



Professional Maritime Character: What Really Matters?

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Abstract

This study examines the factors associated with Professional Maritime Character among vocational maritime students by investigating the effects of Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence, while considering Self-Discipline as a mediating mechanism and Moral Awareness as a moderating factor. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed involving 525 students from Batch VIII, X, and XI at Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat, Indonesia, using a total sampling technique. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with the PLS Algorithm and Bootstrapping Calculation. The measurement model demonstrated adequate indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity across all constructs. The structural results show that Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence have significant positive effects on Professional Maritime Character, while Religious Commitment significantly predicts Self-Discipline; however, Islamic Work Ethic and Spiritual Intelligence do not significantly predict Self-Discipline. Moral Awareness has a significant negative direct association with Professional Maritime Character, but its interactions with Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence are not significant. These findings indicate that professional maritime character is more strongly associated with the direct internalization of religious and spiritual values than with conditional effects of moral awareness, providing practical implications for integrated character development in maritime vocational education.

Keywords: Islamic Work Ethic, Moral Awareness, Professional Maritime Character, Religious Commitment, Self-Discipline, Spiritual Intelligence.

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INTRODUCTION

The maritime industry is undergoing rapid technological and organizational transformation, increasing the need for seafarers who can combine technical competence with responsible, adaptive, and ethically grounded professional behavior (Kurniawan et al., 2025; Hasnur et al., 2026). Recent maritime scholarship emphasizes that future seafarers will require not only traditional seafaring knowledge but also communication, collaboration, higher-order thinking, decision-making, adaptability, safety management, and the capacity to regulate their performance in changing operational environments (Purwantini et al., 2026; Uddin & Siska, 2026). Fauzi et al. (2026) argue that competency frameworks for future seafarers should make valued behaviours

explicit and observable, while subsequent work further identifies cognitive, functional, social, and meta competencies as important for the future maritime workforce. At the student level, maritime professional education is therefore expected to develop dispositions that extend beyond examination performance toward responsible conduct and readiness for authentic professional situations. Evidence from maritime simulation research also shows that students negotiate professional conduct and learning through realistic operational scenarios, indicating that professional formation is embedded in how learners interpret and enact maritime practices (Mashartanto et al., 2024; Riyanto et al., 2026). Consequently, Professional Maritime Character can be understood as an important educational outcome reflecting the disposition to act responsibly, communicate and collaborate effectively, make sound decisions, solve problems adaptively, and maintain continuous readiness for maritime professional demands.

The development of such character is particularly important in maritime education because professional decisions can affect human safety, operational reliability, the marine environment, and organizational trust. Recent evidence from Indonesia shows that competence and safety training are positively associated with safety climate in shipping companies, reinforcing the importance of preparing maritime personnel whose professional behaviour is aligned with safety and responsibility (Riyanto et al., 2026; Riyadi et al., 2026). At the same time, professional identity research among seafarers indicates that professional standards, including good seamanship, provide a basis for judging whether actions and technologies are appropriate in safety-critical shipboard contexts. These findings suggest that professional character should not be treated merely as an outcome of technical training, but as a multidimensional disposition shaped by internal values and capacities for self-regulation and ethical judgment (Widiatmaja et al., 2026; Nazarwin et al., 2026). However, much of the recent maritime literature has concentrated on competencies, training quality, technology adoption, or professional identity, while fewer studies have examined how religious and spiritual resources jointly contribute to professional character among vocational maritime students (Alim et al., 2026). This gap is especially relevant in Indonesia, where vocational maritime institutions educate young people for professions that demand discipline, responsibility, and adherence to professional and safety norms.

Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence offer three complementary perspectives for explaining the internal foundations of professional character. Islamic Work Ethic frames work-related conduct through values such as effort, honesty, fairness, and responsibility, and Nauman et al. (2025) show that the relationship between religiosity and Islamic Work Ethic can vary across historical periods, indicating that religious influence is meaningful but context-dependent. Religious Commitment represents the extent to which religious values are central to an individual's understanding of responsibilities and conduct, and Carminati & Héliot (2023) found that religious commitments can be central to how professionals understand and approach their work while also requiring careful negotiation with institutional environments. Spiritual Intelligence adds a cognitive and reflective dimension by enabling individuals to derive meaning, apply spiritual values in decision-making, and connect personal conduct with broader moral purposes, while Fidelis et al. (2024) reported a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and student character strengthening. Taken together, these studies indicate that ethical work values, religious commitment, and spiritual capacities may provide distinct but interconnected resources for professional character formation. Nevertheless, the existing evidence has largely examined these constructs separately and outside the maritime vocational context, leaving limited empirical understanding of their combined contribution to Professional Maritime Character.

Self-Discipline may provide the behavioural mechanism through which internal religious and spiritual resources are translated into consistent professional conduct. Kerasha et al. (2024), using a large randomized study, found that goal setting significantly increased students' reported time use, study effort, and self-discipline, suggesting that disciplined behaviour is closely connected to the regulation of effort toward valued goals. Complementary evidence among Muslim adolescents shows that religious commitment is associated with initiatory self-control and patience, indicating that religious dimensions can be linked to regulatory virtues rather than remaining purely attitudinal (Bukhori et al., 2024). In maritime education, this mechanism is particularly consequential because professional competence must be demonstrated through consistent behaviour, adherence to procedures, effective decision-making, and the regulation of performance under demanding conditions (Baskoro et al., 2026). A student may therefore possess strong ethical

or spiritual beliefs without consistently expressing them in professional behaviour unless those values are converted into disciplined action. The present study consequently positions Self-Discipline as a mediating mechanism that may explain how Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence become reflected in Professional Maritime Character.

Moral Awareness provides a further condition that may determine whether internal values are translated into professional character across different situations. Osonuga et al. (2026) conceptualize ethical awareness as a situated and relational capacity to recognize and respond to morally important moments under uncertainty, highlighting the importance of reflection, discomfort, negotiation, and sensitivity to relationships rather than simple rule compliance. Recent empirical research similarly demonstrates that moral attentiveness can shape how individuals respond to ethically relevant pressures, with higher moral attentiveness weakening the relationship between fear of goal failure and unethical behaviour (Ebrahimi et al., 2025). In a maritime setting characterized by safety-critical decisions, hierarchy, teamwork, technological change, and occasional ambiguity, the ability to notice moral dimensions may therefore determine how strongly personal work and spiritual values are expressed in professional conduct (Fan et al., 2023). Moral Awareness is consequently conceptualized in this study as a moderating condition that may strengthen the effects of Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence on Professional Maritime Character (Aalberg et al., 2024). Examining this moderation is important because the same level of internal value orientation may produce different professional outcomes depending on whether students are sufficiently attentive to the moral implications of their choices.

Against this background, the present study investigates the influence of Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence on Professional Maritime Character among 525 students of Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat from Batch VIII, X, and XI, using total sampling and Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The study extends previous research by integrating three internal religious-spiritual antecedents within a single model, while introducing Self-Discipline as a behavioural mediator and Moral Awareness as a contextual moderator. This design responds to the need for a more integrated explanation of professional character formation in vocational maritime education, where future seafarers must combine competence with disciplined, ethical, and safety-oriented conduct. The empirical setting also contributes a maritime-specific perspective to scholarship that has more commonly examined religiosity, spirituality, character, self-regulation, or ethical awareness in general educational and organizational populations. By examining these relationships simultaneously, the study seeks to clarify whether professional maritime character is associated directly with internal religious-spiritual resources and whether the strength of these relationships depends on disciplined action and moral awareness. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to test the proposed direct, mediating, and moderating relationships and to contribute an empirically grounded model for strengthening professional character among vocational maritime students.

The hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H1: Islamic Work Ethic has a positive and significant effect on Professional Maritime Character.
- H2: Religious Commitment has a positive and significant effect on Professional Maritime Character.
- H3: Spiritual Intelligence has a positive and significant effect on Professional Maritime Character.
- H4: Islamic Work Ethic has a positive and significant effect on Self-Discipline.
- H5: Religious Commitment has a positive and significant effect on Self-Discipline.
- H6: Spiritual Intelligence has a positive and significant effect on Self-Discipline.
- H7: Moral Awareness has a positive and significant effect on Professional Maritime Character.
- H8: Moral Awareness moderates the effect of Islamic Work Ethic on Professional Maritime Character.
- H9: Moral Awareness moderates the effect of Religious Commitment on Professional Maritime Character.
- H10: Moral Awareness moderates the effect of Spiritual Intelligence on Professional Maritime Character.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the effects of Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence on Professional Maritime Character, while testing the mediating role of Self-Discipline and the moderating role of Moral

Awareness. The study was conducted at Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat, Indonesia, focusing on students from Batch VIII, X, and XI. The target population comprised 525 vocational maritime students enrolled in the institution during the study period. Because the population size was manageable and the study intended to capture the characteristics of the entire target population, a total sampling technique was employed. This sampling approach was intended to minimize sampling bias and provide comprehensive empirical evidence regarding the formation of professional maritime character within the selected student population.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure six constructs, namely Islamic Work Ethic as X1, Religious Commitment as X2, Spiritual Intelligence as X3, Self-Discipline as the mediating variable, Moral Awareness as the moderating variable, and Professional Maritime Character as the dependent variable. The questionnaire items were developed or adapted from established conceptual and empirical measures relevant to each construct and were contextualized to the characteristics of vocational maritime students. The instrument was administered to respondents from Batch VIII, X, and XI after the study procedures and response requirements had been clearly explained. Respondents were instructed to provide answers based on their actual perceptions and experiences so that the resulting data would reflect their individual characteristics and behavioral tendencies.

Table 1. Research Instrument

No.	Variabel	Indikator	Code
1	Islamic Work Ethic (X1) (Linando et al., 2023)	Continuous Effort	IWE 1
		Serious Effort	IWE 2
		Transparency	IWE 3
		Competition	IWE 4
		Responsible Conduct	IWE 5
2	Religious Commitment (X2) (Stacey & Mashayekh, 2026)	Centrality of religious commitment	RC 1
		Integration of religion and daily activities	RC 2
		Religious values as a guide for conduct	RC 3
		Moral purpose and service	RC 4
		Consistency under competing pressures	RC 5
3	Spiritual Intelligence (X3) (Rosadi, 2023)	Meaning and purpose	SI 1
		Spiritual values in decision-making	SI 2
		Moral principles and self-development	SI 3
		Responding to difficulties	SI 4
		Connection with God and others	SI 5
4	Self-Discipline (M) (Islam et al., 2024)	High standards	SD 1
		Self-control and self-motivation	SD 2
		Task completion	SD 3
		Consistency and persistence	SD 4
		Time and responsibility management	SD 5
5	Moral Awareness (Z) (Guo et al., 2026)	Recognition of moral issues	MA 1
		Sensitivity to potential harm	MA 2
		Reflective moral awareness	MA 3
		Relational ethical awareness	MA 4
		Ethical awareness under uncertainty	MA 5
6	Professional Maritime Character (Y) (Ghosh & Emad, 2025)	Professional responsibility	PMC 1
		Professional communication and teamwork	PMC 2
		Professional decision-making	PMC 3
		Problem-solving and adaptability	PMC 4
		Professional readiness and continuous improvement	PMC 5

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) because the proposed model simultaneously included direct effects, mediation, and moderation relationships among multiple latent constructs. The analysis was conducted in two main stages, beginning with evaluation of the measurement model and followed by assessment of the structural model. The measurement model was examined to determine the reliability and validity of the

constructs through the evaluation of indicator loadings, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. After the measurement model satisfied the required criteria, the structural model was assessed by examining the hypothesized relationships among Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, Spiritual Intelligence, Self-Discipline, Moral Awareness, and Professional Maritime Character. Mediation analysis was used to determine whether Self-Discipline transmitted the effects of the three exogenous constructs to Professional Maritime Character, while moderation analysis was employed to assess whether Moral Awareness altered the strength or direction of the hypothesized relationships.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

The results section presents the findings of the PLS-SEM analysis, which was conducted using both the PLS Algorithm and the Bootstrapping Calculation procedures. The PLS Algorithm was used to evaluate the measurement model through the outer loading and construct reliability and validity results. The Bootstrapping Calculation was subsequently applied to assess the significance of the structural relationships, as presented in the bootstrapping path model and hypothesis testing results.

The outer loading results present the contribution of each measurement indicator to its respective latent construct. These results are used to assess the extent to which each indicator adequately represents and reflects the construct being measured.

Table 2. Outer Loading Result

X1	X2	X3	M	Z	Y
IWE 1 = 0.814	RC 1 = 0.834	SI 1 = 0.851	SD 1 = 0.861	MA 1 = 0.821	PMC 1 = 0.719
IWE 2 = 0.774	RC 2 = 0.863	SI 2 = 0.764	SD 2 = 0.875	MA 2 = 0.779	PMC 2 = 0.769
IWE 3 = 0.794	RC 3 = 0.798	SI 3 = 0.802	SD 3 = 0.817	MA 3 = 0.793	PMC 3 = 0.821
IWE 4 = 0.748	RC 4 = 0.783	SI 4 = 0.824	SD 4 = 0.812	MA 4 = 0.754	PMC 4 = 0.813
IWE 5 = 0.836	RC 5 = 0.829	SI 5 = 0.815	SD 5 = 0.835	MA 5 = 0.841	PMC 5 = 0.820

Table 2 shows that all measurement indicators across the six constructs demonstrate satisfactory outer loading values, ranging from 0.719 to 0.875. These results indicate that each indicator has a substantial contribution to its respective latent construct and adequately represents the underlying concept being measured. Overall, the outer loading results provide evidence that the indicators satisfy the required criteria for indicator reliability and can be retained for subsequent measurement model evaluation.

The construct reliability and validity results evaluate the internal consistency and convergent validity of the measurement instruments used in the study. These results are intended to determine whether the indicators collectively measure their respective constructs consistently and whether each construct adequately explains the variance of its indicators. The assessment therefore provides evidence that the measurement model meets the required reliability and validity criteria before structural relationships are examined.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity Result

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
X1	0.853	0.857	0.895	0.630
X2	0.880	0.881	0.912	0.676
X3	0.871	0.876	0.906	0.659
M	0.896	0.897	0.923	0.706
Z	0.859	0.868	0.898	0.637
Y	0.849	0.861	0.892	0.623

Table 3 shows that all constructs achieve satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.623 to 0.706, indicating that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its respective indicators and therefore demonstrates adequate convergent validity. These findings confirm that the measurement model satisfies the required reliability and convergent validity criteria and is suitable for subsequent structural model assessment.

The bootstrapping path model illustrates the estimated structural relationships among Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, Spiritual Intelligence, Self-Discipline, Moral Awareness, and Professional Maritime Character. The model visualizes the path coefficients and statistical relationships generated through the bootstrapping procedure, including the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships proposed in the research model. This figure provides an overview of the empirical structure of the model and serves as a basis for interpreting the significance of the hypothesized relationships.

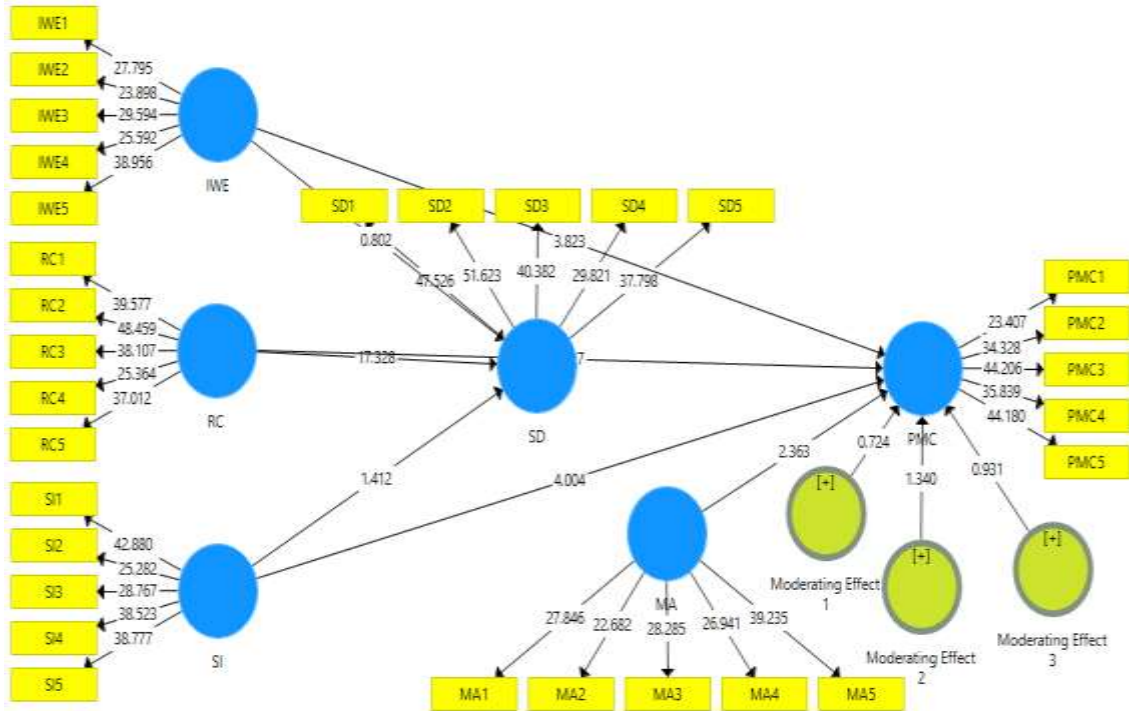


Figure 1. Research Path Model

The hypotheses testing results summarize the statistical evidence for the proposed direct, indirect, and moderating relationships among the study variables. The table reports the relevant path coefficients and significance statistics to determine whether each hypothesized relationship is empirically supported. These findings provide the basis for establishing the extent to which Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, Spiritual Intelligence, Self-Discipline, and Moral Awareness contribute to the formation of Professional Maritime Character.

Tabel 4. Hypotheses Testing

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
X1 – Y	0.263	0.262	0.069	3.823	0.000
X2 – Y	0.444	0.450	0.071	6.227	0.000
X3 – Y	0.281	0.274	0.070	4.004	0.000
X1 – M	0.020	0.018	0.025	0.802	0.423
X2 – M	0.822	0.817	0.047	17.328	0.000
X3 – M	0.069	0.075	0.049	1.412	0.159
Z – Y	-0.119	-0.118	0.050	2.363	0.019
X1*Z – Y	0.035	0.036	0.048	0.724	0.469
X2*Z – Y	-0.132	-0.140	0.099	1.340	0.181
X3*Z – Y	0.091	0.097	0.097	0.931	0.352

Table 4 shows that Islamic Work Ethic (X1) has a positive and statistically significant effect on Professional Maritime Character (Y), as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.263, a t-statistic of 3.823, and a p-value below 0.001. Religious Commitment (X2) also has a positive and significant effect on Professional Maritime Character, with a path coefficient of 0.444, a t-statistic of 6.227, and a p-value below 0.001. Similarly, Spiritual Intelligence (X3) positively and significantly affects Professional Maritime Character, as reflected by a path coefficient of 0.281, a t-statistic of 4.004,

and a p-value below 0.001. The results further indicate that Islamic Work Ethic does not have a significant effect on Self-Discipline (M), with a path coefficient of 0.020, a t-statistic of 0.802, and a p-value of 0.423. In contrast, Religious Commitment has a strong positive and significant effect on Self-Discipline, with a path coefficient of 0.822, a t-statistic of 17.328, and a p-value below 0.001. Spiritual Intelligence does not significantly affect Self-Discipline, as shown by a path coefficient of 0.069, a t-statistic of 1.412, and a p-value of 0.159. Moral Awareness (Z) has a significant negative relationship with Professional Maritime Character, with a path coefficient of -0.119, a t-statistic of 2.363, and a p-value of 0.019. The interaction between Islamic Work Ethic and Moral Awareness does not significantly influence Professional Maritime Character, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.035, a t-statistic of 0.724, and a p-value of 0.469. Likewise, the interactions between Religious Commitment and Moral Awareness and between Spiritual Intelligence and Moral Awareness are not statistically significant, with p-values of 0.181 and 0.352, respectively. Overall, the findings indicate that Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence directly contribute to Professional Maritime Character, while Religious Commitment is the only predictor that significantly enhances Self-Discipline and Moral Awareness does not significantly moderate the relationships between the three antecedent variables and Professional Maritime Character.

2. Discussion

The positive relationship between Islamic Work Ethic and Professional Maritime Character is consistent with the view that faith-based work values can be translated into professional conduct when individuals internalize principles such as responsibility, honesty, diligence, and accountability (Akhmadi et al., 2023). Recent evidence from the education sector similarly shows that Islamic Work Ethic strengthens ethical behavior through mechanisms associated with moral identity and felt obligation, suggesting that Islamic values can shape behavioral standards rather than merely religious attitudes (Nabhan & Munajat, 2023). This finding is also compatible with recent Indonesian evidence that Islamic Work Ethics contribute positively to performance in higher-education organizations, although that study examined employees rather than students (Rubbab et al., 2024). The present study extends these findings by positioning Professional Maritime Character as a vocationally specific outcome that incorporates the ethical and behavioral expectations associated with maritime professionalism (Ghoniya et al., 2024). The difference in population is important because maritime students are being prepared for environments in which discipline, accountability, safety consciousness, and adherence to procedures are integral to professional identity.

Religious Commitment also emerges as an important predictor of Professional Maritime Character, indicating that sustained attachment to religious values is associated with stronger internal standards for professional conduct (Kwarteng et al., 2024). This finding corresponds with research showing that religiosity and religious commitment are linked with morally relevant attitudes and behavioral orientations among young people and university populations (Maulidi et al., 2024). A recent Indonesian study on vocational education likewise identified religiosity as an important element in student character formation, although its explanatory model incorporated learning motivation and literacy as mediating mechanisms (Zuniga et al., 2024). The present evidence differs by demonstrating a direct association between Religious Commitment and a professional character construct specifically designed for maritime vocational education. This distinction suggests that religious commitment may function not only as a personal spiritual orientation but also as an internal reference system for responsibility, integrity, obedience to legitimate rules, and professional accountability (Ludigdo et al., 2025). In a maritime education setting, such internal standards may be particularly relevant because professional character must eventually operate under conditions involving operational risk, hierarchical coordination, and safety-critical decision making.

The significant contribution of Spiritual Intelligence to Professional Maritime Character supports the argument that the ability to derive meaning, maintain inner awareness, and connect actions with higher values can contribute to ethically grounded professional development. This finding is consistent with recent studies reporting positive associations between spiritual intelligence and student character development, including research linking spiritual intelligence with religious character and noble moral development (Pinto et al., 2023). Related evidence from professional education also indicates that spiritual dimensions are relevant to professionalism, although prior work has commonly examined health professionals or accountants rather than

maritime students (Pinto et al., 2024). The current study therefore broadens the application of Spiritual Intelligence by connecting it directly with the formation of Professional Maritime Character (Yin & Liu, 2025). The finding further implies that professional competence in maritime vocational education should not be understood exclusively in technical terms because reflective and value-oriented capacities may also contribute to the quality of professional behavior (Nilsson, 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant when vocational institutions seek to develop graduates who can combine operational competence with integrity and responsible judgment.

The absence of a significant relationship between Islamic Work Ethic and Self-Discipline provides an important contrast to the assumption that religiously grounded work values automatically produce self-regulatory behavior. Although Islamic work ethics emphasize diligence, responsibility, and disciplined conduct, internal endorsement of these values may not necessarily translate into consistent personal regulation in everyday academic behavior (Usmani, 2024). Recent literature on Islamic Work Ethic has similarly emphasized pathways involving moral identity, obligation, and ethical behavior rather than treating work ethic as synonymous with self-control (Bashori et al., 2026). This distinction suggests that students may cognitively accept Islamic principles concerning work while requiring additional institutional routines, behavioral reinforcement, and self-management practices to convert those principles into stable disciplinary habits (Blume & Schmiedek, 2024). The finding therefore differs from studies that conceptually associate Islamic values with discipline by highlighting the gap between normative endorsement and behavioral regulation (Villar et al., 2024). For maritime vocational education, this gap is consequential because disciplined performance often depends on repeated practice and structured habits rather than values alone.

The strong positive relationship between Religious Commitment and Self-Discipline provides clearer evidence that sustained religious engagement is associated with students' capacity to regulate their behavior. This result is closely aligned with research among Muslim adolescents showing that religious commitment is associated with regulatory virtues such as initiatory self-control and patience, although different dimensions of religiosity can operate differently across forms of self-regulation (Witvliet et al., 2024). It is also consistent with recent research in Islamic higher education reporting a significant association between religiosity and self-control, with emotional intelligence helping explain the translation of religiosity into regulatory behavior (Woodbridge et al., 2025). The present finding differs in emphasizing Religious Commitment itself as a more immediate behavioral resource within a maritime vocational context (Bronk et al., 2026). One possible explanation is that commitment provides students with relatively stable internal standards that encourage persistence, restraint, responsibility, and consistency in completing obligations (Salamah et al., 2026). Such characteristics are compatible with the structured demands of maritime education, where repeated compliance with routines can gradually transform internal religious commitment into observable disciplinary behavior.

Spiritual Intelligence does not demonstrate a significant relationship with Self-Discipline, which distinguishes the present result from literature that often associates spiritual development with broader forms of character formation and personal regulation. Recent studies have primarily linked Spiritual Intelligence with religious character, noble morals, and holistic character development rather than directly establishing a consistent effect on self-discipline (Razak et al., 2024). This difference suggests that spiritual reflection and meaning-making may influence how students understand right and wrong without necessarily determining whether they consistently regulate time, attention, behavior, and academic routines. The distinction is theoretically important because Spiritual Intelligence and Self-Discipline represent different psychological processes, with the former emphasizing meaning and transcendence and the latter emphasizing behavioral control and persistence (Shaik et al., 2026). In the maritime vocational context, spiritual insight may therefore require complementary mechanisms such as institutional routines, supervision, accountability systems, and habit formation before it becomes visible as disciplined behavior. The nonsignificant finding consequently indicates that spiritual development alone may be insufficient to explain individual differences in self-regulatory behavior among maritime students.

The negative direct relationship between Moral Awareness and Professional Maritime Character represents a counterintuitive finding because moral awareness is generally expected to support ethical perception and morally appropriate conduct. Existing research conceptualizes moral awareness as an important precursor to recognizing the ethical content of situations, but awareness itself does not guarantee that individuals will translate moral recognition into ethical

action (Huynh et al., 2024). Recent evidence further demonstrates that strengthening moral awareness can improve moral judgment and behavior when students are engaged in authentic moral problems and reflective activities (Kong & Zhu, 2025). The present negative association may therefore reflect a disconnection between recognizing moral issues and consistently embodying professional character in daily conduct (Roldan-Merino et al., 2025). Students with higher moral awareness may also evaluate their own professional behavior more critically, making them less likely to perceive themselves as fully meeting demanding character standards (Zhang et al., 2025). This possibility highlights the need to distinguish moral recognition from moral enactment and suggests that maritime character development should connect ethical awareness with repeated behavioral practice, feedback, and accountability.

The interaction between Islamic Work Ethic and Moral Awareness does not significantly strengthen or weaken Professional Maritime Character, indicating that Moral Awareness does not condition the relationship between these two constructs in the present sample. This finding differs from research in behavioral ethics suggesting that moral awareness can shape how individuals interpret ethically relevant situations and can function within broader psychological mechanisms connecting personal values with behavior (Nasution et al., 2025). One explanation is that Islamic Work Ethic may exert its influence on professional character relatively independently of students' level of moral awareness because its values are already embedded in broader personal and religious orientations (Halbusi et al., 2023). Another possibility is that the institutional environment provides common behavioral expectations that reduce the variation through which moral awareness could alter the effect of Islamic Work Ethic (Rai et al., 2023). The finding therefore challenges a straightforward assumption that greater awareness necessarily amplifies the behavioral consequences of religiously grounded work values (Nguyen et al., 2026). Future studies could examine whether the moderating role of moral awareness becomes more visible when students are exposed to ambiguous ethical dilemmas rather than standardized academic and disciplinary routines.

The nonsignificant interaction between Religious Commitment and Moral Awareness indicates that Moral Awareness does not significantly alter the positive contribution of Religious Commitment to Professional Maritime Character. This result contrasts with studies in behavioral ethics where religiosity and moral awareness interact with situational characteristics to influence ethical evaluation and decision processes (Petrucijová et al., 2025). The absence of moderation may indicate that Religious Commitment operates as a relatively stable internal orientation whose effect on professional character does not depend strongly on differences in students' conscious recognition of moral issues (Buchanan et al., 2025). It may also suggest that the institutional and cultural environment of maritime vocational education already supplies clear norms concerning responsibility, discipline, hierarchy, and appropriate conduct. Under such conditions, additional moral awareness may provide limited incremental influence because students are already guided by established religious and professional expectations (Nomqonde & Downing, 2026). This finding highlights the importance of examining contextual conditions when determining whether moral variables function as moderators or instead operate through direct, mediating, or formative mechanisms.

The interaction between Spiritual Intelligence and Moral Awareness is likewise nonsignificant, indicating that Moral Awareness does not significantly change the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Professional Maritime Character. Although recent literature associates Spiritual Intelligence with character formation and ethical development, these relationships do not necessarily imply that moral awareness will amplify the behavioral effects of spiritual capacity (Rosadi, 2023). The finding suggests that Spiritual Intelligence may contribute to professional character through direct internal processes such as meaning construction, value integration, and reflection rather than through heightened sensitivity to moral issues (Nawaah et al., 2024). It also reinforces the broader pattern in which Moral Awareness fails to function as a significant moderator across all three antecedent pathways examined in the model (Poje et al., 2025). Taken together, the findings suggest that Professional Maritime Character is more strongly associated with the direct internalization of Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence than with conditional effects created by Moral Awareness (Perez-Portabella et al., 2026). Nevertheless, because the reported hypothesis table does not include the Self-Discipline-to-Professional Maritime Character path or indirect effects, claims that Self-Discipline mediates the

three antecedent relationships should not be made until those mediation results are reported and statistically tested.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Professional Maritime Character among vocational maritime students is shaped primarily by Islamic Work Ethic, Religious Commitment, and Spiritual Intelligence, although their effects operate differently across the proposed model. Religious Commitment demonstrates the strongest contribution to Professional Maritime Character and is also the only antecedent that significantly strengthens Self-Discipline, highlighting its importance as an internal foundation for professional development. Islamic Work Ethic and Spiritual Intelligence contribute directly to professional character, but neither demonstrates a significant relationship with Self-Discipline, indicating that value orientation and spiritual capacity do not automatically translate into behavioral self-regulation. Moral Awareness does not significantly moderate the relationships between the three antecedent variables and Professional Maritime Character, suggesting that ethical awareness alone is insufficient to amplify these influences within the observed educational context. These findings imply that maritime vocational institutions should integrate religious values, ethical work principles, spiritual development, and structured behavioral training into character education rather than treating them as separate components. Future research should examine the mediating role of Self-Discipline through direct and indirect effect testing and investigate additional contextual or psychological variables that may explain how professional maritime character develops across different maritime institutions and student Batch.

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