

Effects Emotional Intelligence, Employee Empowerment on Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Work Ethic among Bank Mandiri Employees in Pematangsiantar

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationships among emotional intelligence, employee empowerment, work ethic, and job satisfaction among employees of PT Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk Cluster Pematangsiantar. A quantitative approach was employed involving 41 permanent employees, with data collected through questionnaires and analyzed using path analysis. The results show that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant effect on work ethic, while employee empowerment also has a positive and significant effect on work ethic. Work ethic, in turn, has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. These findings indicate that employees' emotional capabilities and empowerment practices contribute to stronger work ethic and job satisfaction. The study recommends strengthening emotional intelligence development and providing employees with appropriate trust, authority, and responsibility. Future research should use larger samples and formally test the indirect effects of work ethic to further examine its proposed mediating role

INTRODUCTION

Human resources play a pivotal role in organizational effectiveness, particularly in service-oriented industries where employees interact directly with customers. This is especially relevant in the banking sector, where employees are expected to manage demanding workloads, maintain professional relationships, respond effectively to customers, and consistently deliver high-quality services. Within this context, job satisfaction represents an important employee outcome because employees' evaluations and experiences of their work may shape their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace.

Emotional intelligence is an important individual capability associated with employees' work-related attitudes. It reflects individuals' ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively use emotions when dealing with themselves and others. Employees with higher emotional intelligence may be better equipped to regulate negative emotions, cope with workplace challenges, understand colleagues and customers, and maintain constructive interpersonal relationships. Meta-analytic evidence demonstrates that emotional intelligence is positively associated with job satisfaction and other favorable work attitudes (Miao et al., 2017). Furthermore, emotional intelligence may influence job satisfaction through underlying psychological and work-related mechanisms rather than solely through a direct relationship. (Gong et al., 2020), for instance, demonstrated that psychological empowerment and work engagement play mediating roles in the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

In addition to individual emotional capabilities, organizational practices that empower employees may shape how employees perceive and perform their work. Employee empowerment involves providing employees with opportunities to exercise authority, assume responsibility, participate in work-related decisions, and utilize their capabilities in accomplishing organizational tasks. Empowered employees are more likely to experience greater control and responsibility over their work, which can subsequently influence their work attitudes and experiences. Previous research in banking settings has indicated that employee empowerment is positively associated with job satisfaction and other favorable employee outcomes (Ahmed et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the relationships among emotional intelligence, employee empowerment, and job satisfaction may not operate exclusively through direct mechanisms. Previous studies have investigated psychological empowerment, work engagement, positive affect, job performance, and other work-related mechanisms in explaining how emotional intelligence contributes to employees' work attitudes (Miao et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2020). Comparatively less attention has been devoted to work ethic as an intervening mechanism, particularly when emotional intelligence and employee empowerment are considered simultaneously as antecedents. Examining this mechanism is important because work ethic represents employees' fundamental orientation toward work and is reflected in professionalism, responsibility, discipline, interpersonal conduct, career orientation, and leadership-related attitudes.

Work ethic may provide a conceptual bridge between employees' personal emotional capabilities, the empowerment they experience within the organization, and their subsequent satisfaction with work. Employees who are capable of regulating emotions, maintaining motivation, demonstrating empathy, and developing constructive social relationships may be more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their work. Likewise, employees who receive trust, authority, and responsibility may develop a stronger sense of accountability and professional commitment. In turn, a stronger work ethic may contribute to more favorable evaluations of work and greater job satisfaction. Evidence from the Indonesian banking context also indicates a positive association between work ethics and job satisfaction (Astuti, 2024). However, the mediating role of work ethic in connecting emotional intelligence and employee empowerment with job satisfaction remains insufficiently examined, particularly within conventional banking settings in Indonesia.

This issue is particularly relevant to PT Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk Cluster Pematangsiantar. Preliminary observations documented in the original study indicated that several aspects of employee job satisfaction had not reached the expected level. Challenges were identified in social interactions among employees and with supervisors, as well as in physical work-related conditions. The study also identified issues related to professionalism and workplace social relationships within work ethic, emotional regulation and empathy within emotional intelligence, and authority and responsibility within employee empowerment. These organizational conditions provide a relevant empirical setting for investigating how employees' emotional capabilities and empowerment are associated with their work ethic and, subsequently, their job satisfaction.

Accordingly, this study examines the effects of emotional intelligence and employee empowerment on job satisfaction through work ethic among employees of PT Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk Cluster Pematangsiantar. Specifically, the research model positions emotional intelligence and employee empowerment as antecedents of work ethic and work ethic as an antecedent of job satisfaction, consistent with the path model employed in the original research. By integrating an individual-level capability (emotional intelligence) and an organizational factor (employee empowerment) through work ethic, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the mechanisms associated with employee job satisfaction.

This study contributes to the literature in two respects. First, it extends existing research on emotional intelligence, employee empowerment, and job satisfaction by examining work ethic as an intervening mechanism, thereby complementing previous studies that have emphasized psychological empowerment and work engagement as mediating mechanisms. Second, the study provides empirical evidence from employees working within a conventional banking cluster in Indonesia, offering a context-specific perspective that may enrich the broader literature on employee attitudes and human resource management. Thus, the central research question addressed in this study is: To what extent do emotional intelligence and employee empowerment influence job

satisfaction through work ethic among employees of PT Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk Cluster Pematangsiantar?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence and Work Ethic

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and manage emotions effectively. In the workplace, emotional intelligence enables employees to manage their emotional responses, understand others, maintain interpersonal relationships, and remain motivated when facing work-related challenges. The theoretical framework of this study identifies self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills as important dimensions of emotional intelligence. Employees with good emotional intelligence are expected to demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors toward their work.

The ability to regulate emotions, maintain motivation, and interact effectively with others can support professionalism, responsibility, and constructive work behavior. International research has shown that emotional intelligence is associated with positive work attitudes and behaviors, particularly through employees' ability to manage emotions and respond effectively to workplace situations (Choi et al., 2011; Connor et al., 2019).

Building on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the present study proposes that employees with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to demonstrate a stronger work ethic.

H1: Emotional intelligence has a positive effect on work ethic.

Employee Empowerment and Work Ethic

Employee empowerment refers to the process of providing employees with greater opportunities to exercise autonomy, authority, and responsibility in performing their work. Empowerment enables employees to have greater control over their work and to utilize their capabilities in achieving organizational objectives. In this study, employee empowerment is represented by trust, authority, and responsibility, consistent with the conceptualization used in the original research.

Empowered employees may develop a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility toward their work. Greater authority and opportunities to influence work-related decisions can encourage employees to take initiative and demonstrate constructive work behaviors. Previous research has shown that employee empowerment can influence positive employee behaviors (Knol & Linge, 2009). Furthermore, (Masykuri et al., 2020) examined the relationship between employee empowerment and work ethic, providing empirical evidence for the relevance of this relationship in organizational settings.

H2: Employee empowerment has a positive effect on work ethic.

Work Ethic and Job Satisfaction

Work ethic represents a set of positive attitudes and behaviors toward work. It is reflected in employees' professionalism, responsibility, discipline, commitment, and orientation toward achieving optimal work results. The theoretical discussion in the thesis emphasizes that a positive work ethic can support professionalism, career development, interpersonal relationships, and

leadership. Employees who possess a strong work ethic may perceive their work more positively because they are able to perform their responsibilities with commitment and professionalism.

international research has demonstrated a positive relationship between work ethic and job satisfaction. (Al-Nashash et al., 2018) found that work ethics were significantly associated with job satisfaction among employees in Jordanian banks. Similarly, (Gheitani et al., 2018) found a positive and significant relationship between Islamic work ethic and job satisfaction among employees in the banking sector.

H3: Work ethic has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

The Mediating Role of Work Ethic

The preceding relationships provide a basis for positioning work ethic as an intervening variable. Emotional intelligence enables employees to regulate their emotions, maintain constructive interpersonal relationships, and respond effectively to workplace demands. These capabilities may foster positive work attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, employee empowerment provides employees with greater opportunities to exercise responsibility and contribute to work-related decisions, potentially strengthening their ownership of work. In turn, a stronger work ethic may contribute to greater job satisfaction.

Recent evidence from the banking sector identifies work ethic as one of the important determinants of bank employees' job satisfaction (Nantavisit et al., 2023). The present study therefore positions work ethic as an intervening variable linking emotional intelligence and employee empowerment to job satisfaction. This structure follows the path-analysis model specified in the original research

H4: Work ethic mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

H5: Work ethic mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and job satisfaction.

Conceptual Research Model

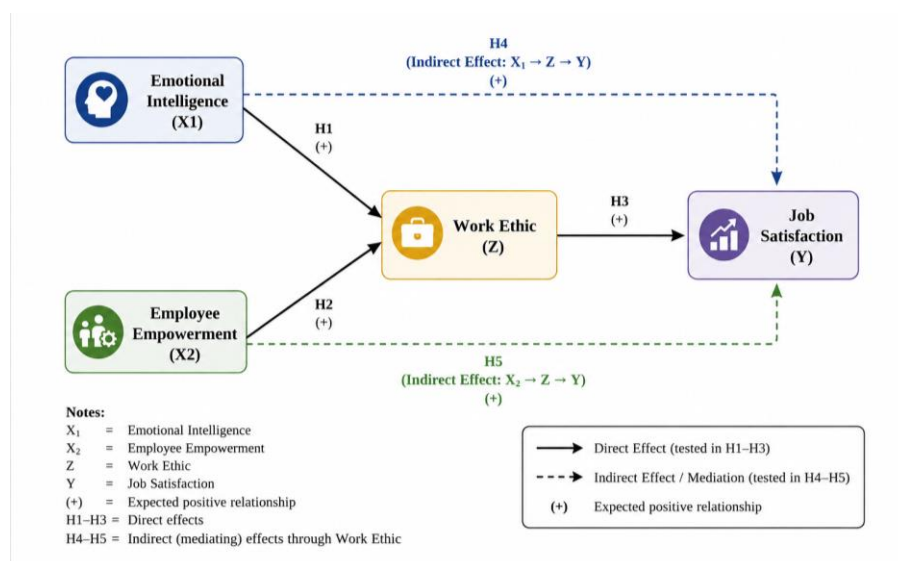


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, employee empowerment, work ethic, and job satisfaction among employees of PT Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk Cluster Pematangsiantar. The study involved 41 permanent employees, who were all included as respondents using a census sampling technique. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data were obtained through documentation and literature review. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale.

Emotional intelligence was measured through self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Employee empowerment was measured through trust, authority, and responsibility. Work ethic was assessed through professionalism, discipline, work quality, career orientation, social interaction, and leadership, while job satisfaction was measured through psychological, social, physical, and supervisory factors.

The research instrument was evaluated for validity and reliability before the main analysis. A preliminary test was conducted with 30 non-permanent employees. Item validity was assessed using item-total correlations, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. Data normality was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The hypotheses were tested using path analysis to examine the direct and indirect relationships among the variables. Path analysis allows the estimation of direct and indirect effects within a theoretically specified causal model (Kline, 2023). The structural model consisted of two equations: $Z = pZX_1X_1 + pZX_2X_2 + \varepsilon_1$ and $Y = pYX_1X_1 + pYX_2X_2 + pYZZ + \varepsilon_2$, where X_1 represents emotional intelligence, X_2 represents employee empowerment, Z represents work ethic, and Y represents job satisfaction. The indirect effects were examined to determine the intervening role of work ethic

RESULT

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 41 permanent employees of PT Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk Cluster Pematangsiantar. Most respondents held a bachelor's degree, while the majority had a tenure of up to 10 years. The distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Education	Bachelor's degree	30	73.17
Tenure	≤10 years	24	58.54
	11–20 years	12	29.27
	21–30 years	5	12.20
Total		41	100.00

Descriptive Results

The descriptive analysis provides an overview of employees' perceptions of emotional intelligence and work ethic. As shown in Table 2, emotional intelligence obtained a mean score of **3.60**, while work ethic obtained a mean score of **3.53**. These results indicate that respondents generally reported relatively favorable levels of emotional intelligence and work ethic. The slightly higher mean for emotional intelligence suggests that employees perceived their ability to recognize and manage emotions somewhat more favorably than their overall orientation toward work. However, the difference between the two mean scores is relatively small, indicating broadly comparable perceptions across the two constructs.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean
Emotional Intelligence	3.60
Work Ethic	3.53

Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The path analysis showed that emotional intelligence and employee empowerment were positively associated with work ethic. The combined model produced $R = .850$ and $R^2 = .723$, indicating that emotional intelligence and employee empowerment jointly explained 72.3% of the variance in work ethic. The individual effects and hypothesis decisions are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t	p	Decision
H1	Emotional Intelligence → Work Ethic	0.387	7.058	< .001	Supported
H2	Employee Empowerment → Work Ethic	0.541	8.322	< .001	Supported
H3	Work Ethic → Job Satisfaction	0.749	11.083	< .001	Supported

The results indicate that emotional intelligence significantly and positively influenced work ethic, while employee empowerment also had a significant positive effect on work ethic. Work ethic subsequently showed a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. Thus, H1, H2, and H3 were supported. The relationship between emotional intelligence and work ethic was strong ($R = .749$; $R^2 = .561$), while the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and employee empowerment to work ethic was substantial ($R^2 = .723$).

Mediation Model of Work Ethic

The proposed mediation model indicates that work ethic provides a potential mechanism linking emotional intelligence and employee empowerment to job satisfaction. The results show that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant effect on work ethic ($\beta = .387$, $t = 7.058$, $p < .001$),

while employee empowerment also has a positive and significant effect on work ethic ($\beta = .541, t = 8.322, p < .001$). In turn, work ethic has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = .749, t = 11.083, p < .001$). Taken together, these significant relationships are consistent with the proposed mediation structure in Figure 2. However, because the available analysis does not report a separate statistical test of the indirect effects, the results should be interpreted as supporting evidence for the proposed mediation mechanism, rather than as definitive statistical confirmation of H4 and H5.

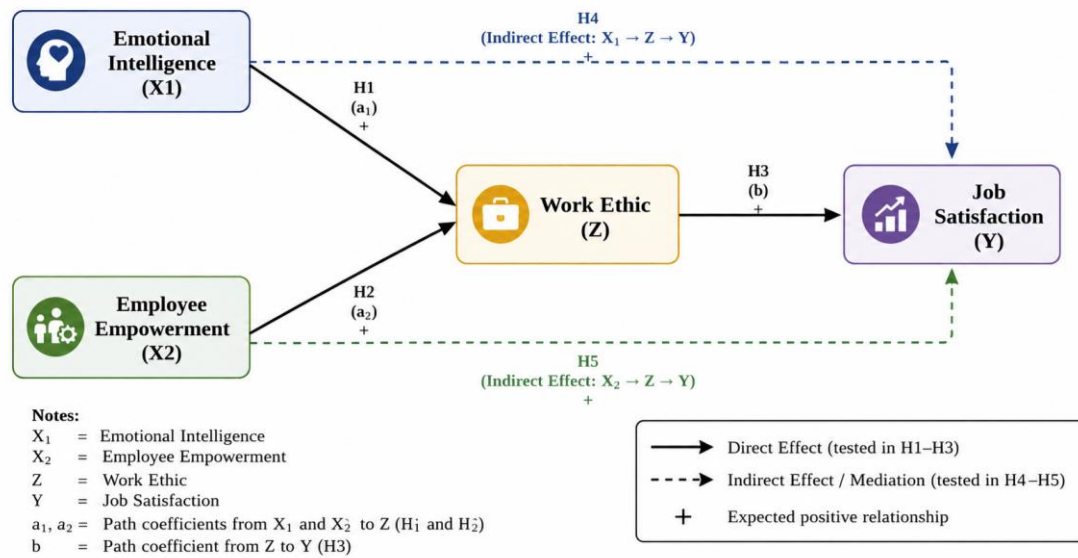


Figure 2. Mediation Model of Work Ethic

DISCUSSION

Emotional Intelligence and Work Ethic

The findings support H1, indicating that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant effect on work ethic ($\beta = .387, t = 7.058, p < .001$). This finding suggests that employees who are better able to recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions are more likely to demonstrate constructive attitudes toward their responsibilities and workplace interactions. In the banking sector, these capabilities are particularly relevant because employees must manage customer interactions, work pressure, and interpersonal demands while maintaining professional behavior.

This finding is consistent with evidence that emotional intelligence can influence important workplace behaviors. (Sadovyy et al., 2021), using data from 1,048 professionals across multiple occupations, found that emotional intelligence played an important role in the relationship between work-related stress, work performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Their findings indicate that emotional capabilities can help employees respond more adaptively to workplace demands.

The present study extends this perspective by showing that emotional intelligence is also positively associated with work ethic. Employees who can regulate their emotional responses may be better able to maintain discipline, responsibility, professionalism, and constructive interactions. Thus, emotional

intelligence may contribute not only to how employees perform their work but also to how they approach and value their work.

Employee Empowerment and Work Ethic

The findings support H2, demonstrating that employee empowerment has a positive and significant effect on work ethic ($\beta = .541$, $t = 8.322$, $p < .001$). The relatively larger coefficient compared with emotional intelligence suggests that empowerment may be particularly important in shaping employees' work ethic within the organizational context examined. Empowerment gives employees greater opportunities to exercise authority, responsibility, and initiative. When employees perceive that they are trusted and have sufficient authority to perform their duties, they may develop stronger ownership of their work and become more willing to take responsibility for outcomes. Recent evidence from the banking sector supports the importance of empowerment for employee outcomes.

(Abuhazeem & Albloush, 2024), studying Jordanian commercial banks, found that employee empowerment was positively related to job satisfaction and emphasized the importance of autonomy, delegation, information sharing, and an empowering work environment in banking organizations. Although their outcome variable differs from the present study, their findings reinforce the argument that empowerment creates workplace conditions that encourage employees to exercise greater autonomy and responsibility. The present study extends this argument by demonstrating a significant relationship between employee empowerment and work ethic. In banking, where employees frequently need to respond to customers and make work-related judgments, appropriate trust and authority may encourage stronger responsibility and commitment toward work.

Work Ethic and Job Satisfaction

The findings support H3, showing that work ethic has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = .749$, $t = 11.083$, $p < .001$). The relatively strong coefficient indicates that employees with stronger positive orientations toward their work tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction. A strong work ethic may contribute to job satisfaction because employees who approach their responsibilities with discipline, commitment, and persistence may experience greater accomplishment and a more positive evaluation of their work. Consistent with this interpretation, (Meriac et al., 2023) found that work ethic was positively associated with job satisfaction among 250 employees in the United States and explained unique variance in job satisfaction beyond related individual characteristics.

The present finding therefore reinforces the view that work ethic is an important employee-level factor associated with job satisfaction. In the banking context, employees who demonstrate responsibility, professionalism, and commitment may be more likely to experience positive evaluations of their work and workplace. The strong relationship identified in this study further suggests that strengthening positive work orientations may be relevant to improving employees' job satisfaction.

The Mediating Role of Work Ethic

The proposed model positions work ethic as an intervening mechanism linking emotional intelligence and employee empowerment to job satisfaction. The results provide support for the individual pathways underlying this mechanism: emotional intelligence significantly affects work ethic, employee empowerment significantly affects work ethic, and work ethic significantly affects job satisfaction.

This pattern suggests that employees' personal capabilities and organizational conditions may first shape their orientation toward work, which is subsequently associated with their job satisfaction. Evidence from the banking sector also indicates that empowerment can operate through psychological mechanisms to influence job satisfaction. (Arathy & Biju, 2022) found that structural and psychological empowerment positively influenced job satisfaction among employees in Indian banks, with psychological empowerment partially mediating the relationship between structural empowerment and job satisfaction.

The present study proposes work ethic as a different intervening mechanism. This is theoretically meaningful because emotional intelligence and empowerment may influence how employees approach their responsibilities, while this orientation toward work may subsequently shape their satisfaction with their jobs. However, the mediation findings require cautious interpretation. The available analysis establishes significant component paths, but it does not report a separate statistical significance test for the indirect effects. Therefore, the findings are consistent with the proposed mediation mechanism, but H4 and H5 should not be described as statistically confirmed until the indirect effects are formally tested.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that emotional intelligence and employee empowerment have positive and significant effects on work ethic, while work ethic has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction among employees of PT Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk Cluster Pematangsiantar. These findings indicate that employees' ability to manage emotions and the organizational support provided through trust, authority, and responsibility are important factors in strengthening positive work attitudes. A stronger work ethic is also associated with greater job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of employees' professionalism, responsibility, discipline, and commitment in the workplace.

From a managerial perspective, the organization is recommended to strengthen employees' emotional intelligence through relevant training and development programs, particularly in emotional regulation, communication, and interpersonal skills. Management should also provide appropriate levels of trust, authority, and responsibility so that employees can develop greater ownership and accountability in performing their duties. These practices may contribute to a stronger work ethic and more positive employee experiences.

Future research should consider larger samples and different organizational or banking contexts to improve the generalizability of the findings. Further studies should also formally test the indirect effects of

emotional intelligence and employee empowerment through work ethic to provide stronger evidence regarding its proposed mediating role.

FURTHER STUDY

Future studies should examine the proposed relationships using larger samples and different banking or organizational contexts to improve the generalizability of the findings. Further research should also apply a formal mediation procedure, such as bootstrapping, to test the indirect effects of emotional intelligence and employee empowerment through work ethic. In addition, future studies may consider other factors, such as leadership, organizational support, work engagement, and organizational commitment, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee job satisfaction.

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