

THE INFLUENCE OF LOCUS OF CONTROL, LEARNING ORIENTATION, AND WORK ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS IN MERTOYUDAN DISTRICT, MAGELANG REGENCY



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Abstract

Teacher performance plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of early childhood education, as teachers are responsible for facilitating children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. However, differences in teachers' performance indicate that both individual and organizational factors may influence their effectiveness. This study aims to examine the effects of locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics on the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers in Mertoyudan District, Magelang Regency. A quantitative approach with an associative research design was employed. The study involved 93 PAUD teachers selected through proportional sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, t-tests, F-tests, and coefficient of determination analysis. Prior to hypothesis testing, the research instrument satisfied validity and reliability requirements, while the regression model fulfilled the classical assumption tests. The findings revealed that locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics each had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance. Simultaneously, these three variables also significantly influenced teacher performance, explaining 49.7% of the variance, while the remaining 50.3% was attributable to other factors outside the research model. These findings suggest that strengthening teachers' internal control beliefs, fostering continuous learning orientation, and creating supportive work environments are essential strategies for enhancing teacher performance and improving the quality of early childhood education.

Keywords: Locus of Control; Learning Orientation; Work Environment Characteristics; Teacher Performance; Early Childhood Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar of national development because it equips individuals with the knowledge, competencies, and values required to participate effectively in an increasingly dynamic society. The quality of education is closely associated with the quality of its human resources, particularly teachers, who are directly responsible for facilitating learning and fostering students' development. Regardless of improvements in educational policies, curriculum reforms, and infrastructure, educational outcomes largely depend on teachers' ability to implement effective learning processes and continuously adapt to changing educational demands. Improving teacher performance has become one of the primary concerns in educational management as an essential strategy for enhancing educational quality and achieving sustainable learning outcomes. Previous studies have emphasized that teacher effectiveness is influenced not only by professional competence but also by psychological and organizational factors that enable teachers to respond effectively to educational challenges and continuously improve instructional quality (Silalahi et al., 2022; Virgana & Lapasau, 2024).

Within the national education system, Early Childhood Education (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini—PAUD) occupies a strategic position because it provides children's first formal learning experiences, laying the foundation for their cognitive, social, emotional, language, and moral development. PAUD teachers are expected to create nurturing and developmentally appropriate learning environments while responding to the diverse learning needs of young children. Fulfilling these responsibilities requires not only professional competence but also strong individual characteristics and supportive organizational conditions that enable teachers to maintain high levels of performance (Hatta et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2025).

The quality of early childhood education is closely associated with teachers' ability to perform their professional responsibilities effectively. High-performing teachers are better equipped to design meaningful learning experiences, manage classrooms, assess children's progress, and create supportive learning environments that foster holistic development. Conversely, variations in teachers' professional performance may reduce instructional effectiveness and limit opportunities for children to achieve optimal developmental outcomes, making the improvement of teacher performance a continuing priority in educational management (Noreen et al., 2025; Suchodoletz et al., 2023). Nevertheless, many Early Childhood Education institutions continue to experience disparities in teacher performance, indicating that professional competence alone is insufficient and that individual psychological characteristics together with organizational conditions may also influence teachers' effectiveness in carrying out their responsibilities (Maharani et al., 2025).

Teacher performance is not determined solely by pedagogical competence or academic qualifications. Rather, it represents the outcome of interactions among individual characteristics, professional commitment, and organizational conditions. Previous studies have suggested that teacher performance is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include competence, knowledge, motivation, personality, confidence, and responsibility, whereas external factors involve leadership, organizational support, career development opportunities, and work environment conditions. These factors interact in

shaping teachers' capacity to perform their professional responsibilities effectively and consistently (Liyun & Zhaolong, 2024; Putra et al., 2024; Taryana et al., 2023).

In practice, variations in teacher performance remain evident across educational institutions, including Early Childhood Education centers. Differences can be observed in teachers' initiative to develop innovative learning activities, participation in professional development programs, commitment to administrative responsibilities, and responsiveness to educational changes. Such variations indicate that teacher performance cannot be explained solely by professional competence but is also associated with psychological characteristics and organizational support that influence teachers' work behavior. Understanding these determinants is therefore essential for developing appropriate managerial strategies to improve teacher professionalism and educational effectiveness.

Considering the strategic role of PAUD teachers and the multidimensional nature of teacher performance, identifying the factors that contribute to professional effectiveness has become increasingly important. A comprehensive understanding of these determinants will provide educational institutions and policymakers with valuable information for designing programs that strengthen teacher competence, encourage continuous professional development, and establish supportive organizational environments. Such efforts are expected to improve teacher performance while simultaneously enhancing the quality of educational services delivered to young children.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The educational management literature recognizes locus of control as one of the psychological factors that may influence teacher performance. This construct reflects an individual's belief regarding the extent to which work outcomes are determined by personal effort rather than external circumstances. Teachers with a stronger internal locus of control are generally more willing to take responsibility, persist in overcoming instructional challenges, and proactively improve their teaching practices. Such characteristics are expected to encourage greater professional commitment and more effective instructional performance. Empirical evidence has consistently shown that internal locus of control contributes to higher work motivation, lower job stress, and better job performance across different organizational settings (Setyorini et al., 2024; AlKhaza'leh & Alomery, 2023; Aris et al., 2024).

Besides psychological characteristics, teachers' professional effectiveness is also influenced by their learning orientation, which reflects a continuous willingness to acquire new knowledge, develop competencies, and adapt to changing educational demands. Rapid curriculum reforms, technological advancement, and evolving learning expectations require teachers to engage in lifelong professional learning to maintain instructional quality. Teachers who demonstrate a stronger learning orientation are generally more open to innovation, responsive to constructive feedback, and capable of implementing improved teaching strategies in classroom practice. Recent empirical studies have shown that learning orientation enhances teachers' adaptability, strengthens organizational readiness for change, and contributes to individual and organizational effectiveness (Gruschka et al., 2025; Mohammed et al., 2024; Nor et al., 2024).

Teacher performance is likewise influenced by organizational conditions, particularly work environment characteristics. A supportive work environment extends beyond physical facilities to include leadership support, collegial relationships, communication quality, organizational climate, and opportunities for professional collaboration. These organizational conditions create psychological comfort that encourages teachers to perform their professional responsibilities more effectively. That work environment characteristics, together with locus of control and learning orientation, significantly enhanced employees' self-efficacy, indicating that organizational support strengthens individuals' confidence in accomplishing professional responsibilities. Such findings suggest that positive workplace conditions not only improve work effectiveness but also facilitate continuous professional growth (Kim, 2025; Setyawan et al., 2022).

Several recent studies have examined the relationship between psychological and organizational factors and professional performance across different institutional settings. (Aris et al., 2024; Tran & Tran, 2023) found that locus of control positively influenced employee performance through individual characteristics. Atamimi (2022) reported that locus of control significantly affected teacher performance through job satisfaction, whereas demonstrated that locus of control and self-efficacy significantly contributed to teacher competence. further concluded that locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics simultaneously influenced employees' self-efficacy, with learning orientation emerging as the strongest predictor. Collectively, these studies indicate that both psychological and organizational factors contribute substantially to professional performance across various organizational contexts.

Despite these important contributions, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, most previous studies were conducted in business organizations, banking institutions, government agencies, or secondary education settings, whereas empirical evidence involving Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers remains limited. Second, previous investigations frequently employed mediating variables such as self-efficacy, job satisfaction, competence, or individual characteristics, resulting in limited evidence regarding the direct contribution of locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics to teacher performance. Third, although previous research has examined these variables individually or through indirect relationships, studies simultaneously investigating the three variables within a single analytical framework focusing specifically on PAUD teachers are still scarce. Consequently, further empirical investigation is necessary to clarify how individual psychological characteristics and organizational work environments jointly influence teacher performance in early childhood education institutions (Anah et al., 2025; Cahyaningsih et al., 2026; Noor et al., 2020; Prasetyo & Ariawan, 2024)

Based on these considerations, this study investigates the influence of locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics on the performance of Early Childhood Education teachers in Mertoyudan District, Magelang Regency. Unlike previous studies that emphasized mediating variables or focused on non-educational organizations, this research directly examines the simultaneous contribution of three key determinants of teacher performance within the context of early childhood education. The findings are expected to enrich educational management literature while providing practical

recommendations for school principals and policymakers in designing evidence-based strategies to strengthen teacher professionalism and improve the quality of PAUD services.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative survey design to examine the influence of locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics on the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers in Mertoyudan District, Magelang Regency. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables the measurement of relationships among variables objectively through statistical analysis. The population consisted of all PAUD teachers registered in the Indonesian Kindergarten Teachers Association (Ikatan Guru Taman Kanak-kanak Indonesia—IGTKI) in Mertoyudan District, totaling 93 teachers. Since the population size was relatively small, all members of the population were involved as research respondents, resulting in a census-based study.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from indicators adapted from relevant theories and previous empirical studies. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Four research variables were measured, namely locus of control (X_1), learning orientation (X_2), work environment characteristics (X_3), and teacher performance (Y). Before data collection, the research instrument was tested for validity using the Pearson Product Moment correlation and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicated that all questionnaire items met the required validity criteria, while each construct demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient exceeding 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Data collection was conducted from PAUD teachers in Mertoyudan District during the 2025 academic year.

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondents' characteristics and the distribution of the research variables. To test the proposed hypotheses, the study applied simple linear regression to examine the partial effect of each independent variable on teacher performance and multiple linear regression to assess their simultaneous effects. Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, were conducted to ensure that the regression model met the required statistical assumptions. The significance of individual regression coefficients was evaluated using the t-test, whereas the overall model was assessed using the F-test. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to determine the proportion of variance in teacher performance explained by locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics. Statistical significance was established at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$), following the quantitative data analysis procedures recommended by Sugiyono (2022) and supported by recent applications in educational research (Silalahi et al., 2022).

Research Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical studies, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows: H1: Locus of control has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers; H2: Learning orientation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Early Childhood

Education (PAUD) teachers; H3: Work environment characteristics have a positive and significant effect on the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers; H4: Locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers.

Research Model

The research model illustrates the direct relationship between the three independent variables, namely locus of control (X_1), learning orientation (X_2), and work environment characteristics (X_3), and the dependent variable, teacher performance (Y). The conceptual framework proposes that each independent variable individually contributes to improving teacher performance, while their combined influence is expected to provide a stronger explanation of variations in teacher performance. This model can be illustrated as follows:

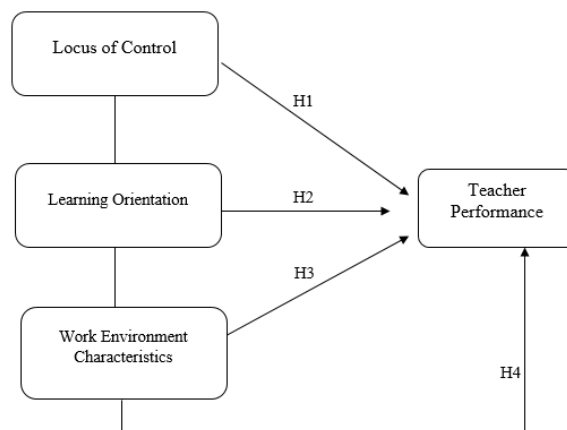


Figure 1.
Research Model

This conceptual model serves as the basis for testing the proposed hypotheses and evaluating the direct influence of locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics on teacher performance. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence that supports educational management strategies aimed at strengthening teacher professionalism and improving the quality of early childhood education in Mertoyudan District, Magelang Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics on the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers. The regression results are presented in Table:

Table 1.
Regression Analysis

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	19.141	6.624		2.890	.005		
	locus of control	.848	.442	.192	1.920	.058	.820	1.219
	orientasi pembelajaran	.241	.262	.105	.919	.361	.624	1.602
	karakteristik lingkungan kerja	.686	.216	.349	3.176	.002	.678	1.476

a. Dependent Variable: kinerja guru

Source: Data processed (2025)

Based on Table X, the estimated multiple regression equation can be formulated as follows:

$$Y=19.141+0.848X_1+0.241X_2+0.686X_3$$

The regression equation indicates that all independent variables have positive regression coefficients, suggesting that improvements in locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics tend to increase teacher performance. The constant value of 19.141 indicates the estimated level of teacher performance when all independent variables are assumed to remain constant.

The regression coefficient of locus of control is 0.848, indicating that every one-unit increase in teachers' locus of control is associated with an increase of 0.848 units in teacher performance, assuming the other variables remain constant. However, the statistical test produced a significance value of 0.058, which exceeds the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, although the relationship is positive, locus of control does not have a statistically significant effect on teacher performance. This finding suggests that teachers' beliefs regarding personal control over work outcomes alone are insufficient to produce meaningful differences in performance within the research context.

The coefficient for learning orientation is 0.241, indicating a positive relationship between learning orientation and teacher performance. Nevertheless, the significance value of 0.361 is considerably higher than 0.05, indicating that learning orientation does not significantly influence teacher performance. This result implies that teachers' willingness to acquire new knowledge and improve professional competencies has not yet translated into measurable improvements in work performance. One possible explanation is that professional development activities may not have been implemented consistently or effectively enough to influence teachers' daily performance.

In contrast, work environment characteristics demonstrate a positive and statistically significant influence on teacher performance. The regression coefficient of 0.686 indicates that improving work environment characteristics by one unit increases teacher performance by 0.686 units, assuming other variables remain unchanged. Furthermore, the significance value of 0.002 confirms that the effect is statistically significant at the 5% level. Among the three independent variables, work environment characteristics exhibit the largest standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.349$), indicating that this variable provides the strongest contribution to teacher performance.

The standardized beta coefficients further reveal the relative contribution of each independent variable. Work environment characteristics ($\beta = 0.349$) contribute more

substantially to teacher performance than locus of control ($\beta = 0.192$) and learning orientation ($\beta = 0.105$). These findings indicate that organizational conditions, including leadership support, communication, interpersonal relationships, and workplace climate, play a more important role in enhancing teacher performance than individual psychological factors in the context of PAUD institutions.

Locus of Control and Teacher Performance

The findings indicate that locus of control has a positive relationship with teacher performance, although its influence is not statistically significant. This suggests that teachers who possess stronger internal control beliefs tend to demonstrate greater responsibility, confidence, and persistence in carrying out their professional duties. However, these individual characteristics alone are insufficient to explain variations in teacher performance among Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers. This finding indicates that teachers' professional performance is likely influenced by a broader combination of personal and organizational factors rather than by individual psychological attributes alone.

The present finding differs from previous studies that reported a significant relationship between locus of control and work performance. Atamimi et al. (2022) found that locus of control positively influenced teacher performance through job satisfaction, while Alim (2021) concluded that stronger internal locus of control contributed to higher employee performance. Similarly, Aris et al. (2024) reported that employees with greater internal control tended to demonstrate higher work commitment and better performance outcomes. The inconsistency may be attributed to differences in research context, respondent characteristics, and institutional environments. In PAUD institutions, teacher performance is often influenced by collaborative practices, leadership support, and organizational conditions, reducing the direct contribution of individual psychological characteristics.

These findings suggest that strengthening teachers' internal locus of control remains important for fostering professional responsibility and commitment. However, efforts to improve teacher performance should also consider organizational support and professional development opportunities to ensure that individual motivation can be translated into effective teaching practices.

Learning Orientation and Teacher Performance

The findings indicate that learning orientation does not have a significant direct influence on teacher performance. Although teachers demonstrate a willingness to participate in professional development activities and continuously improve their competencies, these efforts do not necessarily translate into measurable improvements in daily teaching performance. This suggests that professional learning alone may be insufficient to enhance performance unless teachers are provided with adequate opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge within their instructional practices.

This finding differs from previous studies that reported a positive contribution of learning orientation to individual and organizational performance. Mohammed et al. (2024) found that learning orientation strengthens employees' adaptability and supports continuous organizational improvement, while Nor et al. (2024) emphasized that a strong learning orientation enhances organizational readiness for change and professional effectiveness. Similarly, Hao et al. (2024) argued that continuous learning contributes to better educational outcomes when supported by collaborative professional practices. The inconsistency observed in the present study may be explained by differences in organizational context and

the availability of institutional support that enables teachers to transfer newly acquired knowledge into classroom practice.

These findings imply that encouraging teachers to engage in continuous learning should be accompanied by supportive organizational mechanisms, including mentoring, collaborative professional learning communities, and regular opportunities to implement innovative instructional strategies. Without such institutional support, improvements in teachers' learning orientation may not produce substantial changes in professional performance.

Work Environment Characteristics and Teacher Performance

The findings indicate that work environment characteristics are the most influential factor affecting the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers. This result demonstrates that a supportive organizational environment enables teachers to carry out their professional responsibilities more effectively by providing positive leadership, open communication, collaborative working relationships, and adequate teaching facilities. Such conditions encourage teachers to remain motivated, committed, and focused on delivering high-quality learning experiences for young children.

The present finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of the work environment in improving employee and teacher performance. Bahtilla and Hui (2021) reported that supportive workplace conditions enhance employees' motivation and productivity by creating a positive organizational climate. Likewise, Marsen et al. (2021) found that the availability of adequate educational facilities and instructional resources contributes to more effective teaching practices. Similar evidence was reported by Sunaryo et al. (2023) and Dakhliatunnaviah and Adi (2024), who concluded that both physical and non-physical work environments significantly improve teachers' effectiveness by fostering collaboration, professional commitment, and organizational support.

These findings indicate that improving teacher performance should not rely solely on enhancing individual competencies but should also prioritize the development of supportive organizational environments. Strengthening leadership practices, improving communication among school members, promoting professional collaboration, and providing adequate learning facilities are practical strategies that can create favorable working conditions and support sustainable improvements in teacher performance.

Simultaneous Influence of Locus of Control, Learning Orientation, and Work Environment Characteristics on Teacher Performance

The findings demonstrate that locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics collectively contribute to explaining teacher performance, indicating that professional performance is influenced by the interaction of individual and organizational factors rather than by a single determinant. Although locus of control and learning orientation did not exhibit significant individual effects, their combined presence within the research model strengthens the explanation of teacher performance when considered alongside work environment characteristics. This suggests that teachers' professional effectiveness emerges from the integration of personal attributes and supportive organizational conditions.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that teacher performance is a multidimensional construct influenced by both psychological and environmental factors. Virgana and Lapasau (2024) argued that teachers' professional

performance is developed through the interaction of individual capabilities and institutional support. Likewise, Nor et al. (2024) highlighted that continuous learning becomes more effective when supported by an organizational climate that encourages knowledge sharing and professional collaboration. Similar evidence was reported by Sunaryo et al. (2023) and Dakhliatunnaviah and Adi (2024), who concluded that supportive work environments strengthen teachers' commitment and facilitate better professional performance. Collectively, these studies reinforce the notion that sustainable improvements in teacher performance require an integrated approach combining individual development with supportive organizational practices.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that educational institutions should not focus solely on enhancing teachers' personal competencies through training programs. Equal attention should be directed toward creating a supportive organizational environment characterized by effective leadership, collaborative professional relationships, open communication, and adequate instructional resources. Such a balanced strategy is more likely to promote continuous professional development and improve teacher performance within Early Childhood Education institutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, work environment characteristics have a positive and significant influence on the performance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers. In contrast, locus of control and learning orientation do not demonstrate a significant individual influence on teacher performance. These findings indicate that creating a supportive work environment, characterized by effective leadership, positive communication, collaborative relationships, and adequate facilities, plays a more important role in improving teacher performance than relying solely on teachers' individual psychological characteristics or learning orientation. Nevertheless, when examined simultaneously, locus of control, learning orientation, and work environment characteristics collectively contribute to explaining variations in teacher performance. Therefore, school principals and educational stakeholders should prioritize the development of supportive organizational environments while continuing to encourage teachers' professional development and strengthen their personal responsibility. Such integrated efforts are expected to enhance teacher performance and ultimately improve the quality of Early Childhood Education services in Mertoyudan District, Magelang Regency.

Furthermore, these findings provide empirical evidence that organizational factors play a more prominent role than individual psychological factors in influencing teacher performance within the context of Early Childhood Education, thereby enriching the literature on educational management and teacher performance.

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