren</i> is expected to be carried out with the intention of Lillahi Ta'ala, who is full of responsibility and dedication."	Duties at the <i>pesantren</i> are carried out with sincerity, dedication, and noble goals.	Spirit of Jihad
Alumni of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "I carry the spirit of <i>Ruhul Jihad</i> in every job I do. At work, I always try to give my best, work with sincerity, and don't give up easily. The values I learned at <i>Pesantren</i> help me to stay motivated and highly committed to work."	Total commitment to working by giving the best of what is mastered or possessed by the educational and teaching staff	Spirit of Jihad
Active Senior Student at Traditional <i>Pesantren</i> " <i>Tajarrud's</i> Intention for me is to do everything with pure and sincere intentions. At <i>Pesantren</i> , we are taught to continually renew our intentions before doing anything so that everything we do is worth worship. This motivates me to be more focused on studying and activities."	Good intentions will make work more meaningful and a form of worship	Sincerity of Intention
Alumni of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "I always maintain sincerity of intention in every job. At work, my main goal is to provide benefits and contribute positively, not just seeking personal gain. This value of sincerity really helps me in maintaining my integrity and work enthusiasm."	Maintaining pure intentions ensures integrity	Sincerity of Intention
Caretaker of the Traditional <i>Pesantren</i> "At this <i>Pesantren</i> , each teacher is given tasks and responsibilities according to their abilities. We always remind them that responsibilities must be carried out thoughtfully and with integrity because this is part of the mandate that must be maintained."	Responsibility is part of a trust	Management of Responsibility
Student of Traditional <i>Pesantren</i> " <i>Tadbir Al-Mas'uliyyyah</i> , for me, is managing responsibilities well. At <i>Pesantren</i> , I learned not to procrastinate at work and to complete tasks well."	Not procrastinating on work is part of a teacher's responsibility at the	Management of Responsibility
Caretaker of the Traditional <i>Pesantren</i> "By constantly remembering that Allah SWT is Watching, they are encouraged to behave honestly	The concept of <i>ihsan</i> encourages honesty and responsibility	Self-control



Interview Data/ Observation	Description	Code
<i>and responsibly and try their best in every task they are given."</i>		
Alumni of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "At work, I constantly monitor myself to remain honest, work with integrity, and carry out my duties to the best of my ability".	Teachers self-evaluate and strive to do their best in carrying out their duties	Muraqabah Al-Nafs (Self-control)
Student of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "At Pesantren, we are often involved in social activities such as social service and helping the local community. This motivates me always to do good and give my best at every opportunity, both inside and outside the Pesantren."	Making the best possible contribution inside and outside the <i>pesantren</i>	Spirit of Service
Alumni of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "After graduating, I continued to practice the spirit of <i>Khidmat Ijtima'iyah</i> in my daily life. At work, I always tried to help my colleagues, get involved in company social activities, and make positive contributions to society. The spirit of service I learned at the Pesantren makes me care more and try to give the best to others."	The spirit of service is not limited to work	Spirit of Service

Table 1 shows that there are six forms of *Pesantren*-based work motivation. Thus, the data as above explains the following findings:

First, Ruhul Jihad. The data in Table 1 shows that every task in *pesantren* is carried out with sincere intentions for Allah, with full responsibility and high dedication. One source stated that, as a teacher, he always carries the spirit of Jihad in all his work. Based on this data, educators in *pesantren* always strive to provide the best and are actively involved in activities that make a positive contribution. For educators in *pesantren*, the values they have gained have provided strong motivation and commitment to their work. Research data also shows that the values have been internalized, as evidenced by concrete accreditation achievements in formal educational institutions within *pesantren*.

Second, sincerity of intention. Research data show that teaching and education staff consistently strive to maintain sincere intent in all their work. In the workplace, data shows that teaching staff tend to reject job offers that are more tempting in terms of material. Educators and education personnel ensure that their main goal is to provide benefits and make positive contributions, not just to seek personal gain. The



value of sincerity helps maintain integrity and enthusiasm at work. Kyai always reminds teachers that responsibilities must be carried out seriously and with integrity, as part of the mandate that must be maintained.

Third, management of responsibility. The research data shows that management of responsibility means managing responsibilities well. In *Pesantrens*, educators and education staff learn not to procrastinate work and always complete assignments competently. The kyais' directions and instructions are immediately carried out without questioning the essence or purpose of the person giving the orders. *Pesantrens* educate educators always to be introspective and to monitor their intentions and actions every day. In *Pesantren*-based work motivation, *Tartib al-Aulawiyat* or priority setting encourages teaching and education staff to manage their responsibilities wisely, ensuring that the most critical and urgent tasks are completed first. By prioritizing Islamic values, they can carry out their duties effectively and efficiently and achieve the predetermined goals.

Fourth, Research shows that educators and administrative staff at *pesantren* consistently strive to remain honest, work with integrity, and fulfill their duties to the best of their ability. This is demonstrated by their acknowledgment of any violations or mistakes and a sense of being watched over by God. The awareness that God is always watching makes them more careful, and they strive to give their best at every opportunity. Interviews indicated that remembering that God is overseeing them encourages them to behave honestly and responsibly and to do their best on every task they are given. The research also shows that teachers' profound reflection is an indicator of self-control that motivates teaching and education staff to rethink every action or activity.

Fifth, Research shows that teaching and educational staff are often involved in social activities, such as social service and helping the local community, which motivates them always to do good and give their best at every opportunity, both inside and outside the *pesantren*. Educators and administrators at *pesantren* focus not only on personal interests but also on the interests of the community and the *pesantren*. They also sacrifice their personal time and resources to help others and demonstrate a deep concern for their well-being. In this case, the self-sacrifice of teaching and educational staff at *pesantren* in fulfilling their responsibilities is not motivated by material rewards.



Thus, teaching and educational staff are ready to sacrifice time, energy, and all resources to achieve the best results in each task, with the sincere intention of worshipping and serving the people.

Pesantren-based forms of work motivation



Figure 1. Pesantren-based forms of work motivation

The research findings are shown in Figure 1, which comprises management of responsibility (*tadbir al-mas'uliyah*), spirit of service (*khidmat ijtimai'iyah*), self-monitoring (*muraqabah al-nafs*), spirit of jihad, and overall sincerity of intention. The findings show that *pesantren*-based work motivation leads to carrying out tasks with sincere intentions for Allah, with high responsibility and intense dedication, reflected in Islamic values that teach sincerity, wise management of responsibilities, self-control, and enthusiasm.

b. Factors Forming Pesantren-Based Work Motivation

The research data, as shown in Table 2, shows that work commitment in *Pesantren* is rooted in the practice of *pesantren* values that go deeper than mere work motivation. The following research data shows that the forms of *Pesantren*-based work motivation consist of.

Table 2. Results data on factors forming pesantren-based work motivation

Interview Data/ Observation	Description	Code
Caretaker of the traditional <i>pesantren</i> "We are often reminded that the proper intention not only motivates them to work hard but also keeps them always aiming higher than worldly results."	Intention is important because it guides the primary goal	Intention to Work (<i>Qasd al-'Amal</i>)



Interview Data/ Observation	Description	Code
Educator of Traditional <i>pesantren</i> "My main intention is to seek Allah's approval and provide helpful knowledge to the students."Salary is not my primary motivation, but how can I educate a generation that is religious and has good morals."	The intention is to seek God's pleasure and not to make material things the focus of work	Intention to Work (<i>Qasd al-'Amal</i>)
Head of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "We always remind teachers and staff not only to focus on individual worship, such as prayer and dhikr but also to be active in social activities and helping others. "This balance is essential to build a harmonious <i>Pesantren</i> environment."	Worship and social responsibility are equally important	Vertical and Horizontal Balance
Dormitory Manager of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "When I feel close to Allah, I am more motivated to work well and sincerely. Apart from that, good relationships with colleagues make the work environment more comfortable and productive."	Relationships with God and coworkers motivate work	Vertical and Horizontal Balance
Administrator of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "Tabarrukan is one of our main motivations. "By teaching at the <i>Pesantren</i> , we hope to get blessings from Allah and the blessings of knowledge taught by previous scholars."	The desire to receive divine blessings and the blessing of knowledge are primary motivations	<i>Tabarrukan</i>
Student of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "By seeking knowledge at the <i>Pesantren</i> and taking blessings from the teachers, I will become a better person, and my knowledge will be more helpful."	Seeking blessings is one path to personal spiritual growth for teachers.	<i>Tabarrukan</i>
Educator of Traditional <i>pesantren</i> "The career development program at the <i>Pesantren</i> is beneficial, especially in terms of improving my teaching and research skills."	Professional development opportunities	Career Sustainability and Job Security
Educator of Traditional <i>pesantren</i> "At <i>Pesantren</i> , we get strong support for professional development. Existing mentoring and training programs help clarify our career paths. This, of course, increases work motivation and a sense of security about the future of the career."	Support for professional development and career clarity increases motivation and a sense of security	Career Sustainability and Job Security
Student of traditional <i>pesantren</i> "Good interpersonal relationships in <i>Pesantrens</i> are beneficial in teamwork and completing tasks. The existence of discussion groups and internal forums really strengthens our relationships and increases work motivation."	Strong interpersonal relationships and collaborative activities enhance teamwork and motivation	Interpersonal Connectedness
Educator of Traditional <i>pesantren</i> "The social and team-building activities held by the <i>Pesantren</i> are	Social activities and team building	Interpersonal Connectedness



Interview Data/ Observation	Description	Code
<p><i>beneficial in building harmonious relationships between us. This directly increases work motivation and team spirit."</i></p> <p>Observation: Cooperation among teachers in providing educational facilities and infrastructure in <i>pesantren</i> fosters a spirit of constructive cooperation</p>	<p>strengthen harmony and increase work motivation</p> <p>Working together on activities strengthens relationships</p>	<p>Interpersonal Connectedness</p>

The results of interviews and observations, as shown in Table 2, show that the application of Islamic principles in work activities at the traditional *pesantren* plays a vital role in shaping the motivation and attitudes of teaching and administrative staff. The data in Table 2 also show the factors that shape *pesantren*-based work motivation, as follows.

First, Intention to Work (Qasd al-'Amal). The research findings, as shown in the data above, indicate that both teaching and educational staff are often reminded of their right intentions, not only motivating them to work hard but also ensuring that their goals are higher than mere worldly results. Educators and educational staff emphasize that their main aim is to seek God's approval and to provide students with practical knowledge. Salary is not the primary motivation; what is more important for teaching staff is to educate a generation that is religious and has good morals. In this regard, the research data also shows that educators and educational staff in *Pesantren* strive to always focus on noble spiritual goals, such as performing good deeds and worshipping Allah SWT. In this case, educators and educational staff in *Pesantren* rely on their work to seek God's pleasure.

Second, Vertical and Horizontal Balance. Research data also shows that teachers and staff are formed with a mindset that not only focuses on individual worship, such as prayer and dhikr, but also on being active in social activities and helping others. The expected duality of focus is based on balance, which is important for building a harmonious *pesantren* environment. Educators and educational staff feel that closeness to Allah increases their motivation to work well and sincerely, and good relationships with colleagues create a more comfortable and productive work environment. Thus, the quality of social interaction needs to be assessed to indicate how well individuals



maintain and improve interactions with colleagues and the community. Likewise, it contributes to creating a harmonious, mutually supportive environment and to effective collaboration and communication.

Third, Tabarrukan. The data above also shows that Tabarrukan is one of the factors that shape the motivation of educators and educational staff in *Pesantren*. Educators and educational staff believe that by seeking knowledge in *Pesantren* and receiving blessings from teachers, they will become better individuals and their knowledge will be more helpful. Thus, the tabarrukan orientation experienced by educators and educational staff in *Pesantren* is carried out without rejecting the kyais' orders and for the sake of the *pesantren's* progress.

The form of tabarrukan orientation carried out by educators and educational staff in *Pesantren* is often considered irrational by outsiders. The hope for blessings through total devotion offered to educators and educational staff is expected to serve as a medium for improvement. The belief in becoming better (*ziyadah al-khair*) among educators and educational staff is reflected in improvements across other dimensions, including health and the family economy. Thus, the behavior and views of educational and teaching staff regarding tabarrukan orientation are among the factors that shape work motivation, along with other factors.

Fourth, career sustainability and job security. The research findings indicate that career development programs provided by *Pesantren* are beneficial for improving teaching and research skills. Ultimately, career development activities organized by *Pesantren* provide benefits, including the development of a typical *Pesantren* work motivation. Similarly, mentoring and training programs help guide professional development. This support significantly increases work motivation and provides a sense of security regarding future careers. In the context of *Pesantren*, the research data indicate that employment contract stability and professional development opportunities are crucial, as they provide job security and training and educational opportunities that significantly influence work motivation by offering a sense of security and career advancement, while also supporting employee engagement.

Fifth, interpersonal connectedness. Research data shows the positive role of interpersonal relationships in *Pesantren*. A sense of comfort and peace of mind for



educators and staff at *Pesantren* is a positive value that motivates their retention. Social and team-building activities organized by *Pesantren* are very effective in building harmonious relationships among employees. These activities directly increase work motivation and team spirit. Responses to conflict and social support are also important because these indicators measure how interpersonal conflicts are resolved through precise resolution mechanisms, as well as the extent to which colleagues and leaders provide emotional and professional support. This approach contributes to the development of work motivation by fostering a harmonious, mutually supportive environment, which is essential in *Pesantren* settings, where strong relationships and social support influence employee morale and involvement in *Pesantren* activities.

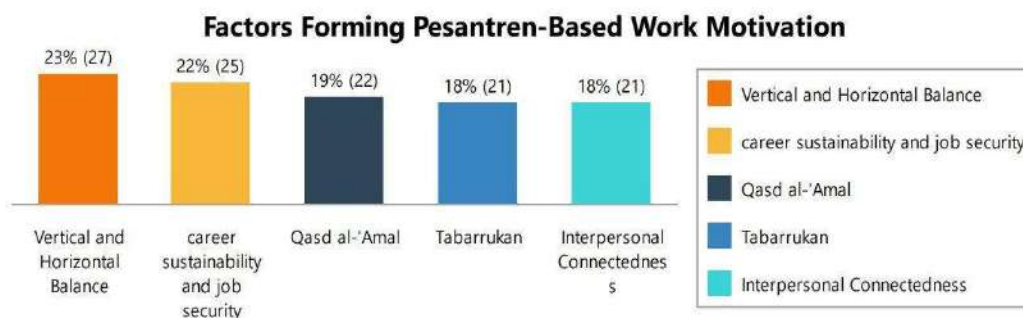


Figure 2. Factors forming pesantren-based work motivation

Based on the data and explanations above, the research findings indicate that the factors that shape *Pesantren*-based work motivation—vertical and horizontal balance, career sustainability and job security, *tabarrukan* (religious work), and interpersonal connectedness play an important role in shaping the commitment and dedication of teaching and education staff. Intention to Work (*qasd al-amal*) demonstrates that a sincere intention to seek Allah’s approval and provide helpful knowledge is the primary motivation, not just worldly results. Likewise, Vertical and Horizontal Balance underscores the importance of balance between individual worship and social activities. *Tabarrukan* (religious work) emphasizes consistency in seeking blessings, reflecting a spiritual dedication to work.

Career sustainability and job security indicate that, although career development programs are beneficial, the support and stability of employment

contracts are equally important for increasing feelings of security and commitment. The final factor shaping *Pesantren*-based motivation is Interpersonal Connectedness. Interpersonal Connectedness highlights the importance of positive relationships and social support in increasing work motivation and effectiveness. The combination of these factors reflects how spiritual orientation and structural support shape the typical work motivation in *Pesantren*.

2. Discussion

The research findings that show that *pesantren*-based work motivation consists of the spirit of jihad, sincerity of intention, management of responsibility (*tadbir al-mas'uliyah*), self-control (*muraqabah al-nafs*), and the spirit of devotion (*khidmat al-ijtimaiyah*) indirectly help explain more deeply how *pesantren*, with their values and teachings, can be a source of intense and sustainable work motivation. The findings also confirm that *pesantren*-based work motivation is realized through the intention to work (*qasd al-amal*), *tabarrukan*, vertical and horizontal balance, career sustainability and job security, and interpersonal connectedness.

The forms of work motivation in *pesantren*, consisting of the spirit of jihad, sincerity of intention, management of responsibility (*tadbir al-mas'uliyah*), self-control (*muraqabah al-nafs*), and the spirit of devotion (*khidmat al-ijtimaiyah*), reflect motives based on deep spiritual values. The concept of jihad in traditional *pesantren* is not interpreted literally. Instead, it reflects a strong commitment and perseverance to work without giving up to achieve a higher goal: devotion to God and society (Mundiri & Sa'adah, 2018; Zaman et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2024). Likewise, encouraging sincere intentions with genuine sincerity actually contributes to deep, sustainable intrinsic motivation (Mundiri, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2025). Teachers in *pesantren* feel that their profession not only demands professional responsibility but also is part of a mandate that is accountable to God (Mundiri, 2016; Mohiyeddini, 2024). This sense of responsibility contributes to the perception of meaningful work and higher engagement. Research also shows that work motivation is not only individual but also social. In this context, religiosity can influence *generative altruism*, the tendency to do good to others as part of moral values imbued with religious beliefs (Özkan et al., 2020; Radino & Mubarak, 2025).



The value system underlying the factors shaping work motivation in *Pesantren* is not a matter of personal preference. Instead, this conception is fostered by the prevailing organizational culture within the *Pesantren*, religious authority relations, and social control, which internalize the motivation that working in a *Pesantren* is part of devotion (Mundiri & Manshur, 2020; Rasyidin et al., 2025). According to Edgar Schein (2002), organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping behavior and motivation (Hofstede, 1986; Miner, 2020; Agusnaya et al., 2024). A culture rooted in deep values and principles can foster a more positive, productive work environment and shape employee character (Sodri & Hasan, 2023; Huda et al., 2025). Thus, *Pesantren* values offer a strong foundation for work motivation that is driven not only by financial incentives but also by deeper meaning and purpose (Morley & Aston, 2023).

The factors that shape *pesantren*-based work motivation, consisting of intention to work (*qasd al-amal*), *tabarrukan* (reward), vertical and horizontal balance, career sustainability and job security, and interpersonal connectedness, reveal the depth of the dynamics of motivation formation that does not originate from material things per se, but rather from principles embodied in spiritual and social values. Intention to work forms a deep foundation for work motivation in *pesantren*. This concept underscores the importance of sincere, genuine intentions before undertaking work. Good intentions based on *qasd al-amal* will encourage someone to strive optimally and give their best in their work (Zou et al., 2024; Darwanto et al., 2024). This is supported by the belief that the work done will bring blessings and the addition of other good things (Farhan & Rofi'ulmuiz, 2021; Mundiri, 2016; Tobroni, 2005).

However, teacher work motivation also stems from the balance between personal life and work. This balance creates space for emotional and spiritual well-being (Abubakar et al., 2025; Zou et al., 2024). Likewise, a sense of security contributes to teacher work motivation in *pesantren*. Job security provides a sense of certainty that allows teachers to focus on self-development and make their best contributions (Zaenurrosyid et al., 2024; Aslam et al., 2022; Kidushin et al., 2021). This is also supported by good relationships between teachers, staff, and students, fostering a healthy climate. Thus, motivation rooted in religious values will foster superior performance and a meaningful work environment.

The description above reaffirms the research findings of Deci and Ryan, which state that motivation that comes from within an individual, such as beliefs and moral



values, is more effective and long-lasting than extrinsic motivation, which is based on material rewards (Muary & Nurwahyu, 2024; Nirmala et al., 2025). Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2020) introduced this theory through their work on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the importance of basic human needs such as autonomy, competence, and social relationships in facilitating intrinsic motivation. In the context of *Pesantren*, values such as sincerity, simplicity, and obedience foster deep, sustained work motivation, aligning with the principles of intrinsic motivation proposed by Deci and Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Hidayatullah & Hidayanto, 2023; Mutammam et al., 2025).

The research findings reaffirm that deeply rooted local values are a source of motivation beyond material goods and money. This finding clearly contradicts the Two Factor Theory developed by Frederick Herzberg (Hollyforde & Whiddett, 2002; Mutesasira & Marongwe, 2024). Herzberg explained that two factors can impact job satisfaction, motivators and hygiene factors. Motivator factors contribute to work motivation and job satisfaction, while hygiene factors contribute to dissatisfaction (Chan & Baum, 2007). Compared to this theory, research findings on motivation in *Pesantren* eliminate the dichotomy between motivators and hygiene factors. In the context of *pesantren*, these two factors become biased boundaries and barriers between the two (Akdemir, 2020; Burga & Damopolii, 2022). Thus, in the context of *pesantren*, motivating factors (spirit of jihad, devotion, and sincere intentions) and hygiene factors (job stability, career security, and social relations) are seen as parts of an inseparable whole.

These findings align with Jones, et al., (2022) broad overview of intrinsic motivation, which states that intrinsic motivation is driven by three main factors, such as autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Pink argues that employees who have the opportunity to develop themselves and feel connected to a greater purpose will be more intrinsically motivated (Pratiwi & Warlizasusi, 2023; Rofifah et al., 2021). This theory of intrinsic motivation holds that motivation arising within a person, driven by beliefs and moral values, tends to be stronger and more lasting than extrinsic motivation, which is driven by material rewards or external recognition.

The research findings also confirm that work commitment, motivated by vertical and horizontal balance, career sustainability, and job security, intention to work (*qasd al-amal*), *tabarrukan*, and interpersonal connectedness, tends to be more



resilient to short-term incentive fluctuations because “*work energy*” is fueled by meaning, purpose, and comfortable and conducive community ties. Thus, the results of this study support the view that Maslow’s linear model of needs often fails to adequately capture motivational dynamics in institutions with strong values (Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, the dynamics that occur in *Pesantren* do not necessarily normalize low compensation. The situation and expectations of equal religious education for the community compel *Pesantren* to accept low compensation and hope for transcendental rewards in the form of inner satisfaction, intellectual enlightenment, and self-realization that transcends material needs (Mundiri, 2016; Purnomo, 2022; Rasyidin et al., 2025).

The findings of this study also show that the factors that shape work motivation are not as simple as those described in Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Zulfikar et al., 2023). The findings of this study indicate that the factors forming *Pesantren*-based work motivation go far beyond short-term satisfaction. The factors that form *pesantren*-based work motivation include vertical and horizontal balance, career sustainability and job security, intention to work (*qasd al-amal*), *tabarrukan*, and interpersonal connectedness. These findings are certainly not in line with Abraham Maslow’s theory, which holds that a person’s motives for working stem from physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Navy, 2020). Work motivation in *pesantren*, such as *tabarrukan*, intention to work (*qasd al-amal*), and vertical and horizontal balance, differs from the hierarchy of needs theory in terms of its forming factors. Educators and educational staff in *pesantren* tend to ignore the first needs in Abraham Maslow’s pyramid of needs. According to educators and educational staff at *pesantren*, the balance of vertical and horizontal motivations serves as a guide to safety in this world and the hereafter (*fi al-dunya hasanah wa fi al-akhirati hasanah*).

The research findings demonstrate a new perspective beyond Maslow’s basic needs framework. Teachers in *pesantren* motivate students by balancing their life needs rather than relying on a single need. This concept of balanced motivation serves as a moral and ethical guide for work and for service to God and others. In this context, the research findings emphasize that work is not merely about achieving material gain, but rather a devotion to God and a form of worship. In *pesantren*, work motivation is driven by religious principles that direct individuals to work with sincere intentions and to engage in social service.



Therefore, the research findings negate the existence of Islamic Work Ethics values as the primary motivator. This motivation emphasizes a deeper meaning in work beyond merely achieving worldly happiness or external recognition.

This contribution expands the theoretical horizon of work motivation studies. The concept of work motivation in *pesantren* provides unique insights into how religious and social values shape behavior, dedication, and overall performance. The Islamic work ethic, which emphasizes selfless service, dedication, and commitment to a higher purpose, could serve as an alternative motivational framework applicable to education and global organizations. The *pesantren*-based work motivation framework offers in-depth insights and alternatives for global organizations facing challenges in employee engagement, work-life balance, and sustainability. The findings of this study on *pesantren*-based work motivation offer a framework for motivation and its shaping factors to create an inclusive, purposeful, and emotionally resilient organization.

Although this study provides an in-depth understanding of work motivation in *pesantren*, it has several limitations: first, it is context-specific and limited to one type of organization. Therefore, generalizing these findings to other organizational contexts requires caution. Second, the qualitative approach used relies on interviews and narratives from selected actors, thus not capturing the full diversity of work motivation practices that may exist across *pesantren* or beyond. Third, this study does not explore in depth how non-Muslim workers or those not involved in *pesantren* respond to this religious value-based motivation. This is crucial for assessing the extent to which this motivational model is accepted and implemented in the broader society. Therefore, future research should consider cross-regional and sectoral explorations to enrich understanding of the social and theological impacts of *pesantren*-based work motivation, and how this approach can be applied in multicultural and multireligious organizations.

D. Conclusion

This study reveals that work motivation in *pesantren* is unique and integrated with religious values, distinguishing it from work motivation in other institutions. This motivation is not solely derived from external factors but guided by educators' and staff's deep conviction in religious values. This motivation encompasses the



management of responsibility (*tadbir al-mas'uliyah*), the spirit of devotion (*khidmat ijtima'iyah*), the spirit of jihad, self-control (*muraqabah al-nafs*), and sincerity of intention. Factors such as vertical and horizontal balance, career sustainability and job security, the intention to work (*qasd al-'amal*), *tabarrukan*, and interpersonal connectedness play a significant role in shaping this motivation. Thus, *pesantren*-based motivation involves not only worldly goals but also spiritual ones.

The main contribution of this research lies in developing a study of *pesantren*-based work motivation by integrating religious and social values as a unique motivational framework. Theoretically, this research enriches academic discourse by offering a work motivation model that combines elements such as responsibility management, devotion, jihad, self-control, and vertical and horizontal balance, which underlie both short- and long-term motivation. This goes beyond existing motivation theories that focus more on material and psychological needs. Practically, these findings guide policymakers, organizational leaders, and educational institutions in designing employee development programs that focus not only on financial incentives but also on integrating moral and spiritual values into work motivation. The novelty of this research lies in positioning *pesantren*-based work motivation as a model that prioritizes spiritual and social goals that can be applied across various global contexts, while still respecting deep-rooted local values.

Future research should focus on studying *pesantren*-based work motivation in *pesantren* where the Muslim community is a minority. This aims to understand the extent to which religious and social value-based motivation models operate in diverse, even challenging, cultural contexts and situations. Comparative studies in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa could also provide deeper insights into the similarities and differences in how Muslim communities integrate religious values into work motivation. Methods such as ethnography or value-based motivation theory could also help analyze how elements such as vertical-horizontal balance and interpersonal connectedness are applied in the evolving contexts of *pesantren*.

This research confirms that *pesantren*-based work motivation is not merely a response to the challenges educators and staff face, but also contributes to a broader understanding of work motivation grounded in Islamic work ethic values. Its emphasis on balancing worldly goals and spirituality offers a model that educational institutions and other organizations worldwide can apply. The key message is that work motivation,



when viewed as part of spiritual and social devotion, becomes more than just material achievement. In this context, it becomes a process that strengthens identity, builds social harmony, and reinforces religion's role as a positive force in organizational life.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial or non-financial interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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