



The Effect of a Positive Work Environment on the Retention of High-Performing Teachers and Educational Staff at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam

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Abstract

Keywords:

positive work environment;
teacher retention;
educational staff; high-performing teachers;
vocational school

This study examines the effect of a positive work environment on the retention of high-performing teachers and educational staff at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to selected teachers and staff. The instrument was confirmed to be valid and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.880 and 0.907). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. The results show that the work environment is perceived as positive (mean = 54.03) and the level of retention is high (mean = 34.91). A positive and significant relationship was found between the work environment and retention ($r = 0.564$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis indicates that a positive work environment significantly influences retention, explaining 31.9% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.319$). These findings emphasize the importance of fostering a positive work environment to retain high-performing teachers and educational staff in vocational schools.

Abstrak:

Kata Kunci:

lingkungan kerja positif; retensi guru; retensi tenaga kependidikan; guru berprestasi; sekolah vokasi

Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh lingkungan kerja positif terhadap retensi guru dan tenaga kependidikan berprestasi di SMK PGRI Pagar Alam dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif explanatory. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner skala Likert yang telah diuji validitas dan reliabilitasnya (Cronbach's Alpha 0,880 dan 0,907) dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, korelasi Pearson, serta regresi linier sederhana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan kerja berada dalam kategori positif (rata-rata 54,03) dan tingkat retensi tergolong tinggi (rata-rata 34,91). Terdapat hubungan positif dan signifikan antara lingkungan kerja positif dan retensi ($r = 0,564$; $p < 0,01$). Hasil regresi menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan kerja positif berpengaruh signifikan terhadap retensi dengan kontribusi sebesar 31,9% ($R^2 = 0,319$). Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya lingkungan kerja yang kondusif dalam mempertahankan guru dan tenaga kependidikan berprestasi di sekolah vokasi.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapid global change and increasing competition in the education sector, the sustainability of educational institutions is strongly influenced by the quality and stability of their human resources. Teachers and educational staff who demonstrate high performance, professional competence, and long-term commitment are strategic assets for schools. Consequently, the ability of educational institutions to retain high-performing personnel has become a critical issue in contemporary educational management (Meyer & Maltin, 2017).

Employee retention refers to an organization's capacity to maintain competent and high-performing individuals over time. In the education sector, low retention rates among teachers and staff can lead to disruptions in instructional continuity, increased recruitment and training costs, and declining educational quality (Deery & Jago, 2015). Previous studies indicate that high employee turnover is often associated with job dissatisfaction, limited organizational support, and unfavorable working conditions (Bui & Baruch, 2020).

One of the most consistently identified determinants of employee retention is the work environment. The work environment encompasses not only physical aspects such as facilities and workplace comfort, but also psychosocial dimensions, including interpersonal relationships, leadership support, communication patterns, and organizational climate (Robbins & Judge, 2019). A positive work environment fosters feelings of safety, recognition, and belonging, which enhance job satisfaction and strengthen employees' intention to remain within the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Empirical evidence has demonstrated a significant relationship between a positive work environment and employee retention. Kundu and Lata (2017) found that a supportive work environment directly influences retention by enhancing organizational commitment and employee satisfaction. Similarly, Afsar and Umrani (2020) reported that a positive work environment plays a crucial role in retaining high-performing employees. In educational settings, supportive leadership, collaborative relationships, and opportunities for professional development have been shown to increase teachers' loyalty and commitment to their institutions (Nguyen & Le, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature on work environment and retention, most existing studies focus on employees or teachers in general, with limited attention given to high-performing teachers and educational staff who play a strategic role in sustaining educational quality. Moreover, empirical research on talent retention within vocational education institutions remains relatively scarce. Vocational schools possess distinct characteristics, such as industry-oriented curricula, high demands for practical competencies, and the need for workforce stability, which may shape retention dynamics differently from those in general education settings (Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2019).

SMK PGRI Pagar Alam, as a private vocational school, faces challenges in retaining high-performing teachers and educational staff amid increasing competition among educational institutions. Creating and maintaining a positive work environment is widely viewed as a key strategy for strengthening employee commitment and loyalty. However, empirical evidence regarding the extent to which a positive work environment influences the retention of high-performing teachers and educational staff in vocational schools, particularly in the context of SMK PGRI Pagar Alam, remains limited.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to examine the effect of a positive work environment on the retention of high-performing teachers and educational staff at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam. This study is expected to contribute empirical evidence to the field of educational management, particularly in relation to human resource management strategies grounded in workplace conditions, and to provide practical insights for vocational school administrators in developing effective retention policies.

II. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the effect of a positive work environment on the retention of high-performing teachers and educational staff at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam. A quantitative approach was selected to allow objective measurement and statistical testing of the causal relationship between variables, as recommended in explanatory research designs.

The population of this study consisted of all teachers and educational staff working at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam, with a total of 35 individuals. Because the population size was relatively small, the study applied a saturated sampling technique in which all members of the population were included as research participants. This approach ensured that the data accurately represented the actual conditions within the institution and reduced the risk of sampling bias.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from established theoretical indicators of a positive work environment and employee retention. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, enabling respondents to express their perceptions and intentions consistently. This measurement approach is widely used in organizational and educational research to capture attitudinal and behavioral data.

Prior to data analysis, the research instrument was subjected to validity and reliability testing. Item validity was examined using corrected item total correlation, with items considered valid when the correlation coefficient exceeded 0.344 at a 0.05 significance level. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in coefficients of 0.880 for the positive work environment variable and 0.907 for the retention variable. These values indicate strong internal consistency and confirm that the instrument was suitable for further analysis.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize respondents' perceptions of the work environment and levels of retention, while inferential analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression to test the research hypothesis. Prior to regression analysis, classical assumption tests were performed to ensure that the data met the requirements for parametric analysis. These tests included normality, linearity, and autocorrelation assessments. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t test, and the coefficient of determination was used to determine the extent to which the positive work environment explained variance in employee retention.

This study was limited to a single vocational school and relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the methodological approach provides a reliable empirical basis for examining the influence of a positive work environment on the retention of teachers and educational staff in vocational education settings.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

a. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe respondents' perceptions of the positive work environment and retention levels. The results indicate that the positive work environment variable has a mean score of 54.03, with a standard deviation of 6.187 and a score range between 34 and 60. This finding suggests that the work environment at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam is perceived as positive by most respondents. The relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents' perceptions tend to be homogeneous.

The retention variable shows a mean score of 34.91, with a standard deviation of 4.072 and a score range between 28 and 40. This result indicates that the level of retention among high-performing teachers and educational staff is relatively high. Most respondents expressed a strong intention to remain at the institution and demonstrated loyalty toward the school.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Positive Work Environment	34	60	54.03	6.187
Employee Retention	28	40	34.91	4.072

b. Classical Assumption Testing

Before conducting regression analysis, classical assumption tests were performed to ensure the suitability of the data for parametric analysis. The normality test using the Kolmogorov Smirnov method showed significance values of 0.294 for the positive work environment variable and 0.395 for the retention variable. Both values exceed the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the data are normally distributed.

The linearity test produced a significance value of 0.001, confirming a linear relationship between the positive work environment and retention. In addition, the Durbin Watson test yielded a value of 1.704, which falls within the acceptable range and indicates the absence of autocorrelation in the regression model. These results confirm that the data meet the assumptions required for regression analysis.

c. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the positive work environment and employee retention. The results show a correlation coefficient of 0.564 with a significance level of 0.001. This finding indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. As perceptions of a positive work environment increase, the level of retention among high-performing teachers and educational staff also tends to increase.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation between Positive Work Environment and Retention

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p)
Positive Work Environment and Retention	0.564	0.001

d. Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of a positive work environment on employee retention. The results show an R value of 0.564, indicating a moderate relationship between the variables. The coefficient of determination R squared is 0.319, which means that 31.9 percent of the variance in retention can be explained by the positive work environment, while the remaining variance is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

The regression coefficient for the positive work environment variable is 0.372 with a t value of 3.807 and a significance level of 0.001. This result indicates that the positive work environment has a significant and positive effect on retention. An increase of one unit in the positive work environment score leads to an increase of 0.372 units in employee retention.

Table 3. Summary of Simple Linear Regression Results

Variable	Regression Coefficient	t Value	Significance (p)
Constant	14.836	2.803	0.009
Positive Work Environment	0.372	3.807	0.001

Table 4. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Durbin Watson
0.564	0.319	0.298	1.704

Overall, the findings demonstrate that a positive work environment plays a significant role in retaining high-performing teachers and educational staff at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam. The statistical results consistently show that improvements in the work environment are associated with higher levels of retention, providing empirical support for the proposed research hypothesis.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that a positive work environment has a significant effect on the retention of high-performing teachers and educational staff at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam. The statistical results indicate a moderate positive relationship between the work environment and retention, with the positive work environment explaining 31.9 percent of the variance in employee retention. This finding confirms that workplace conditions constitute a substantive determinant of retention decisions within educational organizations, particularly in vocational school settings.

The positive and significant relationship identified in this study is consistent with organizational behavior and human resource management

theories, which emphasize that employees are more likely to remain in organizations where they experience supportive leadership, positive interpersonal relationships, and a psychologically safe work climate (Robbins & Judge, 2019). A work environment that fosters respect, recognition, and collaboration enhances employees' sense of belonging and emotional attachment, which are central components of organizational commitment (Meyer & Maltin, 2017). In the context of vocational schools, where instructional quality depends heavily on practical expertise and continuity of teaching staff, such conditions become even more critical.

The regression results further indicate that improvements in the work environment are directly associated with increased retention among high-performing teachers and educational staff. This finding aligns with prior empirical studies showing that supportive and positive work environments significantly influence employees' intentions to remain within their organizations (Kundu & Lata, 2017; Afsar & Umrani, 2020). These studies suggest that work environments characterized by trust, support, and constructive communication reduce turnover intention and strengthen long-term commitment. The present study extends this evidence by confirming that similar dynamics operate within the vocational education sector, which has received comparatively limited attention in retention research.

Notably, the explanatory power of the model indicates that while the work environment plays a substantial role, a considerable proportion of variance in retention remains unexplained. This suggests that retention is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by additional factors such as compensation, career development opportunities, leadership style, workload, and individual motivations. Previous research has emphasized that retention outcomes are shaped by the interaction of organizational, job-related, and personal factors rather than a single determinant (Bui & Baruch, 2020). Therefore, although improving the work environment is an effective strategy, it should be complemented by broader human resource management practices.

From a critical perspective, the findings imply that a positive work environment functions not merely as a physical or administrative condition, but as a strategic organizational resource. By cultivating supportive leadership, transparent communication, and collegial relationships, vocational schools can strengthen the psychological contract between the institution and its employees, thereby enhancing retention among high-performing staff. This perspective supports the view that retention strategies should prioritize employee experience and well-being rather than relying solely on extrinsic incentives (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a single vocational school and its reliance on self-reported data, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to examine retention dynamics across multiple vocational institutions and to incorporate additional variables, such as organizational commitment or job satisfaction, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of retention mechanisms. Longitudinal designs may also offer deeper insights into how changes in the work environment influence retention over time.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of a positive work environment as a critical factor in retaining high-performing teachers and educational staff in vocational education settings. By empirically demonstrating this relationship, the study contributes to the growing literature on human resource management in education and highlights the strategic role of workplace conditions in sustaining educational quality.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a positive work environment has a significant and meaningful effect on the retention of high-performing teachers and educational staff at SMK PGRI Pagar Alam. The findings indicate that the work environment at the institution is generally perceived as positive, and the level of employee retention is relatively high. Statistical analysis confirms a positive and significant relationship between the two variables, demonstrating that improvements in workplace conditions are associated with increased retention.

The regression results further show that the positive work environment explains 31.9 percent of the variance in retention, highlighting its substantial role as a determinant of employees' decisions to remain within the institution. Although other factors beyond the scope of this study also influence retention, the findings emphasize that workplace conditions constitute a critical component of effective human resource management in vocational education settings.

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that fostering a supportive, comfortable, and collaborative work environment is an effective strategy for retaining high-performing teachers and educational staff. The results underscore the importance of prioritizing positive workplace conditions to support organizational stability and sustain the quality of education in vocational schools.

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