

Communication Skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Work Culture As Determinants of Employee Performance in Indonesia's Nickel Mining Industry

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Abstract

Rising operational complexity, stringent safety regulations, and the necessity for efficient labor management have elevated employee performance to the level of a strategic priority in the nickel mining business. This research looks at how IMIP (Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park) businesses fare when it comes to communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture. Using survey data gathered from operational staff, a quantitative explanatory research approach was utilized. Lots of linear regressions were applied to the data. Results show that emotional intelligence, work culture, and communication skills abilities all have a favorable effect on individual and team performance. The capacity to control one's emotions and adjust to new situations is essential in high-risk industrial settings, and emotional intelligence was the best predictor of success among these factors. This study adds to the existing body of literature on organizational behavior by offering data collected from the nickel mining industry in Indonesia. Its practical implications for HRM practices in the mining industry center on the importance of developing integrated communication skills, enhancing emotional intelligence, and reinforcing work culture

Keywords: Communication Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Work Culture, Employee Performance, Nickel Mining Industry.

1. Introduction

The increasing adoption of clean energy technologies has significantly strengthened the global demand for nickel, particularly as a key component in rechargeable batteries and electric vehicle production. Supported by one of the largest nickel reserves worldwide, Indonesia has positioned itself as an important contributor to the global nickel supply chain through its downstream industrialization policy. This policy has accelerated investment in nickel processing and refining industries, creating substantial economic opportunities while increasing the need for a productive workforce capable of supporting more sophisticated industrial operations (IEA, 2022).

Central Sulawesi's Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP) is a game-changer for the country's nickel downstream industry (Dunia Energi, 2026; *Investasi IMIP*, 2026). As one of Southeast Asia's largest integrated nickel industrial parks, IMIP accommodates mining, smelting, refining, and various supporting industries within a single industrial ecosystem. The rapid growth of industrial activities has generated extensive employment opportunities while simultaneously increasing managerial challenges related to workforce productivity, operational coordination, organizational efficiency, and occupational safety (IMIP, 2025; Rusdinah & Tobing, 2025).

Compared with many service-oriented organizations, mining companies operate under substantially different working conditions. Employees are required to perform their duties in environments characterized by rotating work shifts, demanding production targets, hazardous operational settings, and rigorous occupational health and safety standards. Under these circumstances, technical expertise alone is insufficient. Employees must also possess behavioral competencies that enable them

to communicate effectively, adapt to changing operational demands, collaborate with colleagues, and maintain consistent performance. Consequently, employee performance has become a strategic indicator of organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability within mining companies.

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees accomplish assigned responsibilities in accordance with organizational objectives. Organizational behavior literature suggests that performance is shaped by the interaction of individual competencies and organizational factors. Robbins and Judge (2023) argue that performance results from the interaction between employees' abilities, motivation, and organizational support. Likewise, Mangkunegara (2017) emphasizes that employee performance encompasses work quality, work quantity, punctuality, responsibility, and the ability to achieve organizational standards. Therefore, improving employee performance requires organizations to develop not only employees' technical capabilities but also behavioral competencies that facilitate effective work behavior.

Among the behavioral competencies discussed in the organizational behavior literature, communication skills have received considerable attention (DeVito, 2022; Dini et al., 2024; Gunawan et al., 2025; Hamid et al., 2024; Melvina et al., 2024; Romadhoni et al., 2023; Triana & Pramana, 2025). Effective communication supports the accurate exchange of information, facilitates work coordination, and minimizes misunderstandings that may interfere with operational activities. In mining companies, where production processes require continuous coordination among multiple departments, ineffective communication may lead to operational disruptions, production delays, or even workplace accidents. Therefore, communication competence is considered an essential factor in achieving higher employee performance.

Emotional intelligence is another key performance indicator. A high level of emotional intelligence is characterized by perceiving, managing, and effectively expressing one's emotions in social situations. Workers with high EQ are better able to handle pressure on the job, settle disagreements with coworkers, stay motivated, and adjust to new policies and procedures (Adhika et al., 2022; Catur Widayati et al., 2021; Georgousopoulou et al., 2025; Gunawan et al., 2025; Hamid et al., 2024; Jibril et al., 2026; Natasya et al., 2025). These competencies become particularly important in mining companies where employees regularly encounter physically demanding tasks, time pressure, and high-risk operational environments.

Besides individual competencies, organizational factors also contribute significantly to employee performance. Work culture represents shared organizational values, norms, and behavioral expectations that guide employees in performing their duties. A strong work culture encourages discipline, teamwork, responsibility, integrity, and compliance with organizational procedures (Adhika et al., 2022; Catur Widayati et al., 2021; Georgousopoulou et al., 2025; Gunawan et al., 2025; Jodie Firjatullah et al., 2023; Nadia et al., 2023; Sugianto & Mas'ud, 2023). Within mining companies, work culture is closely associated with safety culture because adherence to operational procedures directly influences workplace safety and operational continuity. Therefore, strengthening work culture is expected to improve not only productivity but also organizational sustainability.

Previous studies have consistently reported positive relationships between communication skills, emotional intelligence, work culture, and employee

performance across various organizational settings. However, most empirical evidence has been generated from educational institutions, government organizations, manufacturing companies, financial institutions, and service industries. Studies conducted within the mining industry, particularly Indonesia's nickel mining sector, remain relatively limited. Moreover, previous findings have primarily examined these variables independently rather than integrating them into a comprehensive organizational behavior framework.

The limited empirical evidence within the mining sector indicates an important research gap. Mining organizations possess unique operational characteristics that differ substantially from other industries regarding occupational risks, workforce diversity, operational coordination, and safety requirements. Consequently, findings obtained from manufacturing or service organizations cannot be generalized directly to mining companies without empirical verification. This situation highlights the necessity of examining how communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture collectively influence employee performance within Indonesia's nickel mining industry.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the influence of communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture on employee performance among operational employees working within the Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP). Specifically, the study aims to examine how these three factors contribute to employee performance in Indonesia's nickel mining industry.

2. Literature Review

Organizational Behavior Theory

This research is grounded in Organizational Behavior Theory, which posits that employee performance is shaped by the interaction between individual characteristics and organizational conditions. According to Robbins and Judge (2023) organizational behavior examines how individuals and groups behave within organizations and how these behaviors influence organizational effectiveness. Behavioral competencies, interpersonal connections, organizational support systems, and technical competence are not the only factors that impact employee performance.

Mining companies operate in working environments that differ considerably from those of most service organizations. Employees are required to perform their duties under rotating work schedules, demanding production targets, hazardous operational conditions, and strict occupational health and safety standards. These circumstances require employees to possess behavioral competencies that support effective communication, emotional regulation, teamwork, and compliance with organizational values. Accordingly, Organizational Behavior Theory offers an appropriate framework for explaining employee performance in Indonesia's nickel mining industry.

Communication Skills and Employee Performance

Communication skills refer to an individual's ability to exchange information accurately, coordinate work activities effectively, and build productive relationships within the workplace. Effective communication enables employees to understand work instructions, provide constructive feedback, collaborate with colleagues, and support organizational objectives.

Within mining organizations, communication plays a crucial role because operational activities involve continuous coordination among production, maintenance, logistics, and safety units. Clear communication reduces misunderstandings, facilitates faster decision-making, and helps prevent operational disruptions that may affect productivity or workplace safety. Consequently, employees with stronger communication skills are expected to perform their responsibilities more effectively.

Efficacious communication boosts productivity, according to prior empirical research. Guided by Organizational Behavior Theory, communication facilitates coordination, strengthens collaboration, and enables employees to accomplish work objectives more efficiently. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Communication skills positively influence employee performance.

Emotional Intelligence and Employee Performance

Having high emotional intelligence means you can read people's emotions, keep them in check, and use them to your advantage in social situations. Goleman (2020) considers emotional intelligence to encompass qualities like self-awareness, motivation, empathy, and social skills, as well as the ability to regulate one's own emotions. Individuals are able to adapt to organizational problems, settle interpersonal issues, and maintain psychological stability through these talents.

Mining companies present demanding working conditions characterized by operational pressure, rotating work schedules, and high occupational risks. Employees frequently encounter situations requiring emotional control, adaptability, and effective cooperation with colleagues. Individuals possessing higher emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to cope with workplace stress, resolve conflicts, maintain motivation, and sustain high levels of performance despite challenging operational environments.

Previous empirical evidence consistently indicates that emotional intelligence contributes positively to employee performance in various organizational settings. Employees with stronger emotional competencies tend to demonstrate better adaptability, stronger teamwork, more effective conflict management, and improved work outcomes. Drawing upon Organizational Behavior Theory and previous empirical findings, emotional intelligence is expected to enhance employee performance within mining organizations.

H2: Emotional intelligence positively influences employee performance.

Work Culture and Employee Performance

Work culture represents a set of shared organizational values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral standards that influence how employees perform their daily responsibilities. According to Schein, E. H., & Schein, P. A. (2021), organizational culture becomes embedded in employees' behavior through continuous interaction within the workplace, shaping attitudes and work practices over time.

Within mining organizations, work culture extends beyond productivity by emphasizing discipline, teamwork, responsibility, procedural compliance, and workplace safety. Employees who consistently adhere to organizational values are more likely to perform their duties responsibly while supporting operational continuity and organizational effectiveness.

Previous empirical research demonstrates that organizations possessing stronger work cultures generally experience higher employee performance because employees share common behavioral expectations and organizational goals. Strong work culture also strengthens organizational commitment while improving work discipline and operational consistency.

Accordingly, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Work culture positively impacts employee performance.

Integrated Effects of Communication Skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Work Culture

Employee performance is shaped by the combined influence of individual competencies and organizational factors rather than by a single variable. Organizational Behavior Theory suggests that employee behavior emerges from continuous interactions between personal capabilities and the organizational environment.

Communication skills facilitate effective coordination and information exchange, emotional intelligence enables employees to manage workplace challenges and interpersonal relationships, while work culture establishes shared values that guide employee behavior. The interaction of these three factors creates organizational conditions that support higher levels of employee performance.

Although previous studies have examined communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture separately, relatively few have investigated their combined influence within Indonesia's nickel mining industry. Therefore, this study analyzes the simultaneous effects of these three variables on employee performance.

H4: Communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture simultaneously have a positive effect on employee performance.

Research Framework

Based on the theoretical arguments and hypotheses developed above, the conceptual framework of this study is presented as follows.

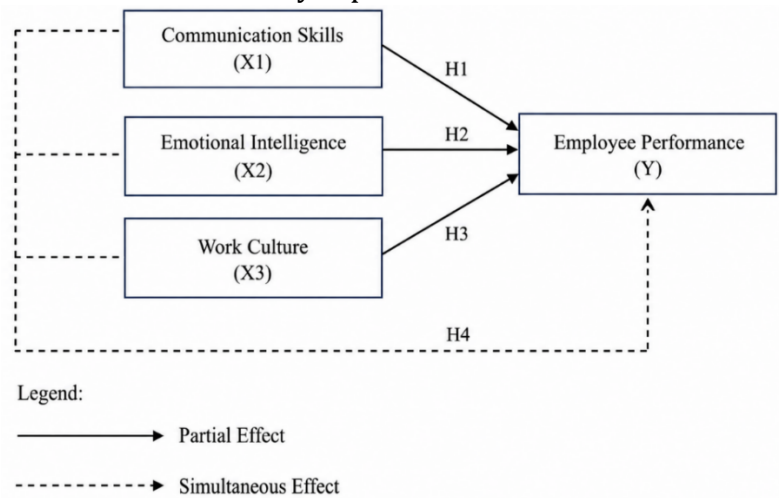


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: Author's

3. Method

Research Design

This study used an explanatory research design and a quantitative research approach to look at the connections among communication skills, emotional intelligence, work culture, and employee performance (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Sugiyono, 2023). The study opted for an explanatory method because it wanted to utilize statistics to assess if there were any causal correlations among the variables. This approach enables researchers to examine the extent to which the independent variables explain variations in employee performance. Businesses in Indonesia's Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP) in Central Sulawesi were the subjects of the study. We chose IMIP as our research site because it is one of Indonesia's biggest integrated nickel industrial zones; it is known for its multicultural workforces, stringent occupational safety regulations, and complicated operational systems.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised operational employees working in nickel mining companies located within the Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP). Operational employees were considered appropriate respondents because they are directly engaged in production processes and routinely experience organizational communication, emotional demands, work culture, and performance-related activities in their daily work.

A probability sampling technique, specifically simple random sampling, was employed to ensure that each member of the population had an equal opportunity to participate in the study (Hair et al., 2022; Sugiyono, 2023). A total of 100 respondents participated in this research. According to the study's methodology, the sample size was sufficient to do multiple linear regression analyses.

Data Collection

Direct distribution of a standardized questionnaire to operational workers served as the primary data collector. Using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), the questionnaire examined each research variable through statements. Books, scholarly articles, organizational records, and scientific journals were all sources of secondary data used to back up the study's hypotheses.

Measurement of Variables

Employee performance served as the dependent variable, whereas communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture functioned as independent variables. Communication skills were measured through employees' ability to convey information clearly, actively listen, provide feedback, and understand work instructions. Emotional intelligence was assessed using indicators related to "self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills". Work culture was measured through indicators reflecting discipline, responsibility, teamwork, integrity, and compliance with organizational procedures. Work quantity, quality, timeliness, accountability, and job completion were the metrics used to assess employee performance.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables

Variable	Indicators	References
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Communication Skills	Information clarity, accuracy, active listening, feedback, ethics	Robbins & Judge (2023)
Emotional Intelligence	Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills	Goleman (2020)
Work Culture	Discipline, responsibility, teamwork, integrity, compliance	Schein, E. H., & Schein, P. A. (2021)
Employee Performance	Quality, quantity, punctuality, responsibility, self-initiative	Mangkunegara (2017)

Source: Author's

Instrument Testing

The measurement instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability testing before hypothesis testing. The results confirmed that all indicators met the required validity criteria and demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, indicating that the instrument was appropriate for subsequent statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Using IBM SPSS Statistics, we ran a multiple linear regression analysis on the data we gathered. Because this study looked at how multiple independent variables affected a single dependent variable at the same time, multiple regression was the method of choice (Ghozali, 2018; Priyatno, 2024). To guarantee the regression model met the requirements for linear regression analysis, traditional assumption tests were run before hypothesis testing. Among these tests, we looked for heteroscedasticity, multicollinearity, and normality.

Hypothesis testing consisted of:

1. t-test to determine the relative importance of each independent variable in explaining variance in worker output;
2. F-test to look at how all the independent variables are influencing each other at the same time;
3. Explanatory power of the regression model is evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2).

All statistical tests were conducted with a 5% significance threshold ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Research Procedure

Starting with identifying the problem, reviewing the literature, developing hypotheses, preparing questionnaires, collecting data, evaluating instruments, doing statistical analysis, and finally, interpreting study findings were all sequential parts of the research process.

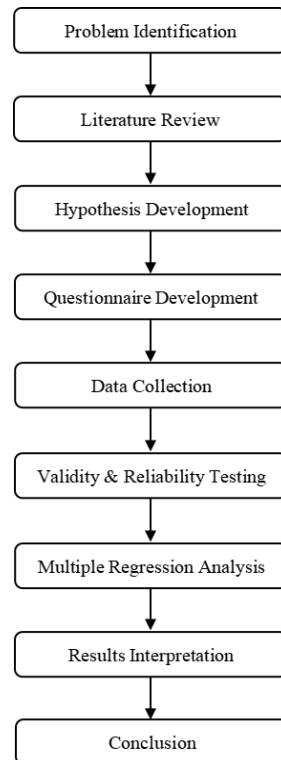


Figure 2. Research Procedure
Source: Author's

4. Result and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 100 operational employees working in nickel mining companies located within the IMIP, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The respondents were selected because they are directly involved in operational activities and possess adequate experience regarding organizational communication, emotional intelligence, work culture, and employee performance. The demographic profile of respondents is presented according to gender, age, educational background, and years of service.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	79	79%
	Female	21	21%
Age	21-30 years	45	45%
	31-40 years	49	49%
	>40 years	6	6%
Education	Senior High School	46	46%
	Diploma	14	14%
	Bachelor's Degree	40	40%
Years of Service	2-4 years	35	35%
	>4-6 years	35	35%
	>6-8 years	25	25%
	>8 years	5	5%

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Instrument Testing

Validity and reliability tests were conducted on the study instrument before hypothesis testing. According to the validity test, every item on the questionnaire measured its intended construct correctly because the correlation coefficients were higher than the minimal permitted threshold. In addition, the reliability analysis showed that all variables had Cronbach's Alpha coefficients higher than the suggested minimum, which means that the internal consistency is good.

Table 3. Instrument Validity and Reliability

Variable	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Communication Skills	Valid	0.771	Reliable
Emotional Intelligence	Valid	0.793	Reliable
Work Culture	Valid	0.923	Reliable
Employee Performance	Valid	0.877	Reliable

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Classical Assumption Tests

To make sure the regression model met the requirements of linear regression, traditional assumption tests were run before the multiple regression analysis. The outputs of the normalcy test shown that the residuals were normally distributed. Tolerance values were higher than the minimum required by the multicollinearity test, and VIF values were lower than the crucial threshold, suggesting that is not multicollinearity between the independent variables. Additionally, tests for heteroscedasticity could not detect any indication of such a phenomenon.

Table 4. Summary of Classical Assumption Tests

Test	Result	Interpretation
Normality	Passed	Normal distribution
Multicollinearity	Passed	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	Passed	No heteroscedasticity

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine how communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture on employee performance.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Results

Hypo-thesis	Relationship	β	t-value	Sig.	Decision
H1	Communication Skills → Employee Performance	0.434	2.893	0.005	Supported
H2	Emotional Intelligence → Employee Performance	0.544	3.877	0.000	Supported
H3	Work Culture → Employee Performance	0.100	2.189	0.031	Supported

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Simultaneous Effect

The simultaneous effect of communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture on employee performance was examined using the F-test.

Table 6. Simultaneous Regression Test

Statistic	Value
F-value	64.622
Significance	0.000
Decision	Model Supported

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

The regression model was statistically significant, indicating that communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture jointly explained employee performance.

Coefficient of Determination

The explanatory power of the regression model was assessed using the coefficient of determination.

Table 7. Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R Square	0.669
Adjusted R Square	0.659

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

While extraneous factors account for 33.1% of the variation in employee performance, the model accounts for 66.9%.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

To facilitate interpretation, the hypothesis testing results are summarized below.

Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypo-thesis	Statement	Result
H1	Communication skills positively influence employee performance	Supported
H2	Emotional intelligence positively influences employee performance	Supported
H3	Work culture positively influences employee performance	Supported
H4	Communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture simultaneously influence employee performance	Supported

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

5. Conclusion

This research examined the effects of communication skills, emotional intelligence, and work culture on employee performance among operational employees working in Indonesia's nickel mining industry. All three variables have a substantial impact on employee performance, according to the results.

Communication skills facilitate effective coordination, improve information exchange, and support efficient task execution within complex operational environments. Cooperation amongst coworkers, comprehension of work instructions, and reduction of operational errors are all enhanced when employees are able to communicate effectively.

Emotional intelligence emerged as the strongest determinant of employee performance. This discovery emphasizes the importance of employees' ability to regulate emotions, adapt to workplace challenges, and maintain constructive interpersonal relationships, particularly within high-risk industrial environments characterized by demanding operational conditions.

Work culture also contributes positively to employee performance by encouraging discipline, teamwork, responsibility, and compliance with organizational procedures. Although its relative contribution is smaller than that of communication skills and emotional intelligence, work culture provides the organizational foundation that supports sustainable employee performance.

Overall, this study confirms that improving employee performance within Indonesia's nickel mining industry requires an integrated human resource management approach that simultaneously strengthens communication competence, emotional intelligence, and organizational work culture.

Recommendations

The findings provide several practical implications for organizations operating in Indonesia's nickel mining industry. First, companies should strengthen internal communication by promoting open information exchange, improving coordination among work units, and encouraging constructive feedback between supervisors and employees. These initiatives are expected to enhance operational efficiency while reducing communication-related errors.

Second, organizations should incorporate emotional intelligence development into their human resource management programs. Leadership training, coaching, mentoring, employee assistance programs, and stress management initiatives can help employees strengthen emotional resilience, improve interpersonal relationships, and maintain performance under demanding working conditions.

Third, mining companies are encouraged to reinforce organizational work culture by consistently promoting discipline, teamwork, accountability, integrity, and compliance with operational and safety procedures. Leadership commitment and continuous organizational socialization are essential for embedding these values into employees' daily work practices.

Finally, future organizational development strategies should adopt an integrated approach that simultaneously enhances communication competence, emotional intelligence, and work culture. Strengthening these three dimensions collectively is expected to support sustainable employee performance while improving overall organizational effectiveness.

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