Ethical Management and Employee Experiences in Educational and Correctional Institutions: A Qualitative Comparative Study

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Abstract : This study explores and compares employees' experiences of ethical management, organizational support, workplace demands, and service-oriented behavior in two contrasting institutional settings: Universitas Sari Mulia (UNISM) and Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura. A qualitative comparative design was employed. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with nine purposively selected participants, comprising five employees from UNISM and four from the correctional institution. Interview data were analyzed thematically and compared across cases. The findings indicate that employees interpret ethical management through fairness, integrity, transparency, consistency, and respectful treatment in everyday work. Organizational support takes both social and structural forms, including supervisory guidance, colleague assistance, access to information, coordination, and adequate facilities. Work demands differ by institutional context: participants at UNISM described overlapping academic and administrative tasks, deadlines, and coordination needs, while participants in the correctional institution described operational, security, discipline, and rehabilitation-related demands. Across both settings, participants associated service-oriented behavior with professionalism, accuracy, responsiveness, and respectful communication. The study highlights the importance of understanding ethical management in relation to context-specific demands and the resources available to employees.

Keywords : Ethical Management; Organizational Support; Workplace Demands; Service-Oriented Behavior; Qualitative Comparative Study

Abstrak : *Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dan membandingkan pengalaman pegawai mengenai manajemen etis, dukungan organisasi, tuntutan pekerjaan, dan perilaku berorientasi layanan di Universitas Sari Mulia (UNISM) dan Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura. Penelitian menggunakan desain komparatif kualitatif dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap sembilan informan yang dipilih secara purposif, terdiri atas lima pegawai UNISM dan empat pegawai lembaga pemasyarakatan. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik dan dibandingkan antarkasus. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pegawai memaknai manajemen etis melalui keadilan, integritas, transparansi, konsistensi, dan perlakuan yang menghormati orang lain. Dukungan organisasi mencakup dukungan sosial maupun struktural, seperti arahan atasan, bantuan rekan kerja, akses informasi, koordinasi, dan ketersediaan fasilitas. Tuntutan kerja berbeda sesuai konteks institusi. Informan UNISM*

menyoroti tumpang tindih tugas akademik dan administratif, tenggat waktu, serta kebutuhan koordinasi, sedangkan informan lembaga pemasyarakatan menyoroti tuntutan operasional, keamanan, disiplin, dan rehabilitasi. Pada kedua konteks, perilaku berorientasi layanan dikaitkan dengan profesionalisme, ketepatan, daya tanggap, dan komunikasi yang menghargai penerima layanan. Studi ini menegaskan pentingnya memahami manajemen etis berdasarkan karakteristik tuntutan kerja dan sumber daya yang tersedia

***Kata Kunci** : Manajemen Etis; Dukungan Organisasi; Tuntutan Pekerjaan; Perilaku Berorientasi Layanan; Studi Komparatif Kualitatif*

INTRODUCTION

Previous empirical studies have provided evidence regarding the relationship between ethical management and employee outcomes. For example, ethical leadership was associated with employee well-being and helping behavior, while human resource management practices influenced these relationships. Similarly, research in the hospitality industry found that ethical leadership was negatively associated with ethical ambiguity and job stress, while job stress was negatively associated with the performance quality of customer-contact employees. These findings suggest that ethical managerial behavior may have implications beyond employees' perceptions of morality; it can also be related to the way employees experience stress and perform service-related work. The relationship between ethical leadership and employee well-being has also been linked to organizational support. Cheng et al. (2022), studying employees in the construction industry, found that ethical leadership was positively related to employee well-being and that perceived organizational support (POS) mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and employee well-being. This finding is consistent with the broader Organizational Support perspective developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) and subsequently reviewed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), which explains that employees develop perceptions regarding how much their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Fairness, supervisor support, rewards, and favorable working conditions are among the organizational factors associated with perceived organizational support (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2026).

More recent studies reinforce the importance of ethical management in understanding employee experiences. The internal ethical context of organizations and highlighted the relationship between organizational ethical conditions and employees' subjective well-being. Meanwhile, a 2024 study involving employees and supervisors in Pakistan's information technology sector found that ethical leadership was positively associated with innovative work behavior through psychosocial well-being, while perceived organizational support influenced the conditions under which these relationships occurred. Another 2024 study examining leaders' ethical behavior found evidence that ethical behavior by leaders is relevant to employee well-being through employees' emotional experiences. The ethical dimension of organizational demands is also becoming increasingly important. Wang and Hannah (2025), drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) perspective, found that organizational ethical pressure could become a source of ethical strain and subsequently contribute to psychological and physical health problems. Their findings also indicated that ethical leadership and employees' ethical efficacy could buffer some of these negative effects. Likewise, a 2025 study in the Journal of Business Research found a complex relationship between ethical leadership and employee stress, with the relationship differing according to employees' moral identity internalization. These studies demonstrate that ethical management should not be understood simply as a normative issue but also as part of the organizational conditions that shape employees' psychological and behavioral experiences.

The relevance of this perspective can be further understood through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework. The JD-R model distinguishes between job demands, which require sustained physical or psychological effort, and job resources, which help employees achieve work goals, reduce

job demands, or stimulate personal growth (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2025). Recent developments of the JD-R theory further emphasize that employee well-being and functioning emerge from the interaction between work demands and available resources. Consequently, the same management practice may be experienced differently by employees working in organizations with substantially different job characteristics. This perspective provides a useful lens for examining employee experiences across educational and correctional institutions without assuming that both organizational contexts have identical work demands. The educational context provides an important setting for examining these issues. Universitas Sari Mulia (UNISM), as a higher education institution, involves lecturers and education staff in educational, administrative, research, community service, and stakeholder-oriented activities. UNISM's Strategic Plan records 121 permanent lecturers in the 2022/2023 academic year, consisting of 117 master's degree holders and four doctoral degree holders (unism.ac.id). The institution also systematically evaluates stakeholder satisfaction with its services. At the Faculty of Humanities, for example, the 2024/2025 academic year service survey involved lecturers, education staff, and students and assessed institutional services using a structured satisfaction measurement process (lpm.unism.ac.id). UNISM's quality assurance documentation further shows that its service scope includes education, student affairs, management, finance, information systems, library services, facilities, and human resource management. This illustrates that employee experiences within higher education are connected to a broad service system involving multiple internal and external stakeholders.

A substantially different organizational context can be found in correctional institutions. Correctional officers work within an environment characterized by security responsibilities, rehabilitation, discipline, interpersonal interaction, and the management of potentially complex situations. At the national level, the Directorate General of Corrections reported that in June 2025 the number of inmates and detainees reached 279,537 compared with a capacity of 147,414, representing an overcrowding level of 89.64%. The same report recorded 27,341 security personnel, with a ratio of approximately one officer to 40 inmates across four shifts. The Directorate General of Corrections explicitly noted that such conditions create challenges for correctional activities and increase security and order risks faced by officers (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2025). The context of Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura is particularly relevant because its activities involve not only security but also rehabilitation and service delivery to women inmates. Recent official reports demonstrate that the institution continues to develop educational, psychosocial, health, and empowerment programs. In 2026, for example, the institution collaborated with external organizations to strengthen reproductive health, counseling, and psychosocial assistance for inmates. The institution has also implemented education-equivalency programs and various skills-development activities as part of inmate rehabilitation. At the employee level, the institution has explicitly emphasized integrity, performance, discipline, loyalty, innovation, and contribution through its employee recognition program in April 2026. These activities demonstrate that correctional employees operate in a context where ethical conduct, organizational support, demanding work conditions, and service-oriented behavior may intersect (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2026).

The contrast between these two settings is theoretically meaningful. Employees in higher education may encounter demands related to teaching, administration, research, student interaction, and institutional performance, whereas correctional officers operate in a more restrictive environment involving security, rehabilitation, discipline, and interactions with inmates. Nevertheless, both institutions require employees to perform their responsibilities within organizational rules while maintaining professional and ethical interactions with the people they serve. The difference in job demands and organizational environments raises an important question: How are ethical management practices experienced by employees when the organizational contexts and demands of their work are substantially different?. Although previous studies have established the relevance of ethical leadership and ethical management to employee well-being, job stress, organizational support, and work-related behavior, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing research has predominantly employed quantitative designs, such as surveys and structural equation modeling, to examine relationships among predetermined constructs. Consequently, relatively limited attention has been given to how employees themselves interpret and experience ethical management in their everyday working

environments. Second, previous studies have largely examined ethical management within a single organizational or industry context, making it difficult to understand whether and how employees experience ethical management differently when workplace demands and organizational characteristics vary substantially. Third, although organizational support and job demands have been recognized as important dimensions of employee experience, their interplay with ethical management and service-oriented behavior has received comparatively less qualitative attention.

This gap is particularly relevant when comparing educational and correctional institutions. Employees in higher education and correctional institutions operate under substantially different workplace demands, organizational structures, and service environments. Nevertheless, both contexts require employees to perform their responsibilities ethically while maintaining professional interactions with their respective stakeholders. A comparative qualitative approach can therefore provide insights that cannot be fully captured through quantitative measurement alone, particularly regarding how employees perceive fairness, organizational support, workplace demands, coping, and service-oriented behavior in their respective institutional contexts. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by adopting a qualitative comparative approach to explore employee experiences of ethical management, organizational support, and workplace demands in Universitas Sari Mulia and Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura. Rather than testing causal relationships among variables, the study seeks to understand how employees interpret these organizational experiences and how they perceive their connection with service-oriented behavior. The comparison is expected to reveal both shared and context-specific patterns of employee experience across educational and correctional settings.

Despite growing research on ethical leadership and employee outcomes, much of the literature relies on quantitative designs and examines a single organizational context. Less is known about how employees themselves interpret ethical management in everyday work, especially when comparing institutions with substantially different demands. This study addresses that gap by comparing employee experiences at UNISM and Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura. It asks how employees experience ethical management, how organizational support helps them deal with workplace demands, and how they perceive connections among these experiences and service-oriented behavior.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative comparative design to explore employees' interpretations of ethical management, organizational support, workplace demands, and service-oriented behavior in two institutional settings in South Kalimantan, Indonesia: Universitas Sari Mulia in Banjarmasin and Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura. The sites were purposively selected because they represent different organizational contexts while both rely on employees to provide professional and ethical services. The participants comprised nine employees selected purposively: five from UNISM and four from Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura. Participants were selected because their work experiences were relevant to the study focus. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide covered ethical management, organizational support, workplace demands and employee experiences, and service-oriented behavior. The manuscript indicates that interviews were expected to last approximately 20–30 minutes and were to be recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, or documented through detailed notes when recording was not permitted.

Interview data were analyzed thematically following the six-stage approach described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, initial coding, grouping codes into categories and themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting findings with supporting extracts. The analysis also compared patterns within each institution and across the two cases. The conceptual framework served as a sensitizing lens rather than a fixed coding scheme, allowing additional themes to emerge from participants' accounts. Interview quotations originally provided in Indonesian were translated into English by the researchers while aiming to preserve their meaning and context. To support trustworthiness, the research process documented transcripts, codes, categories, and theme development; compared accounts across participants and cases; and grounded interpretations in participants' statements. Participants were represented using codes to protect their identities. Institutional access and voluntary participation were treated as ethical considerations.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

The thematic analysis produced four connected areas: (1) ethical values and consistency in their implementation, (2) interpersonal and structural organizational support, (3) workplace demands and coping strategies, and (4) work experiences and service-oriented behavior. Cross-case comparison revealed shared concerns as well as context-specific differences.

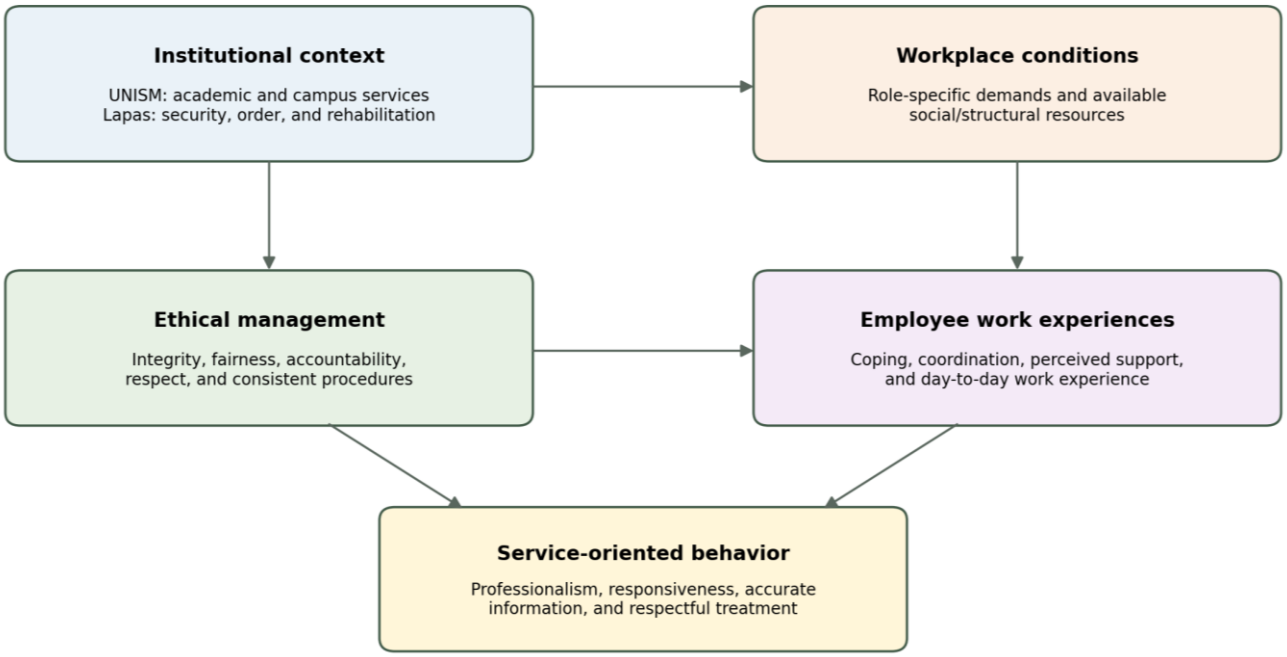
Table 1. Cross-Case Comparison of Employee Experiences

Analytical domain	Universitas Sari Mulia (UNISM)	Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura	Shared interpretation
Ethical management	Academic responsibility, objective assessment, confidentiality, task allocation, and professional interactions.	Integrity, discipline, responsible use of authority, procedural compliance, and fair treatment of incarcerated women.	Ethical values become visible through consistent everyday decisions and interactions.
Organizational support	Guidance and collegial help, coordination across units, access to information, systems, and facilities; needs vary by role.	Team support, supervisory guidance, coordination, facilities, and competency development.	Both social and structural resources matter; interpersonal support cannot always replace unclear systems or limited facilities.
Workplace demands	Teaching, supervision, research, community service, reporting, document processing, and simultaneous service requests.	Security, order maintenance, operational duties, rehabilitation programs, and changing situations.	Demands are role- and context-dependent; the data do not establish that one institution has uniformly heavier workloads.
Service-oriented behavior	Accurate administration, timely responses, clear information, professionalism, and comfortable campus facilities.	Professional service shaped by security, order, and rehabilitation responsibilities.	Service is context-specific but depends on responsibility, coordination, clarity, and adequate resources.

Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2026)

To synthesize the cross-case findings, Figure 1 presents an interpretive thematic relationship map illustrating how ethical management, organizational support, and workplace demands relate to employees' reported service-oriented behavior across the two institutional contexts. The map represents an interpretation of participants' accounts rather than a tested causal model.

Figure 1. Interpretive Thematic Relationship Map



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the interview data (2026)

Ethical values and consistency. Participants in both institutions associated ethical conduct with integrity, responsibility, discipline, respect, and compliance with rules. At UNISM, these principles were reflected in academic responsibilities, objective assessment, confidentiality of student information, task allocation, and professional interactions. In the correctional institution, participants emphasized integrity, discipline, responsible use of authority, compliance with procedures, and fair treatment of incarcerated women. The common principles were similar, but their practical expression reflected the nature of each institution's work. The accounts also suggested that the presence of formal rules did not automatically ensure consistent experiences of fairness and transparency. UNISM participants described situations in which information across units was communicated in stages and decisions could benefit from clearer documentation and employee involvement. In the correctional setting, participants raised concerns about consistency in discipline and rule enforcement. These findings suggest that employees experience ethical management through the practical implementation of rules and decisions, not only through formal statements of organizational values (Andersson & Ekelund, 2022; Asencio, 2022; Brown et al., 2005; Cakir et al., 2023; Shakeel et al., 2020).

Organizational support. Support was experienced in both social and structural forms. Social support included guidance from supervisors, help from colleagues, communication, and appreciation. Structural support included clear procedures, access to current information, effective coordination, functioning systems, equipment, and other facilities. At UNISM, the support needs of lecturers, administrative staff, and operational staff differed according to their responsibilities. In the correctional institution, participants emphasized team support, supervisors' guidance, coordination, facilities, and competency development. Interpersonal support helped employees manage demanding situations but could not always compensate for inadequate systems, unclear procedures, or limited facilities (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Hong et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2024). Workplace demands. The demands described by participants were context-dependent and varied even among employees within the same institution. At UNISM, lecturers described the combination of teaching, student supervision, research, community service, and administrative reporting. Administrative staff highlighted document processing, simultaneous service requests, coordination, and time-sensitive tasks. Participants in the correctional institution described demands related to security, maintaining order, operational duties, rehabilitation programs, and responding to changing situations. The accounts do not support a

conclusion that one institution uniformly experiences heavier workloads; instead, they show that the nature and perceived intensity of demands depend on job roles and working conditions.

The Job Demands–Resources perspective helps interpret these findings: demands may be easier to manage when employees have resources such as clear instructions, supportive colleagues, accessible information, functional equipment, and effective coordination (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2024). Participants at UNISM described prioritizing tasks, breaking work into smaller steps, recording deadlines, checking documents, and coordinating with colleagues. These coping practices were reported experiences rather than objectively measured indicators of performance. Service-oriented behavior. In both institutions, participants associated service-oriented behavior with responsibility, professionalism, responsiveness, accurate information, and respectful communication. At UNISM, service quality was linked to clear procedures, accurate administrative processing, timely responses, and the readiness and comfort of campus facilities. In the correctional institution, service-oriented behavior was shaped by correctional responsibilities, security and order, and rehabilitation-related interactions. These forms of service are not identical, but participants in both settings connected their ability to provide appropriate services with clarity of work processes, coordination, and adequate resources (Conteh & Yuan, 2022; Rabiul et al., 2022).

Cross-case synthesis and discussion. The comparison identified three shared patterns: the importance of fair treatment and clear communication; the value of both social and structural support; and the perceived connection between working conditions and service delivery. Differences mainly concerned the nature of work demands and the forms of support employees needed. These findings are consistent with the view that ethical leadership is enacted through everyday decisions and interactions (Andersson & Ekelund, 2022; Brown et al., 2005; Shakeel et al., 2020), while perceived organizational support concerns employees' sense that their contributions are valued and their well-being matters (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 2020; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Hong et al., 2024). The JD-R framework further clarifies why organizational resources should be understood in relation to specific work demands rather than as a uniform package (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2024). The study's contribution is contextual rather than causal. It does not test statistical relationships or objectively measure service performance. Instead, it shows how employees describe the interrelationships among ethical management, organizational support, workplace demands, and service-oriented behavior in two distinct organizational settings. The findings should therefore be interpreted as reported experiences of the nine participants, not as estimates that represent all employees in either institution.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined employees' experiences of ethical management, organisational support, workplace demands, and service-oriented behaviour at Universitas Sari Mulia (UNISM) and Lapas Perempuan Kelas IIA Martapura. Based on interviews with nine participants, comprising five employees from UNISM and four from the correctional institution, the findings revealed shared concerns and context-specific differences across the two settings. Ethical management was reflected in perceptions of integrity, fairness, accountability, transparency, and consistency in decision-making, although its implementation was not experienced uniformly. Organisational support included supervisory guidance, teamwork, effective coordination, access to information, clear work instructions, adequate facilities, and competency development. Workplace demands differed according to institutional responsibilities, with UNISM employees reporting overlapping academic and administrative tasks, while correctional employees emphasised security responsibilities, urgent assignments, and maintaining order. Across both institutions, clear priorities, consistent communication, supportive working relationships, and adequate resources were perceived as helpful in managing work demands and maintaining service-oriented behaviour. The findings indicate that these four dimensions are interconnected in employees' accounts, although the study does not establish causal relationships. Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrates how institutional responsibilities shape employees' experiences of ethical practices, organisational support, and service-related work.

Future research should involve more participants and a wider range of educational and correctional institutions to examine whether these patterns extend to other organisational settings.

Combining interviews with workplace observations and service-recipient perspectives could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how employees' reported experiences correspond with everyday practices and service delivery. For practitioners and institutional leaders, the findings suggest the need to strengthen transparency and documentation in decision-making, communicate work instructions consistently, clarify task allocation, improve coordination, and provide facilities and resources appropriate to employees' responsibilities. Support mechanisms should be adapted to the operational demands of each institution rather than applied uniformly across different organisational contexts. At the policy level, institutional guidelines should promote consistent ethical practices, clear accountability procedures, manageable work distribution, and context-sensitive employee support. These measures may help create working environments that enable employees to manage their responsibilities effectively and sustain service-oriented behaviour, while their effectiveness should be assessed through further empirical evaluation.

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