

RESEARCH

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Constructing Teacher Work Quality in Public Secondary Schools: Islamic Spiritual Values and Professional Practice in Jambi, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study explores how teachers in public secondary schools construct work quality in relation to instructional supervision, pedagogical competence, and work discipline. A qualitative case study was conducted involving 25 science and mathematics teachers from five schools in Jambi Province, Indonesia, selected through purposive maximum variation sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that teachers construct work quality as a multidimensional concept encompassing professional responsibility, continuous learning, relational collaboration, and spiritual values. Instructional supervision is perceived as effective when it is developmental, relational, and action-oriented, although its implementation varies across school contexts due to leadership capacity and infrastructural disparities. Pedagogical competence is understood as a continuous developmental process shaped by training access, workload, and teaching assignments, while work discipline reflects both institutional compliance and internal commitment. The study also highlights the significant role of Islamic values, particularly amanah (trust), ibadah (worship), and ikhlas (sincere intention), in shaping teachers' professional identity and motivation. These findings contribute to a more context-sensitive understanding of teacher work quality by integrating professional, relational, and spiritual dimensions within educational practice.

Keywords: instructional supervision; pedagogical competence; teacher work quality; work discipline

Introduction

Teacher work quality remains a critical determinant of educational effectiveness, influencing student achievement, institutional performance, and broader societal development (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Hedrick-Shaw, 2025). In science and mathematics education, teacher quality is particularly crucial because it shapes students' readiness to participate in increasingly knowledge-based economies (Dhanjani et al., 2024). Recent global disruptions have intensified challenges in sustaining a stable and high-quality teaching workforce, including increased attrition, professional burnout, and unequal access to developmental support. These realities suggest that teacher work quality should not be understood merely through generalized performance indicators, but as a

contextually constructed professional phenomenon shaped by institutional, relational, and socio-cultural realities. In the Indonesian context, where educational practice is often intertwined with ethical and religious values, understanding how teacher work quality is constructed becomes particularly significant.

In Indonesia, teacher quality remains a persistent policy priority, yet significant challenges endure in ensuring equitable access to quality teachers. The teacher certification program, implemented over two decades, has not consistently improved pedagogical performance, especially in regions with limited professional development access (Sainah et al., 2025). Teacher distribution remains unequal, with concentrations in urban centers and shortages in Frontier, Remote, and Disadvantaged areas. These challenges are compounded by teacher quantity planning issues, where recruitment decisions often fail to reflect actual school needs due to inaccurate data and weak coordination. The interrelated nature of teacher quantity, quality, and distribution demands an integrative approach to understanding teacher work quality beyond simplistic administrative or performance-based metrics.

Provinsi Jambi presents a compelling context for investigating teacher work quality construction. With 559 public secondary schools employing 9,906 teachers across 11 districts (BPS Provinsi Jambi, 2025), the province exhibits Indonesia's educational diversity from urban schools in Jambi City with abundant resources to remote schools in Merangin and Kerinci where geographical isolation compounds professional challenges. Recent research identifies significant variations in teacher distribution and quality, with competency improvement programs showing inconsistent effectiveness, especially in areas with limited access (Sainah et al., 2025). Teachers in rural Jambi face "precarious" conditions job insecurity, low wages, and limited professional support that shapes their motivation and commitment (Hidayati et al., 2025). These realities provide a rich landscape for understanding how teachers construct meaning around work quality.

The theoretical foundation encompasses three interconnected dimensions. Instructional supervision, conceptualized as a developmental process rather than administrative oversight, guides teachers toward improved performance through coaching and professional development (Glickman et al., 2018). Effective supervision positions principals as facilitators who provide constructive feedback. However, persistent obstacles include limited opportunities for pedagogical skill development, inconsistent supervision, and inadequate resources (Indriani et al., 2025). Coaching-based approaches like TIRTA-Innovative Coaching Flow show promise, yet implementation remains constrained by insufficient training and limited institutional support.

Pedagogical competence encompasses teachers' understanding of learners, curriculum design, instructional implementation, and assessment (Shulman, 1987). In Jambi, while teachers demonstrate awareness of these dimensions, competence development faces substantial barriers including limited training access, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient resources (Sainah et al., 2025). Although pedagogical competence significantly influences student outcomes (Khotimah, 2024), certification programs have not consistently improved classroom practice (Sainah et al., 2025). The challenge is acute for science and mathematics teachers, who must integrate content knowledge with pedagogical skills (Thompson-Lee et al., 2025).

Work discipline involves institutional compliance and personal commitment. Research in Jambi documents persistent challenges including tardiness, incomplete lesson planning, and inconsistent attendance (Agustin, 2024). Principals employ multiple strategies motivation, modeling, rules, supervision, sanctions, and rewards (Siskawati et al., 2024). However, enforcement is hampered by limited teacher responsibility, personal commitments, geographical distance, and professional precarity (Handayani et al., 2024; Hidayati et al., 2025). Work discipline must be

examined within structural and cultural contexts shaping teachers' professional lives.

Despite substantial quantitative research examining relationships between supervision, competence, discipline, and teacher performance in Jambi, a critical gap persists. Existing studies demonstrate correlations supervision with work quality at $r=0.462$ and leadership competence with performance at $\beta=0.387$ (Firmansyah, 2025; Joni et al., 2025; Sumirah, 2020). However, these statistical relationships reveal little about how teachers themselves construct meaning around work quality—what it means to be a "quality teacher" from their lived perspectives, how they experience supervision, how they navigate pedagogical development, and how they reconcile disciplinary expectations with personal, cultural, and ethical values. The absence of such emic perspectives leaves a crucial gap in understanding the phenomenon that quantitative studies merely measure.

This study addresses that gap through a qualitative case study prioritizing teachers' voices. Responding to calls to understand what it means to be a teacher beyond measurable impact (White, Simone, 2025), this research explores how teachers in Jambi construct work quality in relation to instructional supervision, pedagogical competence, and work discipline. The research questions are: (1) How do teachers construct meaning around work quality? (2) How do supervision, competence, and discipline shape this construction? (3) What cultural and religious values, particularly Islamic perspectives, inform teachers' understanding? The novelty of this study lies in its qualitative reconceptualization of teacher work quality as a multidimensional construct shaped not only by professional practices, but also by Islamic spiritual values embedded within teachers' lived professional experiences. Its contribution extends beyond conventional performance-based understandings of teacher quality by offering a context-sensitive interpretation of how professional identity, ethical orientation, institutional realities, and religiously informed values interact in educational practice.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2018) to explore how teachers construct their work quality in relation to instructional supervision, pedagogical competence, and work discipline in public secondary schools. This design was selected as it enables in-depth, contextualized understanding of complex phenomena within real-life settings, allowing the research to capture teachers' lived experiences and meaning-making processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted in Jambi Province, Indonesia, which has 559 public secondary schools employing 9,906 teachers across 11 districts with diverse geographical and cultural characteristics, providing a rich context for examining variations in teacher work quality construction (BPS, 2025; Kemdikdasmen, 2025). Participants were selected using purposive maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2015) to capture diverse perspectives based on school location (urban, semi-urban, and rural areas), school size (small, medium, and large institutions), teacher experience (junior teachers with 3-10 years, mid-career with 11-20 years, and senior teachers with over 20 years of service), and subject specialization, resulting in 25 teachers from five public secondary schools, comprising 15 science teachers and 10 mathematics teachers to align with the journal's scope on science and mathematics education. The schools were selected from three districts representing different contexts: Kota Jambi (urban), Kabupaten Muaro Jambi (semi-urban), and Kabupaten Merangin (rural), based on official distribution data of secondary schools in the province (Kemdikdasmen, 2025). Data were collected through three techniques to ensure comprehensiveness and triangulation. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting 60-90 minutes were conducted with each participant using an interview guide developed from the

theoretical frameworks of instructional supervision (Glickman et al., 2018), pedagogical competence and work discipline (Itang, 2015) with questions designed to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making regarding each dimension. Second, participant observation was conducted during school activities, including teachers' meetings, classroom teaching sessions, and supervision encounters, with detailed field notes recorded systematically to capture contextual nuances and non-verbal aspects of teacher experiences. Third, document analysis was performed on teacher supervision records, lesson plans, teacher attendance logs, school policy documents, and professional development records to triangulate and contextualize interview and observation data. Data analysis followed (Braun & Clarke, 2022) six-phase thematic analysis framework: data familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes; initial coding using both deductive codes derived from the theoretical framework and inductive codes emerging from the data; theme generation by grouping codes into potential themes; theme review to ensure coherence and distinctiveness; theme definition and naming; and report writing with illustrative quotations. To ensure trustworthiness and rigor, this study employed triangulation of data sources by comparing interview accounts with observational notes and documentary evidence; member checking by returning interview transcripts and preliminary findings to participants for verification and clarification; and peer debriefing through regular discussions with two senior researchers in educational management who reviewed the coding process and emerging themes (Bresler, 1994). Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university committee, all participants provided written informed consent after receiving comprehensive information about the research purpose and procedures, and pseudonyms are used throughout this article to protect participants' identities and ensure confidentiality.

Results

Teachers' Construction of Work Quality

Participants constructed work quality as a multidimensional concept beyond administrative compliance, encompassing professional responsibility, continuous improvement, and meaningful student outcomes. A senior science teacher explained, "*Kualitas kerja itu bukan hanya tentang kelengkapan administrasi, tapi bagaimana kita bertanggung jawab terhadap masa depan siswa. Saya merasa pekerjaan saya berkualitas jika siswa saya paham dan bisa menerapkan ilmu dalam kehidupan mereka*" (Teacher 3, urban school). This commitment to student development emerged as the ultimate measure of professional success.

Work quality was also viewed as an ongoing developmental process. A mathematics teacher reflected, "*Kualitas kerja itu seperti perjalanan, bukan tujuan. Setiap tahun ada tantangan baru, siswa baru, kurikulum baru. Saya harus terus belajar dan beradaptasi. Kalau berhenti belajar, saya merasa kualitas saya menurun*" (Teacher 12, rural school). Continuous learning was essential for maintaining quality.

Teachers emphasized relational collaboration. A young science teacher noted, "*Saya merasa kerja saya berkualitas kalau bisa bekerja sama dengan rekan sejawat, saling berbagi ide, dan mendapatkan dukungan dari kepala sekolah*" (Teacher 7, semi-urban school). This highlights the social embeddedness of professional practice.

Integration of spiritual values was salient, particularly in rural schools. A senior teacher stated, "*Mengajar itu ibadah. Saya yakin Allah melihat niat dan usaha saya. Jadi kualitas kerja saya bukan hanya dinilai atasan, tapi juga pertanggungjawaban di akhirat*" (Teacher 19, rural school).

Tensions emerged between external accountability and internal standards. A mathematics teacher complained, "*Kadang saya sibuk mengurus administrasi yang tidak ada hubungannya*

dengan mengajar. Laporan ini itu, tapi waktu untuk mempersiapkan pembelajaran berkualitas jadi berkurang" (Teacher 5, urban school).

Table 1 presents a summary of the main themes and sub-themes identified in teachers' constructions of work quality, along with the frequency of occurrence across the 25 participants.

Table 1. Themes in Teachers' Construction of Work Quality

Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequency (n=25)
Professional Responsibility	Commitment to student outcomes	22
	Moral obligation to society	18
	Accountability beyond administration	20
Continuous Learning	Adaptation to curriculum changes	19
	Self-directed professional development	17
	Learning from experience	16
Relational Collaboration	Collegial support and sharing	18
	Teamwork in school activities	15
	Positive relationships with principal	14
Spiritual Values	Teaching as worship (ibadah)	15
	Trust from God (amanah)	14
	Sincere intention (ikhlas)	13
Tension with Accountability	Bureaucratic burden	16
	Disconnect from classroom reality	14

Instructional Supervision as Supportive Mechanism

Teachers viewed instructional supervision as supportive when conducted collaboratively and developmentally. A science teacher described, "*Supervisi yang saya rasakan bermanfaat itu ketika kepala sekolah masuk kelas bukan untuk mencari kesalahan, tapi untuk membantu saya melihat kekurangan dan memberi saran perbaikan*" (Teacher 9, semi-urban school). Relational quality was critical; a mathematics teacher noted, "*Kepala sekolah kami terbuka, mau mendengar, dan pendekatannya kekeluargaan. Jadi saya tidak takut dinilai, malah merasa didukung*" (Teacher 14, rural school).

However, supervision quality varied significantly. A veteran teacher shared, "*Ada kepala sekolah dulu yang supervisinya hanya formalitas. Masuk kelas bentar, centang-centang lembar observasi, lalu pergi. Tidak ada umpan balik, tidak ada tindak lanjut*" (Teacher 18, rural school). Geographical challenges compounded these issues; teachers in remote schools received infrequent supervision. A science teacher explained, "*Kepala sekolah kami harus membagi waktu ke beberapa sekolah... Jadinya supervisi jarang, kalau ada pun kadang terburu-buru*" (Teacher 21, rural school).

Supportive practices included regular observations with feedback, pre-observation conferences, and follow-up support. A teacher noted, "*Yang paling membantu itu kalau kepala sekolah tidak hanya memberi kritik, tapi juga mencarikan solusi. Misalnya, beliau menyarankan saya ikut pelatihan tertentu atau mengamati guru lain yang lebih berpengalaman*" (Teacher 6, urban school).

Table 2 summarizes teachers' perceptions of instructional supervision based on their experiences across different school contexts.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Supervision by School Context

Aspect of Supervision	Urban Schools (Kota Jambi)	Semi-Urban Schools (Muaro Jambi)	Rural Schools (Merangin/Kerinci)
Frequency of supervision	Regular (monthly)	Occasional (once per term)	Rare (once or twice per year)
Supervisory approach	Developmental and structured	Mixed, depends on principal	Often perfunctory, limited feedback
Principal availability	Full-time at school	Split time between	Often acting principal for

Follow-up support	Training and mentoring available	schools Limited follow-up	multiple schools Minimal or no follow-up
Teacher perception	Mostly positive, supportive	Variable, some dissatisfaction	Frustration with lack of support

Pedagogical Competence as Developmental Journey

Teachers constructed pedagogical competence as an ongoing journey requiring continuous learning and adaptation. A science teacher reflected, "*Kompetensi pedagogik itu tidak pernah selesai. Dulu saya mengajar dengan cara yang berbeda, sekarang harus berubah karena anak zamannya berbeda, kurikulumnya berbeda. Saya harus terus belajar*" (Teacher 15, urban school). They operationalized competence across four domains: understanding learners, designing instruction, implementing teaching, and assessment. A mathematics teacher explained, "*Saya harus paham dulu karakter siswa saya. Ada yang cepat paham, ada yang lambat. Cara menjelaskan konsep matematika harus disesuaikan*" (Teacher 8, semi-urban school).

Challenges were significant, especially in rural areas. A science teacher lamented, "*Kami jarang dapat pelatihan. Kalau pun ada, biasanya di kota, jauh dan mahal ongkosnya. Jadi saya belajar otodidak dari internet, tapi sinyal di sini lemah*" (Teacher 22, rural school). Innovation and adaptation were crucial; a young teacher shared, "*Saya belajar bikin media pembelajaran sederhana dari barang bekas, kadang pakai video dari YouTube kalau ada sinyal. Siswa lebih antusias*" (Teacher 1, urban school).

Facilitators included collegial collaboration and personal motivation. A teacher noted, "*Di sekolah kami ada komunitas belajar. Kami rutin diskusi, saling berbagi pengalaman, kadang saling observasi. Itu sangat membantu saya berkembang*" (Teacher 13, rural school). Barriers included heavy workloads, limited training, and non-linear assignments. A senior teacher noted, "*Kadang saya ingin ikut pelatihan, tapi bentrok dengan jadwal mengajar. Kalau saya tinggal, siapa yang mengajar siswa?*" (Teacher 17, rural school). A science teacher admitted, "*Saya lulusan biologi, tapi disuruh ngajar fisika juga. Awalnya berat sekali, saya harus belajar ulang konsep-konsep fisika*" (Teacher 16, rural school).

Table 3 presents the facilitating factors and barriers to pedagogical competence development as reported by teachers across different school contexts.

Table 3. Factors Influencing Pedagogical Competence Development

Category	Facilitating Factors	Barriers
Individual Factors	Personal motivation to improve (n=18) Self-directed learning (n=15) Reflection on practice (n=14)	Heavy teaching workload (n=16) Non-linear teaching assignments (n=12) Family responsibilities (n=10)
Social Factors	Collegial collaboration (n=16) Peer learning communities (n=14) Supportive supervision (n=15)	Isolation in remote schools (n=14) Lack of mentoring (n=13) Negative school culture (n=8)
Institutional Factors	Access to training programs (n=12) Adequate resources and facilities (n=10) School leadership support (n=16)	Limited training opportunities (n=19) Inadequate infrastructure (n=18) Budget constraints (n=15)
Technological Factors	Access to internet resources (n=11) Digital literacy (n=9) Technology training (n=8)	Poor internet connectivity (n=20) Lack of digital devices (n=16) Unreliable electricity (n=14)

Work Discipline: Compliance and Personal Commitment

Teachers constructed work discipline as dual-dimensional: external compliance and internal commitment. A senior teacher articulated, "*Disiplin itu bukan hanya datang tepat waktu dan pakai seragam lengkap. Itu bagian luar. Yang lebih dalam adalah disiplin hati—komitmen untuk*

menyelesaikan tugas, menyiapkan pelajaran dengan baik, dan tidak mengabaikan siswa meskipun tidak diawasi" (Teacher 11, semi-urban school). Yet challenges persisted; a young teacher noted, "Di sekolah saya ada guru yang sering datang terlambat, kadang tidak masuk tanpa kabar. Kalau ada piket, kadang tidak dijalankan" (Teacher 2, urban school).

Principals employed multiple strategies. A teacher explained, "Kepala sekolah kami rutin mengingatkan, memberi motivasi, dan beliau sendiri jadi teladan. Datang pagi, pulang sore. Kalau ada yang melanggar, ditegur dulu secara pribadi, kalau diulang baru ada sanksi" (Teacher 6, urban school).

Barriers included geographical distance and personal factors. A rural teacher said, "Jarak rumah ke sekolah jauh, transportasi sulit. Kadang saya terlambat bukan karena malas, tapi memang tidak ada angkutan" (Teacher 20, rural school). Burnout also played a role; a veteran reflected, "Ada teman yang dulu disiplin, sekarang mulai longgar. Mungkin karena lelah, atau karena merasa tidak dihargai" (Teacher 17, rural school).

Leadership was critical. A teacher stated, "Kepala sekolah yang tegas tapi adil membuat kami segan melanggar. Tapi kalau pemimpinnya sendiri tidak disiplin, kami juga ikut-ikutan longgar" (Teacher 5, urban school). Discipline was also socially negotiated; a science teacher noted, "Disiplin itu juga soal teman-teman. Kalau di lingkungan kami semua disiplin, kami saling menjaga. Tapi kalau ada yang mulai longgar, bisa menular" (Teacher 9, semi-urban school).

Table 4 summarizes the disciplinary challenges reported by teachers and the strategies employed by school principals to address them.

Table 4. Disciplinary Challenges and Principal Strategies

Category	Specific Issues	Principal Strategies
Attendance	Tardiness (reported by 14 teachers) Absence without notification (12) Leaving early (10)	Modeling punctuality Clear attendance policies Regular monitoring
Classroom Responsibilities	Not entering class on time (11) Incomplete lesson planning (15) Neglecting picket duties (9)	Scheduled classroom visits Lesson plan reviews Rotating duty schedules with oversight
Professional Tasks	Incomplete administrative tasks (16) Missing meetings (8) Lack of follow-up on student work (10)	Regular administrative checks Meeting attendance requirements Work evaluation reviews
Attitude and Commitment	Low sense of responsibility (13) Burnout and disengagement (11) Negative influence on colleagues (7)	Motivational talks and counseling Recognition and rewards Peer mentoring and team building

Cultural and Religious Values in Quality Construction

A distinctive finding was the pervasive influence of Islamic values. A senior teacher stated, "Bagi saya, mengajar itu bukan sekadar profesi. Ini adalah ibadah. Setiap ilmu yang saya sampaikan, setiap waktu yang saya luangkan untuk siswa, itu semua dicatat sebagai amal" (Teacher 19, rural school). Religious values shaped all dimensions: supervision as *silaturahmi*, pedagogical competence as *sedekah jariah*, and discipline as accountability to God. A teacher explained, "Saya menerima supervisi sebagai bentuk *silaturahmi* dan saling mengingatkan dalam kebaikan" (Teacher 14, rural school). Another shared, "Saya berusaha mengajar dengan baik karena ini tanggung jawab saya sebagai pendidik. Dalam Islam, menuntut ilmu itu wajib, dan mengajarkan ilmu itu sedekah jariah" (Teacher 8, semi-urban school). Discipline was motivated by "*takut akhirat*" rather than fear of sanctions (Teacher 22, rural school).

Communal values strengthened professional relationships. A teacher noted, "Kami di sini seperti keluarga. Saling membantu, saling mendoakan... Ini menguatkan kami dalam bekerja" (Teacher 10, semi-urban school). Religious activities reinforced commitment; a teacher shared,

"Setiap pagi Jumat kami ada kuliah tujuh menit sebelum masuk kelas. Bergantian guru memberi tausiah. Ini mengingatkan kami tentang tujuan bekerja" (Teacher 3, urban school). The concept of *ikhlas* was central; a senior teacher reflected, "Gaji kami tidak besar, tapi saya ikhlas. Saya tidak mengharap pujian atau imbalan dunia. Kalau niatnya ikhlas, kerja terasa ringan" (Teacher 17, rural school).

Table 5 presents the Islamic values that teachers explicitly connected to their construction of work quality.

Table 5. Islamic Values in Teachers' Construction of Work Quality

Islamic Value	Meaning	Application to Work Quality	Frequency (n=25)
Amanah	Trust from God	Professional responsibility as divine trust	14
Ibadah	Worship	Teaching as an act of worship	16
Ikhlas	Sincere intention	Working for God's pleasure, not material reward	13
Ukhuwah	Brotherhood/sisterhood	Collegial relationships as family bonds	12
Silaturahmi	Maintaining good relations	Supervision as friendly advice, not judgment	11
Sedekah Jariah	Ongoing charity	Teaching knowledge as continuous charity	10
Ta'awun	Mutual cooperation	Helping colleagues as religious duty	9
Tawakkal	Reliance on God	Trusting God after doing one's best	8

Summary of Thematic Findings

Figure 1 presents a spiritual values-based teacher work quality model derived from the thematic analysis of participants' narratives. The model positions Islamic values including *amanah* (trust), *ibadah* (worship), *ikhlas* (sincere intention), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *silaturahmi* (maintaining good relations), *sedekah jariah* (ongoing charity), *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation), and *tawakkal* (reliance on God) as the normative and ethical foundation that underpins all dimensions of teacher work quality. These spiritual values serve as an internal driving force that shapes three core dimensions of quality construction: professional responsibility (commitment to student outcomes and moral duty), continuous learning (adaptation, innovation, and reflection), and relational collaboration (collegial support, teamwork, and principal-teacher relationships). These constructions are influenced by contextual factors including geographical location (urban, semi-urban, rural), school culture, leadership quality, and resource availability. The model further illustrates how these internal constructions manifest in professional practice through instructional supervision experiences, pedagogical competence development, and work discipline practices. This integrated framework captures the complex interplay between spiritual values, contextual factors, internal meaning-making processes, and observable professional behaviors that collectively constitute teacher work quality.

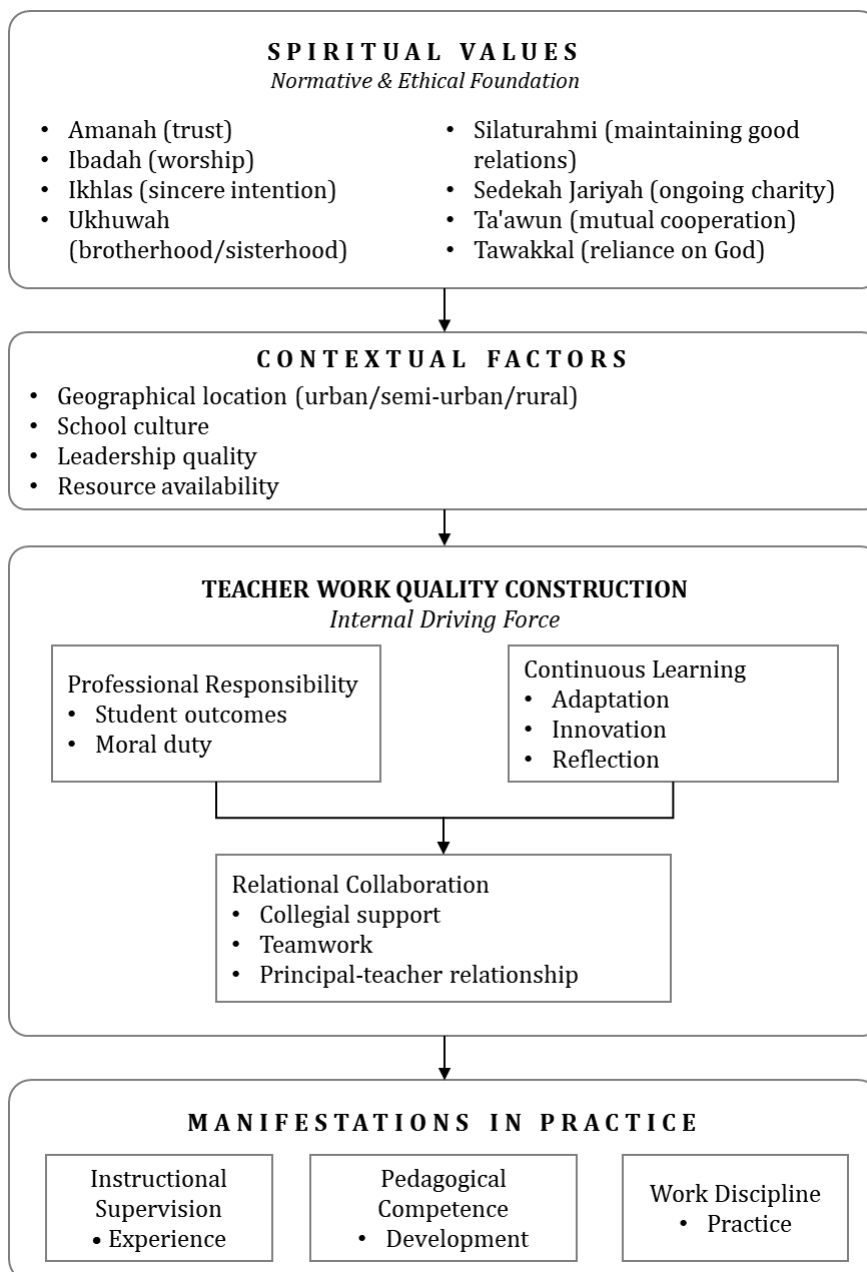


Figure 1. Spiritual Values–Based Teacher Work Quality Model
 Source: Developed by the authors based on thematic analysis of qualitative data.

The model illustrates the foundational role of eight Islamic values identified in the study—*amanah* (trust), *ibadah* (worship), *ikhlas* (sincere intention), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *silaturahmi* (maintaining good relations), *sedekah jariah* (ongoing charity), *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation), and *tawakkal* (reliance on God)—as the normative and ethical foundation. Contextual factors (geographical location, school culture, leadership quality, resource availability) influence the construction of teacher work quality. The core dimensions of professional responsibility, continuous learning, and relational collaboration function as internal driving forces. These internal constructions manifest in observable professional practices: instructional supervision experiences, pedagogical competence development, and work discipline practices.

In summary, the findings reveal that teacher work quality is constructed through complex interrelationships among professional, developmental, relational, and spiritual dimensions, all shaped by the specific contexts in which teachers work.

Discussion

Teachers' Multidimensional Construction of Work Quality

The findings reveal that teachers in Jambi Province construct work quality as a multidimensional concept encompassing professional responsibility, continuous learning, relational collaboration, and spiritual values. This emic understanding extends beyond narrow, indicator-based definitions prevalent in quantitative research (Firmansyah, 2025; Sumirah, 2020) suggesting that teacher work quality is experienced not merely as measurable performance, but as a lived professional reality shaped by ethical commitment, adaptation, and social relationships. The emphasis on meaningful student outcomes as the ultimate measure of quality aligns with international literature positioning student learning at the center of teaching effectiveness (Hedrick-Shaw, 2025; Vidoni et al., 2007) while the explicit inclusion of spiritual values reflects the distinctive socio-cultural context in which these teachers work.

The finding that teachers view work quality as an ongoing developmental journey rather than a fixed condition supports contemporary understandings of teacher professional learning as a lifelong process (Avalos, 2011). This interpretation challenges one-time or purely administrative evaluations of teacher quality by highlighting adaptation, reflection, and continuous improvement as essential dimensions of professional practice. In the Jambi context, where teachers navigate changing policy expectations, uneven institutional support, and diverse learner needs, such developmental orientation becomes particularly significant (Joni et al., 2025).

The relational dimension of work quality, reflected in teachers' emphasis on collaboration and collegial support, reinforces international evidence on the importance of professional communities in strengthening teacher effectiveness (Vangrieken et al., 2015). It also resonates with (Masbirorotni et al., 2025) finding that positive relational experiences contribute significantly to teacher performance in Jambi. Taken together, these findings suggest that teacher work quality should be understood not only as an individual professional attribute, but also as a socially constructed and relationally sustained practice.

Supervision as Supportive Mechanism: Conditions and Variations

The findings indicate that teachers construct instructional supervision as meaningful when it is developmental, relational, and action-oriented rather than merely administrative. This aligns with (Glickman et al., 2018) developmental supervision model and coaching-oriented approaches described by (Indriani et al., 2025). Teachers' preference for supervisors who act as facilitators rather than inspectors suggests that supervision contributes to teacher work quality when it fosters trust, constructive dialogue, and practical professional support rather than compliance monitoring (Napiah, 2025).

However, substantial variations in supervision quality reveal that its contribution to teacher work quality remains context-dependent. Constraints such as limited supervisory training, inadequate follow-up, inconsistent implementation, and resource limitations have also been documented in prior studies (Pitri, 2025). The geographical barriers experienced by teachers in remote schools further reinforce disparities in professional support between urban and rural settings (Sainah et al., 2025). These findings suggest that supervision shapes teacher work quality positively only when institutional capacity supports meaningful implementation.

Teachers' receptivity to supervision also depends on perceived supervisor credibility, particularly subject-matter understanding. This extends (Demir & Kalman, 2025) findings regarding instructional leadership effectiveness, suggesting that professional legitimacy matters in shaping whether supervision is experienced as developmental support or bureaucratic obligation.

Pedagogical Competence as Developmental Journey: Opportunities and Barriers

Teachers construct pedagogical competence as a continuous developmental process requiring adaptation, reflection, and sustained professional learning, consistent with (Taber, 2014) understanding of pedagogical knowledge as dynamic and context-sensitive. Their emphasis on learner understanding, instructional design, implementation, and assessment reflects established pedagogical competence domains (Subagia, 2025). This suggests that pedagogical competence is not perceived as a fixed qualification, but as an evolving professional capacity directly shaping teachers' sense of work quality.

At the same time, teachers identified substantial barriers including limited access to professional development, heavy workloads, infrastructural constraints, and non-linear teaching assignments. These findings support concerns raised in prior studies regarding unequal competency development opportunities and weak institutional support (Amzat et al., 2022; Awang et al., 2025). The issue of teachers being assigned outside their disciplinary expertise is particularly significant, as it creates tension between institutional demands and professional preparedness (Anggraini et al., 2024; Holloway & Brass, 2018), especially in science and mathematics contexts requiring specialized content mastery (Cabahug et al., 2024).

Despite these constraints, teachers demonstrated agency through collegial collaboration, self-directed learning, and adaptive strategies. This reinforces evidence that collaborative professional cultures remain important mechanisms for competence development (Muhajirin, 2025; Samsu, 2022) suggesting that teacher work quality is shaped not only by formal institutional support, but also by teachers' own professional resilience and collective learning practices.

Work Discipline: Beyond Compliance to Commitment

Teachers construct work discipline not merely as compliance with institutional rules, but as a combination of external accountability and internal professional commitment. This extends motivational perspectives distinguishing extrinsic and intrinsic drivers of workplace behavior (Ebuara & Coker, 2012; Itang Sapwan et al., 2025). The notion of internalized commitment, reflected in teachers' emphasis on *disiplin hati*, suggests that discipline becomes meaningful when it is understood as professional responsibility rather than imposed control.

Nevertheless, persistent issues such as tardiness, absenteeism, and incomplete lesson preparation confirm that compliance challenges remain significant (Idris, 2016b; Wati et al., 2024). Teachers' accounts indicate that disciplinary difficulties are shaped not only by individual attitudes, but also by structural realities including transportation barriers, geographical distance, workload pressures, and professional precarity (Kandau et al., 2024; E. D. Nakpodia, 2020). This challenges simplistic interpretations of discipline problems as purely personal failings.

The social dimension of discipline also emerged as important, with teachers describing discipline as collectively negotiated and reinforced through collegial norms. This suggests that efforts to strengthen discipline may be more effective when combining institutional expectations with collaborative professional cultures rather than relying solely on hierarchical enforcement.

Cultural and Religious Values: The Islamic Framework of Teacher Quality

The pervasive influence of Islamic values on teachers' construction of work quality represents one of the most distinctive findings of this study. Teachers framed their professional roles through concepts such as *amanah* (trust), *ibadah* (worship), *ikhlas* (sincere intention), and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood/sisterhood), indicating that teacher work quality is understood not only as professional performance but also as a spiritually grounded ethical responsibility. These findings suggest that, within the studied context, professional identity is deeply intertwined with religious

meaning-making and moral commitment.

Religious values also shaped how teachers interpreted instructional supervision, particularly when supervisory relationships were framed as *silaturahmi* and mutual encouragement toward professional improvement. This extends (Jumiati et al., 2024) findings regarding the importance of trust and shared values in supervision processes and supports (Rachmawati & Andari, 2023) argument that trust strengthens teachers' professional engagement. In this context, supervision was perceived more positively when embedded within relational and ethical rather than purely bureaucratic interactions.

Teachers similarly infused pedagogical competence with spiritual significance by interpreting teaching as *sedekah jariyah* (ongoing charity), providing moral motivation that sustained professional commitment despite institutional and material limitations. This finding extends (Awang et al., 2025) discussion of pedagogical competence by illustrating how spiritual orientation may reinforce teachers' willingness to continuously develop their professional capacities.

Work discipline was likewise interpreted through religious accountability. Teachers described discipline as motivated not only by institutional sanctions, but also by moral awareness and accountability before God, reflected in expressions such as *takut akhirat* and *tawakkal*. This interpretation supports (Aceh et al., 2024) findings regarding the relationship between discipline and work quality, while further demonstrating how religious values may internalize professional responsibility beyond external enforcement mechanisms.

The communal orientation reflected in teachers' emphasis on *ukhuwah* and *ta'awun* also highlights the relational dimension of Islamic values in shaping professional culture. Consistent with (Pusvitasari et al., 2025), positive interpersonal relationships contributed to teacher motivation and professional well-being. In this study, however, such relationships were additionally understood as religiously informed obligations of mutual support and cooperation within educational practice.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that teacher work quality in the Jambi context cannot be fully understood through technical or performance-based frameworks alone. Religious and spiritual values function as ethical, motivational, and relational resources that shape how teachers interpret supervision, competence, discipline, and professional responsibility. This underscores the importance of culturally responsive approaches in understanding teacher professional identity across diverse educational contexts.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study carry several implications for educational policy and professional practice in Jambi Province and similar contexts. First, the multidimensional nature of teacher work quality suggests that teacher development policies should move beyond narrow performance indicators and address relational, developmental, and spiritual dimensions of professional practice. Improvement efforts focused solely on measurable outcomes may overlook aspects of quality that teachers themselves consider meaningful and professionally sustaining.

Second, the variations in supervision quality across schools indicate the importance of strengthening principals' capacity in developmental and relational supervision approaches, particularly in geographically disadvantaged areas. Training initiatives should emphasize coaching skills, trust-building, and context-sensitive professional support for teachers. At the same time, barriers to pedagogical development such as limited training access, infrastructural constraints, heavy workloads, and non-linear teaching assignments highlight the need for more equitable and accessible professional development systems, especially for teachers in remote areas (Obae et al.,

2025; Weerasinghe et al., 2024a).

The findings also suggest that disciplinary policies may be more effective when accompanied by structural and professional support mechanisms rather than relying solely on enforcement. Teachers' experiences indicate that geographical challenges, workload pressures, and professional precarity significantly influence disciplined practice. In addition, the integration of Islamic values within teachers' professional identities suggests that culturally responsive development programs that acknowledge teachers' ethical and spiritual resources may strengthen motivation, commitment, and professional resilience in ways that purely technical approaches cannot.

Conclusion

This study explored how teachers in public secondary schools in Jambi Province construct work quality in relation to instructional supervision, pedagogical competence, and work discipline through a qualitative case study approach. The findings demonstrate that teacher work quality is not merely an administrative or performance-based construct, but a multidimensional professional reality shaped by professional responsibility, continuous learning, relational collaboration, and Islamic spiritual values embedded in teachers' lived experiences. Instructional supervision is perceived as meaningful when developmental, relational, and action-oriented; pedagogical competence is understood as an ongoing adaptive process; and work discipline is interpreted not only as institutional compliance but also as internally grounded professional commitment.

Most distinctively, this study reveals that teachers' professional meaning-making is significantly informed by Islamic spiritual values such as *amanah*, *ibadah*, *ikhlas*, *ukhuwah*, *ta'awun*, and *tawakkal*, which function as ethical and motivational resources in navigating institutional and contextual challenges. These findings extend conventional understandings of teacher quality by demonstrating that professional practice is inseparable from cultural, relational, and religiously informed dimensions within the studied context.

This study is limited by its focus on one provincial context, a subject-specific participant group, and a cross-sectional qualitative design that prioritizes depth over statistical generalizability. Future research may expand comparative, longitudinal, and multi-stakeholder investigations to further examine how teacher work quality is constructed across diverse educational and socio-religious settings. Nevertheless, the study offers a context-sensitive framework for understanding teacher work quality and suggests that teacher development policies may be more effective when they acknowledge not only technical competencies, but also the ethical, cultural, and spiritual resources teachers bring to their professional practice

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