

## Work-Life Balance as a Catalyst for Excellence: Determinants of Administrative Staff Performance in Higher Education

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### ARTICLE INFO    ABSTRACT

Received: 22 Dec 2024    Drawing on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Boundary Theory, the research examines the direct and indirect effects of religiosity, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), and organizational culture on performance through Work-Life balance (WLB). Using a quantitative approach and structural equation modeling (SEM), data from 250 respondents were analyzed to assess the relationships among these variables. The findings reveal that religiosity and organizational culture significantly enhance employee performance, both directly and indirectly, through their positive influence on WLB. Religiosity fulfills higher-order needs, fostering intrinsic motivation, ethical behavior, and resilience, while organizational culture provides a supportive environment that promotes collaboration and alignment with institutional goals. Conversely, HPWS primarily impacts performance directly and shows limited influence on WLB, highlighting the need for enhancements to better support work-life integration. WLB itself is identified as a critical determinant of performance, reinforcing its role as a mediator and catalyst for performance. This study contributes to the theoretical discourse by integrating Maslow's and Boundary Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of workplace dynamics. The findings offer practical implications for higher education institutions, emphasizing the importance of integrating personal values, organizational practices, and cultural elements to enhance administrative staff performance and institutional excellence.

**Keywords:** work-life balance, administrative staff, religiosity, organizational culture, high-performance work systems, higher education, employee performance

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### INTRODUCTION

Administrative staff, often referred to as non-academic personnel, play an essential yet frequently understated role in the functioning of higher education institutions (HEIs). While much of the academic discourse focuses on educators and researchers, the contributions of administrative staff in areas such as strategic planning, resource management, and operational support are indispensable. These staff members ensure the smooth running of day-to-day activities, compliance with accreditation standards, and alignment with institutional goals, thereby directly impacting the overall performance and quality of HEIs (Bacelar-Nicolau et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, private universities account for a significant proportion of the higher education sector. However, only a small fraction of these institutions achieves the highest accreditation level. In Semarang, for instance, just three private universities have reached this distinction, with many others remaining at lower levels. Accreditation not only serves as a marker of institutional quality but also influences public perception, student enrollment, and access to funding. Given the critical role of administrative staff in supporting the institutional goals required to secure high accreditation, their performance has become a focal point for university management (Woelert, 2023).

One of the primary factors influencing administrative staff performance is work-life balance (WLB), which represents the equilibrium between work responsibilities and personal life (Begum et al., 2024). WLB is increasingly recognized as a determinant of job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being (Zaitouni et al., 2024). Employees with a healthy WLB tend to exhibit greater engagement, lower stress levels, and enhanced performance (Jackson & Fransman, 2018). Conversely, a lack of balance can lead to burnout, diminished productivity, and increased turnover (Gynning et al., 2024). Despite its importance, achieving WLB in higher education environments can be challenging, particularly for administrative staff who often juggle extensive workloads and conflicting demands (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023).

The factors shaping WLB are multifaceted and can be categorized into individual and organizational determinants (Stoilova et al., 2020). At the individual level, religiosity has been identified as a significant influence (Sav, 2019). Religiosity, defined as the extent of an individual's commitment to their religious beliefs and practices, is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where religious values strongly shape social and professional behavior (Khuzaimah et al., 2023). Empirical studies indicate that religiosity fosters resilience, ethical conduct, and emotional well-being, thereby contributing to better WLB and, consequently, improved performance (Arshad et al., 2024; Dolcos et al., 2021).

At the organizational level, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) are instrumental in creating an environment that supports both WLB and staff performance (Zahoor et al., 2021). HPWS comprises human resource practices such as selective staffing, comprehensive training, performance-based rewards, and flexible work arrangements (Nassani et al., 2023). These practices enhance employee capabilities and motivation, creating a conducive environment for balancing work and personal responsibilities (Zhang et al., 2013, 2014; Zhu et al., 2018).

Another critical organizational factor is organizational culture, which encompasses shared values, norms, and practices within an institution. A positive organizational culture promotes collaboration, alignment with institutional objectives, and a sense of belonging among staff members. Such an environment not only enhances individual motivation but also facilitates a healthier balance between work and life (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Noe et al., 2016). Conversely, a toxic or unsupportive culture can exacerbate stress and hinder both WLB and performance (Adisa et al., 2017).

Although these factors have been studied individually, their combined influence on WLB and administrative staff performance in higher education remains underexplored. Furthermore, the role of WLB as a mediating variable in the relationships between religiosity, HPWS, organizational culture, and staff performance has not been thoroughly investigated. Previous studies have often focused on direct relationships, overlooking the potential interplay and mediation effects that WLB might have (Kumarasamy et al., 2021; Hilman et al., 2022).

This research addresses these gaps by examining the direct and indirect impacts of religiosity, HPWS, and organizational culture on administrative staff performance in Semarang's private universities. The study adopts Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a framework to understand how fulfilling various levels of human needs—ranging from physiological to self-actualization—contributes to better WLB and performance. Additionally, Boundary Theory is employed to explain how individuals manage the boundaries between their work and personal lives, and how organizational and individual factors influence

this balance (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000). By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of administrative staff performance in higher education. The findings are expected to contribute not only to academic literature but also to practical strategies for enhancing staff well-being and institutional effectiveness. This research underscores the importance of a holistic approach to managing human resources in higher education, emphasizing the critical role of WLB as a catalyst for organizational excellence.

The originality of this study lies in its novel approach to examining Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a mediating variable in the relationship between religiosity, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), and organizational culture with employee performance in private universities with excellent accreditation in Semarang City. While previous studies have explored the direct effects of these independent variables on either WLB or employee performance, no prior research has integrated WLB as an intermediary factor that connects these relationships comprehensively. Additionally, the study addresses inconsistencies in existing research findings by investigating both individual and organizational factors affecting employee performance, thereby bridging the research gap left by earlier studies that focused on only one aspect. This research contributes to the theoretical development of human resource management and organizational behavior by offering empirical evidence on how WLB facilitates the influence of religiosity, HPWS, and organizational culture on employee performance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Maslow's hierarchy of needs and boundary theory***

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Boundary Theory offer complementary perspectives on understanding human motivation and the management of WLB. Maslow's theory, introduced in 1943, organizes human needs into a hierarchy, ranging from basic physiological necessities to higher-order aspirations like self-actualization. The theory emphasizes that individuals must satisfy lower-level needs, such as job security and a supportive environment, before pursuing higher-level goals like personal growth and fulfillment (Maslow, 1943; Smith et al., 2016). This framework is instrumental in explaining how fulfilling diverse needs at work and in personal life contributes to overall well-being and performance. Boundary Theory, on the other hand, focuses on how individuals navigate the boundaries between work and personal life, which are characterized by their permeability (ease of crossover) and flexibility (adaptability to shifting demands) (Ashforth et al., 2000). The theory highlights the role of segmentation and integration in managing these boundaries, suggesting that effective boundary management reduces role conflict and supports better WLB (Clark, 2000). Together, these theories provide a holistic understanding of how organizational practices, such as supportive cultures and flexible work systems, can align with individual needs and boundary preferences to foster improved WLB and performance, particularly in demanding environments like higher education.

### ***Religiosity***

Religiosity refers to the extent of an individual's commitment to and practice of their religious beliefs, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. It influences a person's values, ethics, and resilience, shaping both personal and professional behaviors (Robbie & Sayyaf, 2022). Religiosity is often categorized into two types: intrinsic, where religion is an end in itself, and extrinsic, where religion is used as a means to achieve other goals, such as social connections (Allport & Ross, 1967). Research indicates that religiosity positively impacts WLB and employee performance by fostering ethical behavior, emotional well-being, and resilience in the face of stress (Osman-Gani et al., 2013; Khan & Kirmani, 2018). For instance, individuals with higher religiosity are more likely to draw on their faith to navigate work and personal life challenges, enhancing their ability to maintain balance (Sundjoto et al., 2020). In higher education,

religiosity can be a significant factor influencing administrative staff's ability to integrate professional responsibilities with personal values, contributing to improved job satisfaction and performance. Therefore, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H1. Religiosity positively and significantly affects WLB.*

*H2. Religiosity positively and significantly affects staff performance.*

### **High-performance work systems**

High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) refer to a set of interrelated human resource practices designed to enhance employee capabilities, motivation, and opportunities to contribute effectively to organizational goals (Appelbaum et al., 2001). These systems typically include selective staffing, extensive training, performance-based rewards, and flexible work arrangements, creating an environment that fosters engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction (Zhu et al., 2018). Research suggests that HPWS not only boost individual performance but also improve WLB by empowering employees and providing them with the resources to manage their professional and personal responsibilities effectively (Babic et al., 2019). However, the effectiveness of HPWS in enhancing WLB depends on how these practices are implemented and whether they align with organizational culture and employee expectations (Rabl et al., 2014). In the context of higher education, HPWS can play a pivotal role in supporting administrative staff by creating a supportive work environment that accommodates their unique challenges and promotes both organizational and personal success. Therefore, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H3. HPWS positively and significantly affects WLB.*

*H4. HPWS positively and significantly affects staff performance.*

### **Organizational culture**

Organizational Culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape the behavior of individuals within an organization. It serves as an informal control mechanism, guiding how employees interact, solve problems, and align with organizational goals (Schein, 1992; Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). A positive organizational culture fosters trust, collaboration, and engagement, which can enhance employee satisfaction, performance, and retention (Noe et al., 2016). Moreover, a supportive culture is essential for WLB, as it promotes flexibility and understanding of employees' personal needs, reducing role conflict and stress (Adisa et al., 2017). Conversely, a toxic or rigid culture can exacerbate workplace tensions and hinder productivity. In higher education, organizational culture significantly impacts administrative staff performance by shaping their attitudes and behaviors, ultimately influencing the institution's ability to meet strategic objectives (Baltaru, 2019). Thus, cultivating a culture that values employee well-being and aligns with institutional goals is critical for fostering excellence in administrative functions. Therefore, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H5. Organizational culture positively and significantly affects WLB.*

*H6. Organizational culture positively and significantly affects staff performance.*

### **Work-life balance**

Work-Life Balance (WLB) refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage and harmonize professional responsibilities with personal life, ensuring minimal conflict between the two domains. It is characterized by a sense of equilibrium in time, involvement, and satisfaction across work and non-work activities (Greenhaus et al., 2003). WLB has been shown to positively impact job satisfaction, employee well-being, and organizational performance, as employees with a healthy balance are more engaged, productive, and less prone to burnout (Jackson & Fransman, 2018; Hilman et al., 2022). Factors influencing WLB can be individual, such as personal values and coping mechanisms, or organizational, including supportive policies,

flexible work arrangements, and high-performance work systems (Babic et al., 2019). Conversely, poor WLB can lead to stress, reduced productivity, and higher turnover rates. In the higher education sector, where administrative staff often face extensive workloads, achieving WLB is particularly challenging yet crucial for maintaining high performance and institutional effectiveness. Therefore, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H7. WLB positively and significantly affects staff performance.*

*H8. WLB mediates the effect of religiosity on staff performance.*

*H9. WLB mediates the effect of HPWS on staff performance.*

*H10. WLB mediates the effect of organizational culture on staff performance.*

After reviewing these previous studies, this research aims to propose the following model for further empirical examination.

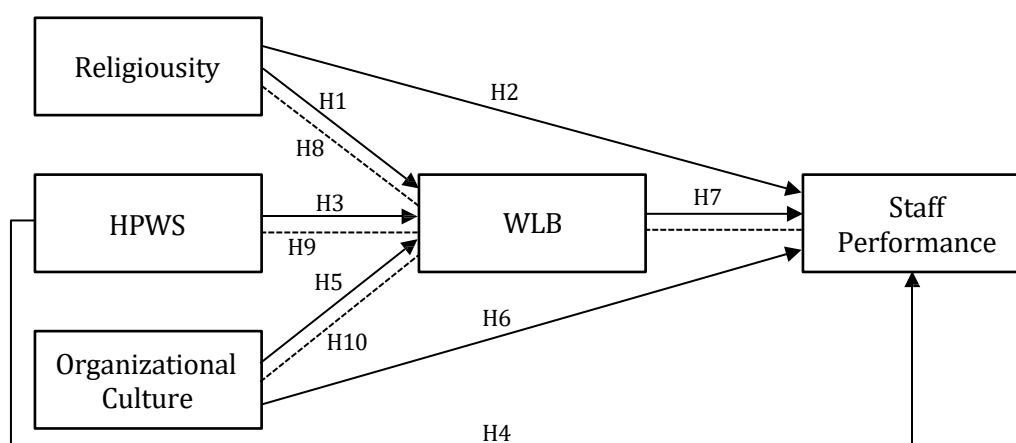


Figure 1. Research Model

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to investigate the determinants of administrative staff performance in higher education institutions, focusing on the mediating role of WLB. The study seeks to identify and analyze the relationships between religiosity, HPWS, organizational culture, and performance, with WLB as a mediating factor. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to administrative staff at private universities in Semarang that have attained "Unggul" accreditation, ensuring the relevance and context of the findings.

The data sources include primary data collected directly from respondents and secondary data from institutional records to provide additional contextual insights. The sample size was determined using purposive sampling, targeting administrative staff actively engaged in supporting the institutions' core functions. A total of 250 respondents participated in the study, meeting the minimum requirements for statistical analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM). The questionnaire was designed with multiple sections to measure religiosity adopted from Pearce et al. (2017), HPWS adopted from Wahid & Hyams-Ssekasi (2018), organizational culture adopted from Sashkin & Rosenbach (2013), WLB adopted from



Fisher et al. (2009), and performance adopted from Koopmans et al. (2012), using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

For data analysis, a two-step procedure was adopted. The first step involved evaluating the measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the constructs' reliability and validity. Key indicators such as composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings were assessed. The second step analyzed the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among variables. SEM was employed to explore direct and indirect effects, focusing on the mediating role of WLB. Statistical software SmartPLS was used for the analysis.

## RESEARCH RESULT

Table 1 presents a comprehensive evaluation of the measurement model in PLS-SEM, demonstrating the reliability and validity of five key constructs: Religiosity (REL), High-Performance Work System (HPWS), Organizational Culture (OC), Work-Life Balance (WLB), and Employee Performance (EP). The analysis encompasses factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), each meeting or exceeding the recommended thresholds. Factor loadings for all items are above the minimum requirement of 0.70, confirming their adequacy as indicators of the respective constructs. The internal consistency of each construct is evidenced by CA values, all exceeding the threshold of 0.70, indicating that the items within each construct reliably measure the intended concept. Furthermore, CR values for all constructs surpass 0.70, affirming strong reliability across the model. Convergent validity is also established, as the AVE values for each construct are greater than 0.50, demonstrating that the majority of variance in each construct is explained by its indicators.

*Table 1. Loadings, Cronbach' Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE*

Construct	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
REL	0.791; 0.761; 0.701; 0.719; 0.754; 0.770	0.845	0.885	0.563
HPWS	0.784; 0.754; 0.801; 0.772; 0.759; 0.749; 0.740; 0.735	0.897	0.917	0.581
OC	0.747; 0.759; 0.774; 0.734; 0.804; 0.790; 0.768; 0.803; 0.753; 0.749	0.923	0.935	0.591
WLB	0.703; 0.709; 0.801; 0.801; 0.859; 0.872	0.881	0.910	0.630
EP	0.788; 0.768; 0.788; 0.779; 0.799; 0.809; 0.719; 0.730	0.904	0.922	0.598

Source: Authors' own research.

Table 2 provides an overview of the hypotheses testing results, summarizing the relationships between constructs, the path coefficients, p-values, and the conclusions drawn from the analysis. The findings indicate that most hypotheses are supported, with statistically significant relationships (p-values < 0.05), while a few hypotheses are not supported due to lack of statistical significance. REL significantly influences WLB (H1, coefficient = 0.491, p = 0.000) and EP (H2, 0.151, 0.013), supporting the hypothesized relationships. Similarly, OC positively impacts both WLB (H5, 0.173, 0.005) and EP (H6, 0.497, 0.000). Additionally, WLB positively affects EP (H7, 0.146, 0.027). However, HPWS does not significantly influence WLB (H3, 0.072, 0.255), although it has a modest impact on EP (H4, 0.129, 0.027). Mediation analyses reveal that REL significantly influences EP through WLB (H8, 0.072, 0.040). Conversely, the indirect effects of HPWS (H9, 0.010, 0.355) and OC (H10, 0.025, 0.086) on EP through WLB are not significant.

Table 2. Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Path	Coefficient	P-values	Result
H1	REL → WLB	0.491	0.000	Supported
H2	REL → EP	0.151	0.013	Supported
H3	HPWS → WLB	0.072	0.255	Not Supported
H4	HPWS → EP	0.129	0.027	Supported
H5	OC → WLB	0.173	0.005	Supported
H6	OC → EP	0.497	0.000	Supported
H7	WLB → EP	0.146	0.027	Supported
H8	REL → WLB → EP	0.072	0.040	Supported
H9	HPWS → WLB → EP	0.010	0.355	Not Supported
H10	OC → WLB → EP	0.025	0.086	Not Supported

Source: Authors' own research.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide an integrative understanding of how religiosity, HPWS, organizational culture, WLB, and employee performance interact in shaping workplace dynamics among non-academic staff at private universities in Semarang with excellent accreditation. Religiosity emerges as a strong determinant of both WLB and EP, fulfilling higher-order needs such as belonging and self-actualization within Maslow's framework. Employees who exhibit strong religiosity tend to experience heightened intrinsic motivation and purpose, which enhance their ability to integrate work and personal life while fostering better performance outcomes. This aligns with previous studies, such as those by Robbie & Sayyaf (2022) and Osman-Gani et al. (2013), which highlight that religiosity promotes ethical behavior and resilience, thereby supporting organizational goals. Furthermore, the significant mediating role of WLB in the relationship between religiosity and EP underscores Boundary Theory, which posits that managing the interface between work and personal life reduces role conflict and enhances well-being. Supporting this, Sav (2019) and Abu Bakar et al. (2018) found that religiosity enhances work-life integration by promoting role clarity and reducing spillover effects.

The role of HPWS, however, appears more limited. While HPWS directly influences EP, it shows no significant effect on WLB or its mediated impact on performance. This suggests that HPWS predominantly addresses esteem and safety needs by focusing on professional development and job security but falls short in supporting work-life integration. Previous research, such as by Cao et al. (2024) and Han et al. (2023), indicates that HPWS often prioritizes organizational productivity over holistic employee well-being, which limits its contribution to balance. For private universities, this finding highlights the need to integrate support mechanisms such as flexible work arrangements and wellness programs into HPWS frameworks to better align with employees' personal and professional needs.

Organizational culture plays a vital role in influencing both WLB and EP, reflecting its ability to meet belonging and esteem needs while fostering a supportive environment. A strong culture creates shared values and norms that enhance collaboration, motivation, and performance. Previous studies, such as those by Naqshbandi et al. (2024) and Khan et al. (2022), confirm that organizational culture directly enhances performance by fostering cohesive and engaging work environments. However, the lack of mediation through WLB suggests that culture primarily drives performance through mechanisms like collaboration and motivation rather than work-life balance alone.

WLB itself proves to be a critical determinant of EP, reinforcing Boundary Theory, which emphasizes that effective boundary management reduces stress, enhances well-being, and improves focus. Research by Weiss & Ortlieb (2024) and Ongaki (2019) supports these findings, demonstrating that

employees with better work-life integration show higher levels of productivity and commitment. For non-academic staff in private universities, achieving this balance is particularly crucial due to the dual demands of administrative efficiency and stakeholder engagement, which are essential for maintaining institutional accreditation and excellence.

These findings reveal that religiosity and organizational culture are robust determinants of employee performance, exerting significant direct and indirect effects through WLB. Conversely, HPWS, while directly impactful, requires refinement to better address work-life integration comprehensively. These insights offer theoretical and practical contributions. For private universities in Semarang, designing policies that integrate personal values, organizational practices, and cultural elements is essential for optimizing employee performance. Strategies such as enhancing flexibility within HPWS, fostering inclusive cultures, and recognizing religiosity's role in motivating employees can ensure that non-academic staff continue to support institutional excellence while maintaining their personal well-being.

## CONCLUSION

This study examines the determinants of administrative staff performance in private universities in Semarang with "Excellence" accreditation, emphasizing the mediating role of WLB. By integrating religiosity, HPWS, organizational culture, and their combined effects on performance, the study provides a holistic understanding of workplace dynamics in higher education. The findings reveal that religiosity and organizational culture are robust predictors of employee performance, directly and indirectly enhancing outcomes through WLB. Religiosity fosters intrinsic motivation, ethical behavior, and resilience, fulfilling higher-order needs as described in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and contributes to improved boundary management, aligning with Boundary Theory. Organizational culture, meanwhile, provides shared values and supportive environments that drive collaboration and motivation, significantly impacting performance.

The role of HPWS is more limited, with its primary influence on performance being direct and less evident in promoting work-life integration. While HPWS addresses esteem and safety needs, its inability to support boundary management highlights the need for enhancements, such as integrating flexibility and wellness initiatives, to better align with staff's holistic needs. WLB itself emerges as a critical determinant of performance, underscoring the importance of managing the interface between professional and personal responsibilities. Employees who achieve a balanced work-life integration are more productive, engaged, and resilient, further contributing to organizational goals.

This research bridges theoretical gaps by synthesizing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Boundary Theory in the context of higher education, offering insights into how personal, organizational, and systemic factors interact to influence performance. Practically, the study provides actionable recommendations for private universities, such as fostering inclusive cultures, enhancing HPWS with flexible policies, and recognizing the role of religiosity in supporting staff well-being. By addressing these factors, universities can optimize administrative staff performance, ensuring sustained institutional excellence in a competitive educational landscape.

The primary limitation of this study is its restricted scope, as the study focuses exclusively on educational staff from private universities with excellent accreditation in Semarang City, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to institutions in other regions or with different accreditation statuses. Additionally, the research examines only three main factors—religiosity, HPWS, and organizational culture—while other potential determinants of performance, such as leadership style, economic conditions, and workload pressure, were not considered. The study employs a cross-sectional design, which restricts its ability to establish causal relationships between variables. Furthermore, data collection relies on self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias, potentially affecting the accuracy



of responses. Lastly, the role of WLB is solely examined as a mediator, without further exploration of additional mediators or moderators that could influence the studied relationships.

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