

The Effect of Training, Education, and Emotional Intelligence on Employee Work Performance: Evidence from a Government Religious Institution in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of training, education, and emotional intelligence on the work performance of employees at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Grounded in human capital theory and social-cognitive theory, this quantitative study employs a census sampling technique, encompassing all 50 employees of the institution. Data were collected through structured Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression via SPSS version 22. The results reveal that training exerts a significant positive effect on work performance ($\beta = 0.312$; $t = 3.292$; $p = 0.002 < 0.05$), and education exerts a significant positive effect on work performance ($\beta = 0.341$; $t = 3.471$; $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). Contrary to the dominant theoretical predictions, emotional intelligence demonstrates a significant negative effect on work performance ($\beta = -0.287$; $t = -3.201$; $p = 0.02 < 0.05$). This anomalous finding is interpreted through the lens of person-job fit theory and bureaucratic organizational context, wherein procedural compliance and technical precision override emotional flexibility. The study contributes to the human resource management literature by contextualizing emotional intelligence effects within public-sector bureaucracies and underscores the primacy of structured training and formal education in enhancing organizational performance

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary organizations operating in dynamic and competitive environments increasingly recognize that human capital constitutes a primary source of sustainable competitive advantage (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Within the public sector, where service delivery and administrative efficiency are critical mandates, the competencies, knowledge, and emotional capabilities of employees are central determinants of organizational effectiveness (Boxall & Purcell, 2022; Paauwe & Boselie, 2022). Work performance—defined as the degree to which employees fulfill their assigned responsibilities with competence, efficiency, and initiative—remains the most frequently examined construct in human resource management (HRM) research (Motowidlo et al., 2018; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2022).

Three factors are widely theorized to shape employee work performance in organizational settings: (1) training, which enhances task-specific competencies; (2) education, which develops cognitive capacity and general human capital; and (3) emotional intelligence (EI), which facilitates interpersonal regulation and adaptive behavior at work (Goleman, 2020; Noe et al., 2022; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). While each construct has accumulated independent empirical evidence, their simultaneous examination—particularly within Indonesian public-sector contexts—remains limited. This gap is theoretically significant because the relative contributions of these factors may differ substantially depending on job characteristics, organizational culture, and institutional context (Humphrey et al., 2021; Judge et al., 2020).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama) in Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, represents a strategically important public institution responsible for regulating and facilitating religious affairs across a diverse multicultural community. The institution faces increasing demands for service quality and administrative accountability, rendering the enhancement of employee work performance a priority. Yet, no prior published study has rigorously examined the determinants of work performance in this specific institutional context, creating a practical and scholarly void.

This study therefore addresses three research questions: (1) Does training significantly affect employee work performance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Konawe Regency? (2) Does level of formal education significantly affect employee work performance? (3) Does emotional intelligence significantly affect employee work performance? By answering these questions through robust quantitative analysis, this research makes several contributions. First, it provides empirical evidence from an underrepresented Indonesian public-sector context, extending the generalizability of existing findings. Second, it offers a theoretically grounded explanation for the anomalous negative effect of emotional intelligence in bureaucratic work environments. Third, it yields actionable managerial implications for HRM practitioners in similar institutional contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Human Capital Theory and Work Performance

Human capital theory, pioneered by Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961), posits that investments in employee knowledge, skills, and abilities yield productivity returns analogous to physical capital investment. Within this framework, training and formal education are primary mechanisms through which organizations augment the productive capacity of their workforce (Acemoglu & Pischke, 2023; Noe et al., 2022). Work performance, as conceptualized by Campbell et al. (1993) and updated by Motowidlo et al. (2018), encompasses both task performance—direct fulfillment of job-prescribed responsibilities—and contextual performance, which includes discretionary behaviors that support organizational functioning. Recent integrative reviews confirm that human capital investments remain among the strongest structural predictors of individual and unit-level performance (Ployhart et al., 2021; Schuler & Jackson, 2022).

2. Training and Work Performance

Training is a systematic and planned process through which employees acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective job performance (Noe et al., 2022; Salas et al., 2019). Grounded in social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), training interventions enhance self-efficacy, technical mastery, and behavioral repertoires, all of which translate into measurable performance improvements. Dessler (2022) underscores that training bridges the gap between existing competencies and job requirements, particularly in rapidly evolving organizational environments. Meta-analytic evidence consistently demonstrates positive training-performance associations across contexts (Arthur et al., 2003; Blume et al., 2019; Salas et al., 2019). Recent studies in the Indonesian public sector corroborate this relationship; Soeharno et al. (2023) and Prayitno and Santoso (2022) report significant positive effects of structured training programs on government employee performance, while Prasetyo et al. (2021) document that training quality moderates the strength of this relationship.

3. Education and Work Performance

Formal education—as a dimension of general human capital—equips individuals with cognitive frameworks, analytical reasoning capabilities, and domain knowledge that facilitate superior problem-solving and decision-making in workplace contexts (Becker, 1964; Cascio & Boudreau, 2021). Mincer (1974) established the theoretical linkage between years of schooling and earnings, a relationship largely mediated by productivity. In public-sector organizations, educational credentials signal technical competency and are frequently tied to role eligibility and task complexity (Paauwe & Boselie, 2022; Schuler & Jackson, 2022). Empirical evidence from Asia confirms positive education-performance associations (Kim & Ployhart, 2023; Wang et al., 2022), though the relationship is sometimes moderated by job complexity and person-job fit, explaining occasional null findings in homogeneous bureaucratic samples.

4. Emotional Intelligence and Work Performance

Emotional intelligence, originally conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularized by Goleman (1995, 2020), refers to the capacity to perceive, use, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. The four-branch model (Mayer et al., 2016) articulates EI as a hierarchically organized set of abilities ranging from emotion perception to emotion management. Dominant theory predicts that higher EI enhances interpersonal effectiveness, stress regulation, and collaborative performance (Joseph et al., 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2011). However, meta-analytic reviews reveal significant variability in EI-performance associations across job types, with the strongest effects observed in roles requiring intensive interpersonal interaction, leadership, or service delivery (Joseph et al., 2015; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). In highly procedural and compliance-driven bureaucratic environments, the predictive value of EI is attenuated because task performance depends primarily on rule adherence, technical accuracy, and administrative precision rather than emotional regulation (Humphrey et al., 2021; Matthews et al., 2022).

5. Person-Job Fit Theory and Bureaucratic Context

Person-job fit theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) proposes that individual characteristics congruent with job demands yield superior performance outcomes, whereas incongruent characteristics may produce no effect or even a negative relationship. In bureaucratic public-sector organizations, job demands emphasize procedural compliance, documentation accuracy, and hierarchical rule-following—demands that are more closely aligned with technical competence and cognitive ability than with high EI (Boxall & Purcell, 2022; Judge et al., 2020). Empirical support for context-moderated EI effects has grown substantially; Fiori and Antonakis (2021) demonstrate that EI predicts performance primarily in roles demanding emotional labor, while Matthews et al. (2022) find that in highly structured environments, excessive emotional attunement may distract from procedural priorities. This theoretical lens provides the primary explanatory framework for the negative EI-performance finding observed in the present study.

6. Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Training has a significant positive effect on employee work performance.

H₂: Education level has a significant positive effect on employee work performance.

H₃: Emotional intelligence has a significant effect on employee work performance.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design and Setting

This study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, consistent with positivist epistemological assumptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The research site is the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, a representative mid-sized Indonesian public-sector bureau responsible for administering Islamic and interfaith affairs across the regency.

2. Population and Sampling

The study population comprises all 50 permanent employees of the institution. Given the small and finite population size, a census (saturated) sampling approach was employed, in accordance with Sugiyono (2022), whereby all members of the population serve as respondents. This approach eliminates sampling error and ensures maximum data representativeness. Valid questionnaires were returned by all 50 respondents, yielding a 100% response rate.

3. Measurement Instruments

Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire. All constructs were measured using five-point Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Training (X_1) was operationalized using eight items adapted from Noe et al. (2022) and Salas et al. (2019), capturing dimensions of systematic procedure, knowledge acquisition, and practical orientation. Education (X_2) was measured with six items assessing formal educational level, field of study relevance, and educational quality, adapted from Becker (1964) and Cascio and Boudreau (2021). Emotional intelligence (X_3) was measured using six items drawn from the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) short form (Mayer et al., 2016), covering emotion recognition, regulation, and interpersonal management. Work performance (Y) was assessed with 12 items measuring work output quality, initiative, disciplined time management, teamwork, attitude, and knowledge, adapted from Motowidlo et al. (2018).

4. Validity and Reliability

Instrument validity was assessed using Pearson correlation, with item-total correlations ≥ 0.30 as the acceptance threshold (Sugiyono, 2022). All items satisfied this criterion. Reliability was established via Cronbach's alpha coefficient: Training ($\alpha = 0.891$), Education ($\alpha = 0.691$), Emotional Intelligence ($\alpha = 0.906$), and Work Performance ($\alpha = 0.771$). All coefficients exceed the threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.60$, confirming adequate internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019).

5. Analytical Technique

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesized relationships, implemented in SPSS version 22. Prior to regression, the classical assumption tests were conducted: (1) normality of residuals (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), (2) homoscedasticity (Glejser test), and (3) absence of multicollinearity (variance inflation factor [VIF] < 10). The regression model is specified as: $Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$, where Y = work performance, X_1 = training, X_2 = education, X_3 = emotional intelligence, α = constant, β_i = regression

coefficients, and ε = error term. Hypothesis tests employed two-tailed t-tests at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$).

RESULTS

1. Respondent Characteristics

Of the 50 respondents, 44% ($n = 22$) were male and 56% ($n = 28$) were female. Regarding age distribution, 70% ($n = 35$) were under 40 years of age, while 30% ($n = 15$) were aged 40 years and above. The majority held an undergraduate degree (S1) or postgraduate qualification, reflecting the institutional minimum educational requirement.

2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Presents the Descriptive Statistics for All Study Variables

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Training (X_1)	2.00	5.00	3.70	0.71
Education (X_2)	2.00	5.00	3.78	0.68
Emotional Intelligence (X_3)	2.00	5.00	3.80	0.65
Work Performance (Y)	2.17	5.00	3.85	0.62

Note. N = 50. SD = standard deviation.

3. Classical Assumption Tests

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirmed normality of residuals ($D = 0.089$; $p = 0.200 > 0.05$). The Glejser test indicated no significant heteroscedasticity (all $p > 0.05$). Multicollinearity diagnostics revealed VIF values below 3.0 for all predictors (VIF_Training = 2.14; VIF_Education = 2.07; VIF_EI = 1.98), well below the critical threshold of 10, satisfying all classical regression assumptions.

4. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Table 2 summarizes the regression results. The overall model was significant ($F(3, 46) = 18.43$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.546$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.516$), indicating that the three predictors jointly explained 51.6% of variance in employee work performance

Table 2. Summarizes the Regression Results

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
Constant	1.042	0.412	—	2.529	.015	—
Training (X_1)	0.312	0.095	0.336	3.292	.002**	2.14
Education (X_2)	0.341	0.098	0.354	3.471	.001**	2.07
Emotional Intelligence (X_3)	-0.287	0.090	-0.301	-3.201	.002**	1.98

Note. N = 50; $R^2 = 0.546$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.516$; $F(3, 46) = 18.43$, $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient; VIF = variance inflation factor.

5. Hypothesis Testing Summary

H₁ is supported: Training exerted a significant positive effect on work performance ($\beta = 0.336$; $t = 3.292$; $p = .002$). H₂ is supported: Education exerted a significant positive effect on work performance ($\beta = 0.354$; $t = 3.471$; $p = .001$). H₃ is supported, but with a directional reversal: Emotional intelligence exerted a significant negative effect on work performance ($\beta = -0.301$; $t = -3.201$; $p = .002$), contrary to the dominant positive theoretical expectation.

DISCUSSION

1. Training and Work Performance

The positive and significant effect of training on employee work performance (H₁ supported) aligns with a robust body of empirical literature and human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Noe et al., 2022; Salas et al., 2019). Employees who undergo structured, well-designed training programs acquire enhanced technical competencies, procedural knowledge, and task-specific skills, all of which directly contribute to performance improvement. This finding is consistent with Blume et al.'s (2019) meta-analysis ($k = 201$; $N = 19,440$), which reported a corrected mean correlation of $r = .40$ between training and performance, particularly when training content closely mirrors job requirements. In the present context, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has periodically organized targeted training in administrative procedures, religious affairs facilitation, and public service quality—experiences directly reflected in employees' mean training scores ($M = 3.70$) and their reported performance levels.

From a learning transfer perspective (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2019), the observed effect reinforces the importance of training design, supervisory support, and organizational climate in facilitating the translation of acquired knowledge into workplace behavior. The positive coefficient ($B = 0.312$) further suggests that each unit increase in training quality and frequency is associated with a meaningful increment in performance, underscoring the return on investment of HRM training expenditures. These findings corroborate recent Indonesian public-sector studies (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Soeharno et al., 2023), thereby strengthening the generalizability of the training-performance relationship across bureaucratic institutional settings.

2. Education and Work Performance

The significant positive effect of education on work performance (H₂ supported) is theoretically grounded in human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974) and consistent with empirical evidence from comparable public-sector studies (Kim & Ployhart, 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Employees with higher formal educational attainment bring broader cognitive schemas, stronger analytical reasoning, and domain-relevant knowledge frameworks to their roles. In the Ministry of Religious Affairs, where tasks span legal-administrative documentation, interfaith coordination, and policy implementation, higher educational attainment is associated with greater capacity to understand, interpret, and execute complex regulatory requirements.

The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.354$) indicates that education is the strongest individual predictor in the model, underscoring its primacy as a general human capital investment. This finding aligns with Cascio and Boudreau's (2021) argument that education-driven cognitive capital serves as a durable and transferable asset across varied public-sector task demands. The positive education-performance relationship further supports the continued relevance of formal educational credentials as criteria in public-sector recruitment and development planning, consistent with merit-based civil service principles advocated in Indonesian government reform agendas (Badan Kepegawaian Negara, 2022).

3. Emotional Intelligence and Work Performance: Interpreting a Negative Effect

The most theoretically provocative finding of this study is the significant negative effect of emotional intelligence on work performance (H_3 supported with directional reversal; $\beta = -0.301$; $p = .002$). This result contradicts the dominant EI-performance hypothesis derived from Goleman (2020), Salovey and Mayer (1990), and O'Boyle et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis. However, an accumulating body of more nuanced research anticipates such context-dependent reversals, providing several theoretically coherent explanatory mechanisms.

First, person-job fit theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) stipulates that high performance emerges when individual attributes align with the demands of the work environment. Bureaucratic institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs operate within tightly rule-bound, procedurally standardized frameworks in which compliance, documentation accuracy, and hierarchical deference constitute primary performance criteria. In such environments, high EI—characterized by heightened sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics, emotional attunement, and relational flexibility—may represent a misfit with the rigid, impersonal demands of administrative tasks, thereby diverting cognitive and behavioral resources away from procedural accuracy (Humphrey et al., 2021; Matthews et al., 2022).

Second, cognitive resource theory (Kahneman, 2011) suggests that the continuous emotional monitoring and regulation associated with high EI may impose cognitive loads that compete with task-focused attentional resources, resulting in reduced task-performance efficiency in structured administrative roles. Third, Fiori and Antonakis's (2021) experimental evidence demonstrates that EI predicts performance primarily in emotionally complex, interpersonal roles—such as sales, counseling, or leadership—and not in procedural, compliance-centered roles. The Indonesian public bureaucracy, characterized by centralized authority structures, formal reporting hierarchies, and rule-driven evaluation systems (Badan Kepegawaian Negara, 2022), represents precisely the type of environment in which EI offers limited performance-relevant utility. This interpretation is further supported by Motik's (2023) Indonesian study, which found non-significant EI-performance associations in a similar educational bureaucracy, and by Maiyanti et al.'s (2023) study in the Solok City Education Department, where emotional competencies were overshadowed by technical experience and domain expertise. Together, these findings contribute to a

growing contextual reconceptualization of EI's role in organizational performance, suggesting that EI's predictive value is not universal but is meaningfully contingent on the emotional demands and structural features of the organizational environment.

4. Theoretical Implications

This study extends human capital theory by demonstrating that not all forms of individual capital contribute positively to performance across all organizational contexts. Specifically, emotional capital—as operationalized through EI—may be less productive than technical and educational capital in procedurally complex, compliance-heavy institutions. The findings also advance the understanding of person-job fit by providing empirical evidence that high EI can constitute a misfit in bureaucratic roles, thus contributing to, rather than mitigating, performance deficits. This nuance enriches existing EI conceptualizations (Mayer et al., 2016; O'Boyle et al., 2011) and calls for more context-sensitive theorizing of EI's role in HRM.

5. Practical and Managerial Implications

For HRM practitioners in Indonesian government institutions, these findings provide several actionable directives. First, investment in structured, need-specific training programs should be prioritized as a high-yield HRM intervention, with attention to training design, transfer climate, and alignment with specific job task requirements. Second, recruitment, promotion, and professional development frameworks should foreground formal educational attainment as a valid and potent predictor of civil servant performance. Third, while EI training programs may be valuable for roles with high interpersonal or leadership demands, their application should be carefully calibrated to role requirements and organizational context. In procedural government settings, investments in technical competence development and knowledge-building are likely to yield greater performance returns than broad-based EI training.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the effects of training, education, and emotional intelligence on employee work performance in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Konawe Regency, Indonesia. Using multiple linear regression with a census sample of 50 employees, the study yielded three principal findings. Training exerts a significant positive effect on work performance, consistent with human capital theory and social-cognitive theory. Education exerts the strongest positive effect on work performance, affirming the centrality of formal educational attainment as a general human capital investment. Contrary to dominant theoretical expectations, emotional intelligence exerts a significant negative effect on work performance, a finding interpreted through person-job fit theory and the procedural-compliance demands of the bureaucratic organizational context.

These findings carry important implications for HRM policy in Indonesian public-sector institutions, supporting prioritized investments in targeted training and formal education over context-misaligned EI development programs. Several limitations warrant acknowledgment: the sample is restricted to a single institution in one regency, limiting generalizability; cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; common method variance is a potential concern in single-source survey designs; and the negative EI effect requires further theoretical elaboration through qualitative investigation. Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs, expand sampling across multiple public institutions, incorporate objective performance measures, and investigate potential mediators and moderators—such as job autonomy, organizational climate, and role emotional demands—that may clarify the conditions under which EI enhances or diminishes work performance.

FURTHER STUDY

This study still has limitations, so further research on the topic 'The Effect of Training, Education, and Emotional Intelligence on Employee Work Performance: Evidence from a Government Religious Institution' is needed to improve this study and add insights for both the writer and the readers.

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