

Employee Professionalism in Maintaining Work Discipline as an Effort to Improve Performance at the Bureau of General Administration, Finance, and Human Resources Muhammadiyah University of Makassar

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and analyze employee professionalism in maintaining work discipline as an effort to improve performance at the Bureau of General Administration, Finance, and Human Resources, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. This study used a qualitative phenomenological approach. Research informants were selected through purposive sampling and consisted of leaders and employees. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis followed the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification, and data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The results show that employee professionalism is reflected in responsibility, service commitment, teamwork, and task completion according to established standards. Work discipline is demonstrated through compliance with regulations, punctuality, and adherence to work procedures. Performance improvement is supported through employee development, competency enhancement, improved work processes, and the implementation of clear operational standards. Professionalism and strong work discipline have been proven to support the effectiveness and efficiency of work execution, thereby contributing to improved employee performance.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations operating in both the public and private sectors require human resources with high levels of work discipline. Work discipline is not only understood as adherence to formal rules but also encompasses a consistent attitude, responsibility, and professionalism in carrying out daily tasks. Work discipline plays a crucial role in increasing organizational effectiveness, particularly in the public service sector, as it is closely related to the regularity, reliability, and stability of employee performance (Luthfi et al., 2022). Professionalism is a key factor in achieving optimal organizational performance, particularly in higher education

institutions, as professional employees not only possess the competencies and skills relevant to their fields but also demonstrate responsibility, a strong work ethic, and discipline in carrying out their assigned tasks.

The Bureau of General Administration, Finance, and Resources (BAUKS) of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar plays a strategic role in supporting the smooth running of the university's academic and non-academic functions. However, in carrying out its functions, this bureau is not free from challenges related to employee work behavior, discipline, and professionalism, such as delays, non-conformity of task implementation with procedures, and lack of initiative in improving work quality. The implementation of international quality management standards (ISO) in this unit requires high competence and integrity so that every procedure can be carried out according to organizational targets, so that work discipline becomes a control instrument that ensures that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are implemented consistently and on time. Without strong discipline, ISO certification will only be an administrative symbol without a real impact on daily work effectiveness.

Administrative bureaucracy is one of the main pillars supporting the academic function and good governance of higher education institutions (Bintang et al., 2021). The quality of administrative bureaucracy in higher education institutions is greatly influenced by the level of discipline of its employees, as slow or inaccurate service is often rooted in indiscipline such as absenteeism, tardiness, or lack of attention to work procedures. However, the reality on the ground shows variations in the level of discipline among administrative bureau employees. Ningsih et al. (2022) emphasized that work discipline does have a positive effect on employee performance, but its implementation is often hampered by weak supervision and a lack of individual motivation. Therefore, work discipline is a complex factor influenced by the interaction between individuals, the organization, and work culture.

Several previous studies have confirmed a significant influence between professionalism, work discipline, and employee performance. Pongoh et al. (2021) showed that professionalism has a positive and significant effect on employee performance; Feel et al. (2018) found work discipline to be the dominant factor influencing employee performance; Kristanti (2019) confirmed the contribution of discipline and motivation to the performance of production employees; while Kristina et al. (2025), Sumarni et al. (2024), and Tashliyev and Tirtoprojo (2023) emphasized the importance of professionalism and work discipline on productivity in higher education environments. However, most of these studies are quantitative and emphasize the relationship between variables through regression tests, t-tests, or reliability tests, rather than on employees' subjective interpretations. Research by Nasir et al. (2020), Emiyanti et al. (2023), Amin (2022), Khoiri et al. (2022), and Pristiani (2024) are also still limited to certain contexts, variables, or locations and have not specifically examined professionalism as a foundation for implementing work discipline in strategic administrative units in private universities, especially in the Eastern Indonesia region.

This research gap emphasizes the need for an in-depth study of individual professionalism in implementing work discipline through a qualitative approach, which allows researchers to explore the meaning of work discipline from the perspective of the employees themselves. Theoretically, work discipline is understood as the level of individual compliance with organizational regulations, norms, and procedures, including timeliness, adherence to procedures, quality of professional behavior, and initiative and consistency in completing tasks (Hasibuan, 2020; Rivai, 2020). Meanwhile, employee performance is understood as the level of achievement of an individual in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, which includes the quantity and quality of work, punctuality, discipline, cooperation, and service orientation (Mangkunegara, 2017).

Based on the description, this study aims to: (1) understand the professionalism of BAUKS employees at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar in implementing daily work discipline; (2) analyze the implementation of employee work discipline which includes compliance with work rules, attendance, implementation of tasks, and enforcement of sanctions; and (3) analyze the role of employee professionalism in implementing work discipline as an effort to improve performance within the bureau. This study is expected to enrich the human resource management literature on work discipline in higher education with a qualitative perspective that is still rarely used, while also providing practical input for university leaders in formulating more effective and contextual disciplinary policies.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological approach through field research. This approach was chosen because it aligned with the research objective, which was to understand the meaning and subjective perspectives of employees in implementing work discipline as part of an effort to improve performance. Phenomenology allows researchers to explore the lived experiences of participants in depth, including how they interpret rules, adapt to organizational demands, and the strategies and challenges they face in maintaining work discipline (Badil et al., 2023; Daruhadi, 2024). Data analysis was inductive, where themes emerged from the data and emphasized contextual meaning over statistical generalizations.

The research was conducted at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, Jl. Sultan Alauddin No. 259, Makassar City, South Sulawesi, for three months. The research informants were determined using purposive sampling based on their knowledge and direct involvement in the phenomenon under study (Sugiyono, 2021). The five informants were selected as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research informants

No	Initials	Position	Length of work
1	SN	Director of BAUKS	20 years
2	AMY	Head of Verification Section	5 years
3	MA	Treasurer	5 years
4	ANO	Finance Staff	5 years
5	BM	Human Resources Staff	Honorary

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, direct observation of employee behavior and work interactions, and documentation in the form of disciplinary regulations, attendance data, and bureau policy documents. Data analysis followed the stages of data collection and verification, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (Sugiyono, 2021). Data validity was tested through source and technique triangulation, member checking, extended participation, observation diligence, and audit trails to ensure the research findings were credible and accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employee Professionalism in Carrying Out Work Discipline

The results of the study indicate that the professionalism of BAUKS employees at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar is reflected through compliance with work rules, implementation of superior instructions, and responsibility in completing work. The financial staff (ANO) stated that “employees must have a good understanding of the applicable rules or policies related to their respective fields,” while the Treasurer (MA) emphasized the importance of “being committed to complying with work rules to superiors and colleagues.” In implementing superior instructions, employees prepare detailed work plans as work guidelines, and the timeliness of task completion is evaluated periodically; for example, the budget disbursement process is carried out twice a month with a strict deadline, and delays are a direct indicator of low employee punctuality.

These findings indicate that professionalism is not only related to technical skills, but also responsibility, work ethics, and discipline in carrying out tasks. These results align with Kristina et al. (2025) who stated that professionalism and work discipline are closely related in supporting work productivity, and support the findings of Tashliyev and Tirtoprojo (2023) who stated that employee professionalism in complying with work regulations is a crucial factor in the effectiveness of work implementation in higher education environments.

Implementation of Employee Work Discipline

The implementation of work discipline at BAUKS is realized through monitoring attendance levels, carrying out tasks according to procedures, and implementing sanctions. The Head of the Verification Section (AMY) explained that employee attendance is summarized every month through an attendance system (fingerprint and application), which is

the main reference for disciplinary assessments considering the relatively small number of employees so that it is easy to monitor directly by management. The Human Resources Staff (BM) added that the implementation of tasks according to procedures is maintained through direct supervision and training, while the Director of BAUKS (SN) explained the mechanism for enforcing sanctions in stages: notification to the employee concerned, withholding salary if violations continue, a letter of warning, and termination of employment if the warning is not heeded.

These findings align with those of Feel et al. (2018), who demonstrated that work discipline is a dominant factor influencing employee performance, and Kristanti (2019), who emphasized that compliance with regulations, punctuality, and work responsibility significantly contribute to improved performance. These findings also reinforce those of Sumarni et al. (2024), who found work discipline to be a crucial factor supporting optimal performance in higher education settings, and Agussalim and Mappatempo (2019), who found work discipline to be a dominant factor in improving employee performance.

The Role of Professionalism in Performance Improvement

Employee professionalism plays a crucial role in improving performance through regular evaluation and supervision, enhancing work effectiveness and efficiency, and increasing productivity. Evaluations are conducted periodically to monitor service quality and identify improvements to work processes, as ANO stated that evaluations are used “to identify process improvements that can be made to support employees in providing better service.” Work effectiveness and efficiency are enhanced through competency development, streamlining procedures, and implementing clear operational standards, while employee productivity is supported by the ability to set clear work priorities and objectives.

These findings are consistent with Pongoh et al. (2021) who stated that professionalism positively influences employee performance through competence, responsibility, and a positive work attitude. These results also support Kristina et al. (2025) who stated that professionalism and work discipline are important factors in increasing productivity, and Tashliyev and Tirtoprojo (2023) who explained that professionalism in adapting to organizational demands contributes to work effectiveness in higher education environments. Overall, professionalism manifested through work discipline, responsibility, and commitment to work is an important foundation for achieving optimal organizational performance in higher education administrative bureaus.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that the professionalism of BAUKS employees at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar in implementing work discipline is reflected through compliance with work rules, responsible implementation of superior instructions, and punctuality in completing work according to the set targets. The implementation of work discipline is realized through attendance monitoring, carrying out tasks according to procedures, and

gradual enforcement of sanctions, which play a role in creating work order and supporting the smooth implementation of daily tasks. Employee professionalism in implementing work discipline has also been proven to play a significant role in improving performance through periodic evaluations, increasing work effectiveness and efficiency, and increasing employee productivity.

This study is limited by its relatively small sample size and the specific location context of one work unit, making the findings difficult to generalize widely. Based on these findings, it is recommended that BAUKS leadership continue to improve employee competency development and coaching through ongoing training and evaluation, maintain consistent and objective disciplinary oversight, and refine standard operating procedures to support more effective and efficient administrative services. Future research is expected to expand the sample size or use different approaches to deepen understanding of the factors influencing employee performance in higher education environments.

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