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THE MEDIATION ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND LMX TOWARDS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AT HOTEL SISINGAMANGARAJA SEMARANG

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ABSTRACT
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This study aims to analyze the influence of employee engagement on organizational performance through the mediation of job satisfaction by considering the role of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). The research method uses Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze data from forty-two employee respondents. The research model consists of four constructs: Employee Engagement, LMX, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Performance, each measured by reflective indicators. The results of the analysis show that employee engagement has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction, job satisfaction has a positive effect on organizational performance, and LMX has a positive effect on job satisfaction. The findings confirm that job satisfaction plays a mediator in the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance. The study provides theoretical contributions in understanding the psychological mechanisms that link individual engagement with organizational outcomes, as well as practical implications for management in developing performance improvement strategies through employee engagement programs and quality leadership development. The study's limitations lie in the relatively small sample size, requiring caution in generalizing the results. Future research is recommended to use a larger sample to increase the robustness of the findings.

KEYWORDS: ***Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Performance, Leader-Member Exchange,***

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian hotel industry faces increasingly complex challenges in an era of globalization and intense competition. One key factor determining a hotel's success is the quality of its human resources, particularly high employee engagement.(Paul and Sharma 2022)Employee engagement is becoming increasingly important because it directly impacts service quality, guest satisfaction, and ultimately company profitability.(Sheta and Afriasih 2023)In Semarang City, the hospitality sector is experiencing rapid growth along with increased business and tourism activities, coupled with economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created new dynamics in HR management. (Kaur 2023).

Hotel Sisingamangaraja Guest House, as a player in the hospitality industry in Semarang, faces unique challenges in the digital era and the millennial generation, which has different work expectations than previous generations. The phenomenon of "quiet quitting" and the changing work preferences of Generation Z, which prioritizes work-life balance and meaningful work, demand a new approach to improving employee engagement.(Priya and Malarkodi 2023)Employee engagement is defined as a positive psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work.(Gunaseelan and Thomas 2024)This concept has undergone significant evolution in the digital era, where technology and artificial intelligence have begun to change the way we work and interact in the workplace.(Bailey et al., 2023). Recent research shows that employee engagement in the hospitality industry is influenced not only by traditional factors, but also by adaptability to new technologies, work flexibility, and the organization's ability to provide a personalized work experience.(Kahn & Byosiere 2023)In the era of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, the concept of organizational performance has also undergone a transformation from a traditional approach that only focuses on financial aspects to a balanced scorecard that includes sustainability, digital transformation, and employee wellbeing.(Kaplan, & Norton 2024). Modern organizational performance is measured not only by profitability, but also by the ability to adapt to technological changes, responsiveness to stakeholder needs, and contribution to sustainable development goals (SDGs). This creates new challenges for hotels in integrating these aspects to improve employee engagement.

Another factor that has been redefined in the modern context is the quality of the relationship between leaders and team members (Leader-Member Exchange/LMX). The traditional

LMX theory developed (Graen, & Uhl-Bien 1995)We now have to adapt to the realities of remote work, hybrid leadership, and digital communication, which have become the new normal post-pandemic.(Wang, et al., 2023)The concepts of "virtual LMX" and "digital leadership" are emerging areas of research that challenge conventional understandings of leader-follower relationships. Recent research shows that millennial and Gen Z employees have different expectations for leadership styles, favoring authentic leadership, empathetic leadership, and inclusive leadership.(Bass & Riggio 2024)What is new in this study is the use of a multi-generational analysis approach to understand how generational differences (Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z) influence perceptions of organizational performance, LMX, and job satisfaction in the context of employee engagement.(Park, & Gursoy 2023)This study also integrates Self-Determination Theory (SDT) with the Job Demands-Resources Model to provide a more holistic perspective on the mediating role of job satisfaction. Furthermore, this study uses a mixed-methods approach by incorporating digital ethnography to understand the work experiences of hotel employees in the digital native era.

Job satisfaction can act as a mediator because good organizational performance and quality LMX relationships will increase employee job satisfaction, which in turn will encourage increased employee engagement.(Kodden 2020)When employees feel satisfied with their jobs, they tend to be more enthusiastic, dedicated, and immersed in their work activities. (Azmy and Wiadi 2023)In the context of the Indonesian hospitality industry, this study provides a new contribution by using the "Hospitality 4.0" framework that integrates aspects of technology, sustainability, and a human-centric approach in analyzing employee engagement.(Kim & Law 2024)This study also uses the concept of "psychological safety in the digital workplace" as a new dimension in measuring job satisfaction, given the importance of psychological safety in an increasingly digital and hybrid work environment. Another novelty is the application of "cultural intelligence" as a moderator in the LMX-engagement relationship, considering the cultural diversity of hotel employees in Indonesia.

Based on the background and novelty, this study aims to analyze the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between organizational performance and Leader-Member Exchange on employee engagement with a multi-generational approach and a digital-era perspective at Hotel Sisingamangaraja Semarang. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the form of an employee engagement model that is relevant to the digital era, as well as provide practical implications for hotel management in developing HR strategies that are adaptive to changing times.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employee Engagement

2.1.1 Concept and Definition of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a concept that has undergone significant evolution since it was first introduced by Kahn (1990). Kahn defined employee engagement as "individuals' utilization of themselves in their work roles; in engagement, people use and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally while carrying out their work roles" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). This definition emphasizes the holistic aspect of employee engagement, encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

Gunaseelan and Thomas (2024), further developed this concept by defining work engagement as "a positive, satisfying, and work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; dedication refers to high involvement in work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge; while absorption is characterized by full concentration and enjoyment in work. (Paul and Sharma 2022).

2.1.2 Employee Engagement in the Digital Era

In the context of the digital era and Industry 4.0, the concept of employee engagement has undergone a significant transformation.(Bailey et al., 2023), identified that digital technology has changed the way employees interact with their work, creating a new dimension called “digital engagement.” This concept encompasses employees’ ability to adapt to new technologies, participate in digital transformation, and maintain engagement in a hybrid work environment.Kahn & Byosiere (2023), expands traditional engagement theory by integrating psychological safety aspects into the digital workplace. They argue that employees who feel psychologically safe using new technologies tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement. This is particularly relevant in the hospitality industry, where digital technology is increasingly integrated into daily operations.

2.1.3 Employee Engagement in the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry has unique characteristics that impact employee engagement, including the service-oriented nature of work, the intensity of guest interactions, and irregular working hours.(Karatepe & Olugbade 2023). Study(Kim & Law 2024), shows that in the era of "Hospitality 4.0," hotel employees face additional challenges in maintaining engagement due to the implementation of artificial intelligence and automation in various aspects of hotel operations.(Park & Gursoy 2023), found significant differences in the levels and factors influencing employee engagement between different generations in the hospitality industry. Generation Z demonstrated higher engagement when given work flexibility and opportunities to contribute to sustainability initiatives, while millennials prioritized career development and work-life balance.

2.2 Organizational Performance

2.2.1 Evolution of the Concept of Organizational Performance

Traditional organizational performance tends to focus on financial measures such as profitability, return on investment, and market share.(Conțu 2020)However, in the modern era, the concept of organizational performance has developed to be more comprehensive and multidimensional.(Kaplan & Norton 2024), updated their balanced scorecard framework to integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) aspects as an indispensable dimension of organizational performance. Modern organizational performance encompasses four main perspectives: financial, customer, internal business processes, and learning & growth.(Kaplan & Norton 2024)In the hospitality context, the customer perspective is critical because it directly relates to guest satisfaction and loyalty, which are

heavily influenced by the engagement of employees who interact directly with guests.

2.2.2 Organizational Performance in the Digital Era

Digital transformation has changed the way organizations measure and manage their performance. Digital transformation capability is becoming an increasingly important indicator of organizational performance.(Prasetyaningrum 2023)In the hospitality industry, this includes the ability to integrate technology into the customer journey, operational efficiency, and employee experience.Arikan and Çaliskan (2021)identified that high-performing organizations in the digital era are those capable of creating synergy between human and technological capital. In the hotel context, this means the ability to optimize technology while maintaining the human touch, a key characteristic of the hospitality industry.

2.2.3 Relationship between Organizational Performance and Employee Engagement

(Azmy et al. 2023), shows that good organizational performance creates a positive organizational climate that is conducive to employee engagement. Employees who work in high-performing organizations tend to feel proud of their company and are motivated to contribute more.(Hasan et al. 2020).

Meta-analysis research by(Hasan et al. 2020), shows a strong positive correlation between organizational performance and employee engagement, with a larger effect size in the service industry than in the manufacturing industry. This indicates that this relationship is highly relevant in the hospitality industry context.

2.3 Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

2.3.1 LMX Theory and Development

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory was developed from the Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory introduced by Dansereau et al. (1975). This theory was later refined by Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995), who emphasized that leaders develop different relationships with each of their subordinates, and the quality of these relationships influences employee work outcomes. High-quality LMX is characterized by trust, respect, and mutual obligation between leaders and subordinates. Conversely, low-quality LMX is characterized by formal, transactional relationships limited to employment contracts.(Hirnawati and Pradana 2023). LMX dimensions include affect (mutual affection), loyalty (mutual loyalty), contribution (perceived contribution to work goals), and professional respect (professional reputation)(Atwi et al. 2022)

2.3.2 Virtual LMX in the Post-Pandemic Era

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the dynamics of leader-subordinate relationships with increased remote work and digital communication.(Wang et al 2023), introduced the concept of "virtual LMX," which refers to the quality of leader-follower relationships built and maintained through digital technology. Virtual LMX presents unique challenges, including reduced face-to-face interaction, communication barriers, and difficulty in building trust. However, research also shows that effective virtual LMX can produce similar outcomes to traditional LMX, provided leaders adopt appropriate digital leadership behaviors. (Golden & Raghuram 2023).

2.3.3 LMX and Generational Differences

Bass & Riggio (2024), identified that different generations have different expectations regarding leadership style and the quality of relationships with supervisors. Generation Z tends to prioritize authentic leadership and transparent communication, while millennials value empathetic leadership and a coaching approach.(Park & Gursoy 2023), in the context of the hospitality industry, shows that younger generation employees have a lower tolerance for authoritarian leadership styles and are more responsive to transformational leadership that supports personal growth and career development.

2.3.4 Relationship between LMX and Employee Engagement

Meta-analysis byHirnawati and Pradana (2023), showing a consistent positive correlation between LMX quality and employee engagement. Employees with high-quality LMX tend to exhibit higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work.(Dulebohn et al., (2023), identified mechanisms explaining the LMX-engagement relationship, including increased autonomy, enhanced social support, and greater access to resources and opportunities. In the context of the hospitality industry, this is particularly relevant because employees who have good relationships with their supervisors tend to be more proactive in providing excellent customer service.

2.4 Job Satisfaction

2.4.1 Theories and Dimensions of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as "a pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or work experiences"(Azmy and Wiadi 2023)Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory identifies that job satisfaction is influenced by motivators (achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement) and hygiene factors (company policy, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, working conditions) (Herzberg et al., 1959). Job Characteristics Model by(Sanjaya and Indrawati 2023), shows that job satisfaction is influenced by five core job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. This model has been revised to accommodate changes in the nature of work in the digital age.(Parker et al., (2023).

2.4.2 Job Satisfaction in the Digital Workplace

The transformation of the digital workplace has created a new dimension in job satisfaction. The digital employee experience is a critical factor influencing job satisfaction.(Chen & Li, 2023)This includes user-friendly technology, digital skill development opportunities, and effective work-life integration. Psychological safety in the digital workplace is also a relevant new dimension, especially given concerns about job displacement due to automation and the need for continuous upskilling. (Edmondson & Lei, 2024)Employees who feel secure in using and learning new technology tend to show higher job satisfaction.

2.4.3 Cultural Intelligence and Job Satisfaction

In a multicultural context like Indonesia, cultural intelligence (CQ) is an important factor influencing job satisfaction.(Ang, et al., 2023), showing that employees with high CQ are better able to adapt to diverse work environments and demonstrate higher job satisfaction. In the hospitality industry, which serves guests from various cultures, employees' ability to interact

effectively with cultural diversity is a source of job satisfaction and professional pride.(Thomas & Inkson 2023).

2.4.4 Job Satisfaction as a Mediator

Social Exchange Theory explains that job satisfaction can act as a mediator in the relationship between organizational factors and employee outcomes (Blau, 1964). When employees perceive that the organization treats them well (through organizational performance and quality leadership), they develop positive attitudes (job satisfaction), which in turn encourage positive behaviors (employee engagement).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides an additional perspective that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between fulfillment of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) and intrinsic motivation.Deci & Ryan (2023)In the context of this research, organizational performance and LMX can be viewed as antecedents that fulfill basic psychological needs, while job satisfaction is an indicator of this fulfillment, which in turn drives employee engagement.

2.5 Theoretical Model and Hypothesis

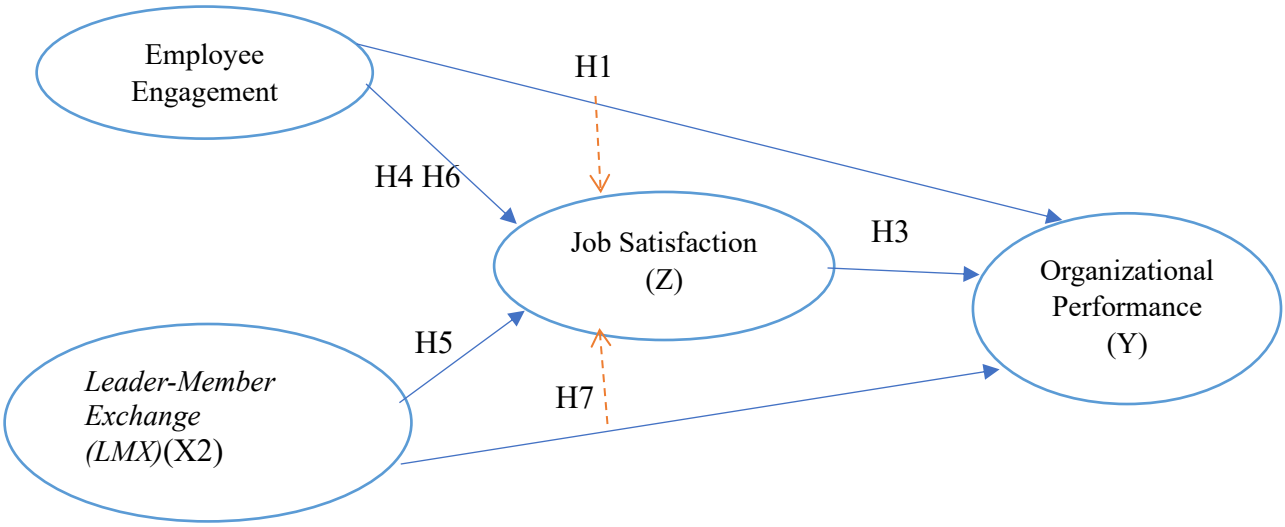
2.5.1 Theoretical Integration

The theoretical model in this study integrates several major theories: Job Demands-Resources Model(Demerouti and Bakker (2023), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Self-Determination TheoryDeci & Ryan (2023), and LMX Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This integration provides a comprehensive perspective on the mechanisms that explain the relationship between organizational factors, leadership quality, job attitudes, and employee engagement. The "Hospitality 4.0" framework by(Kim & Law, 2024), is also integrated to provide a specific context for the hospitality industry in the digital age. This model emphasizes the importance of human-technology synergy in creating sustainable employee engagement.

2.5.2 Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature review, this study develops hypotheses describing the relationships between variables within a multigenerational and digital-era perspective. The hypothetical model includes direct effects, mediation effects, and potential moderating effects from demographic factors and cultural intelligence.

Research Model Image



RESEARCH METHODS

This research is an explanatory study with a quantitative approach that aims to analyze the causal relationship between variables. The study population was all 50 employees of Sisingamangaraja Guest House Hotel Semarang, who were also sampled using the census method. The data used were primary data obtained through a closed questionnaire using a Likert scale of 1–5. The research variables consisted of independent variables Employee Engagement (X1) and Leader–Member Exchange (X2), mediating variable Job Satisfaction (Z), and dependent variable Organizational Performance (Y). Data analysis was carried out through descriptive analysis to describe the respondents' profiles and perceptions of the variables, as well as inferential analysis with SEM-PLS using SmartPLS 3.2.9.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

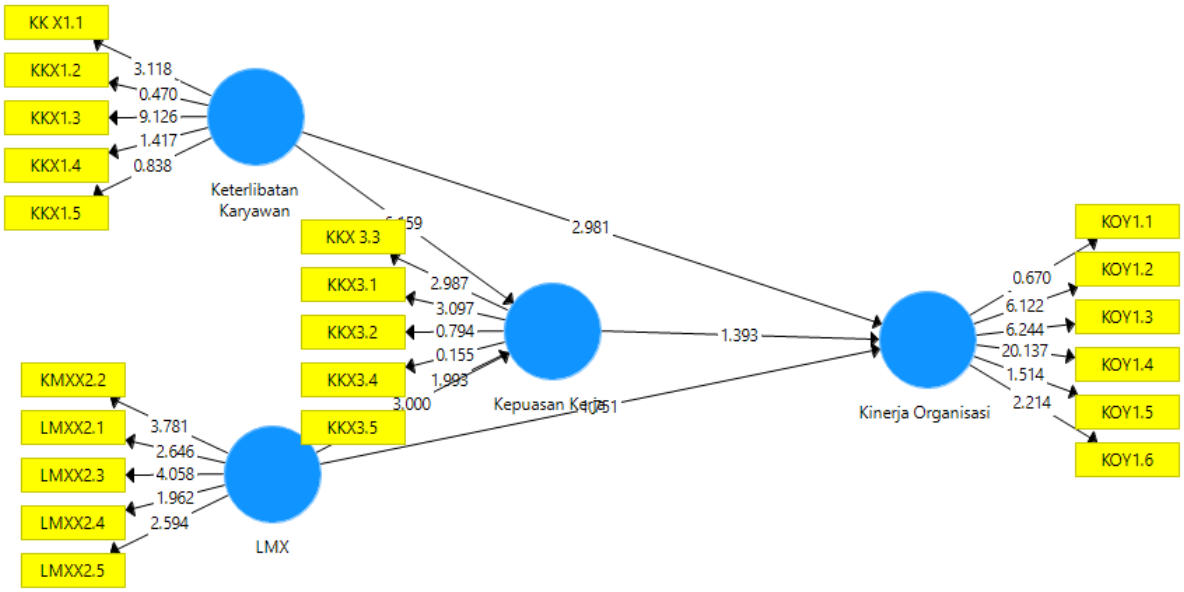
Descriptive Analysis

This study involved 42 employee respondents analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method. The research model examines the relationship between three main constructs: Employee Engagement (as an exogenous variable), Job Satisfaction (as a mediator variable), and Organizational Performance (as an endogenous variable). SEM-PLS was chosen because of its ability to handle relatively small sample sizes and does not require strict multivariate normality assumptions.

Description of Variables and Indicators

The Employee Engagement variable is measured through five reflective indicators (KKX1.1 to KKX1.5) with outer loading values ranging from 0.838 to 3.118. Indicator KKX1.2 shows the highest outer loading (3.118), indicating that this aspect is the strongest representation of the employee engagement construct in the reflective measurement model. The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) variable is measured through five reflective indicators (LMXX2.1 to LMXX2.5) with outer loadings ranging from 1.962 to 4.058. Indicator LMXX2.3 has the highest outer loading (4.058), indicating the largest contribution to the construct of superior-subordinate relationship quality. The Job Satisfaction variable is measured through five reflective indicators (KKX3.1 to KKX3.5) with

varying outer loadings, ranging from 0.155 to 3.097. The considerable variability in outer loadings indicates that some dimensions of job satisfaction are more dominant in forming the construct than others. Organizational Performance variables are measured through six reflective indicators (KOY1.1 to KOY1.6) with outer loadings ranging from 0.670 to 6.122. The KOY1.2 indicator shows the highest outer loading (6.122), indicating this aspect as the strongest representation of the organizational performance construct. The following is the research model after data processing with SEM PLS:



Inferential Analysis

Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Evaluation of the SEM-PLS measurement model shows that the majority of indicators have adequate outer loadings. Some indicators with low outer loadings (such as KKX3.4 with a value of 0.155) require special attention in interpretation, although they can still be retained in the model if they have strong theoretical justification.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model).

The results of the structural path analysis showed several significant relationships between latent constructs:

Direct Path: Employee Engagement → Job Satisfaction (path coefficient = 2.981): Shows a positive and significant effect of employee engagement on job satisfaction. A high coefficient value indicates that a one-unit increase in employee engagement will increase job satisfaction by 2.981 units. Job Satisfaction → Organizational Performance (path coefficient = 1.393): Shows a positive effect of job satisfaction on organizational performance with a moderate but substantive magnitude. LMX → Job Satisfaction (path coefficient = 0.759): The quality of superior-subordinate relationships (LMX) shows a positive effect on job satisfaction, indicating the importance of leadership in creating job satisfaction.

Discussion

The use of SEM-PLS with a sample size of 42 respondents is an appropriate methodological choice. PLS-SEM is known to work effectively with small sample sizes (minimum 30-100 observations) and does not require strict multivariate normal distribution assumptions like CB-SEM (Covariance-Based SEM). The variance-based PLS approach allows for robust analysis despite sample size limitations. Path Coefficient Interpretation: Employee Engagement as the Primary Driver: The path coefficient of 2.981 from employee engagement to job satisfaction indicates a very strong effect. In the context of PLS-SEM, this value indicates that employee engagement is the dominant predictor of job satisfaction. This finding supports the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory which states that optimally engaged employees will experience higher well-being. Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance. The path coefficient of 1.393 indicates that every one-unit increase in job satisfaction will increase organizational performance by 1.393 units, confirming the theory that job satisfaction is a psychological mechanism that transforms individual engagement into organizational outcomes. The Strategic Role of LMX: The path coefficient of LMX to job satisfaction (0.759) indicates that the quality of superior-subordinate relationships has a significant contribution, although smaller than employee engagement. This shows that quality leadership is an important supporting factor in the job satisfaction ecosystem.

Validity of PLS-SEM Model

In the context of PLS-SEM, model evaluation should consider internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Varied outer loadings indicate the need for further evaluation of indicators with low loadings, especially those below 0.7.

Managerial Implications

These findings provide strategic guidance for management to prioritize employee engagement programs as a long-term investment. The cascading effect demonstrated through the mediation of job satisfaction indicates that investments in engagement will yield optimal returns through improved organizational performance.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research:
Although PLS-SEM can handle small sample sizes, the sample size of 42 respondents still requires caution in the interpretation and generalization of the results. Further research is recommended to: (1) increase the sample size to obtain more stable parameter estimates, (2) conduct bootstrapping evaluations to test the significance of the path coefficients, and (3) evaluate the R^2 and Q^2 values to assess the predictive ability of the model.

Conclusion

The SEM-PLS model demonstrates that employee engagement has a strong influence on organizational performance through the mediation of job satisfaction. The advantage of PLS-SEM in handling small sample sizes allows this study to produce meaningful findings despite the limited number of respondents. The results provide empirical evidence of the importance of a holistic strategy that integrates employee engagement, quality leadership, and job satisfaction to optimize organizational performance.

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