

Work engagement as a central driver: Reassessing employee well-being metrics and performance

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ABSTRACT

Traditional metrics of employee well-being, such as satisfaction and commitment, are now under scrutiny by scholars. There's growing concern that these measures might lead to complacency rather than maximizing workforce potential. Amidst this debate, work engagement is highlighted as a crucial determinant in enhancing workforce performance, especially in ever-evolving work contexts. This study aims to bridge existing gaps by unearthing the intricate relationships between work engagement, job satisfaction, and performance in the public sector. Data for the study were gathered through a survey questionnaire administered to 538 civil servants employed in the Indonesian government sector. Thus, the proposed mediation model was evaluated using Sobel test. The results revealed that work engagement does affect employee performance both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. Intriguingly, the direct effect of work engagement on performance proved more dominant, marking it as a central contributor to productivity and efficacy in the public realm. This elucidates a complex interplay, emphasizing that while satisfaction plays a role, it's the intrinsic engagement of employees that stands paramount in driving optimal outcomes in the public sector.

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Introduction

In the intricate landscape of the contemporary labor market, the public sector is particularly under scrutiny. There's a burgeoning examination of the constructs that influence employee well-being and performance. Historically, job satisfaction and commitment have been considered touchstones for gauging workplace well-being. However, recent critiques (Tummers et al., 2016; Ugaddan & Park, 2017) have triggered a reassessment of these metrics amidst an alarming decline in public sector performance. Indeed, there have been numerous indications of suboptimal performance and unmet expectations from citizens, legislators, and institutions alike (Anthopoulos et al., 2016; Askim et al., 2010; Morgeson & Mithas, 2009; Moynihan & Lavertu, 2012).

Illustratively, Ethiopian public service delivery epitomizes inefficiency. As depicted by Girma et al. (2021) this inefficiency manifests as a time-consuming, costly, and stagnant service delivery model that often lacks responsiveness. Similar sentiments reverberate across other African nations. For instance, Elias-Fatile (2021), Leseiyo & Ngui (2019), and Muriu et al. (2017) elucidate underwhelming performance trends in Nigerian and Kenyan public institutions, attributed to challenges like inadequate remuneration, a dearth of effective training, and faltering compensation and appraisal systems. A comparable narrative unfolds in the Vietnamese civil service, depicted by Poon et al. (2009) as suffering from low work ethic, irresponsibility, wastefulness, and arbitrary decision-making. Further insights from Prateepornnarong (2020) and Vu et al. (2019) indicate that countries like Vietnam and Thailand are grappling with challenges akin to other transitioning nations, marked by poor employee performance, systematic corruption, low efficiency, bureaucratic red tape, and abuse of power. Indonesia, too, is enmeshed in this pattern of inefficiency. Akbar (2018) underscores a troubling trend where public employees' performance significantly falls short of expectations, a scenario corroborated by unfulfilled community needs and unattained performance benchmarks.

Indonesia's public sector is a complex, dynamic landscape characterized by a multiplicity of roles, expectations, and challenges. As a developing nation, the quest for enhanced service delivery, efficiency, and productivity is central. The workforce is not just the machinery that drives this quest but the heartbeat that determines its success or failure. With this in view, understanding the undercurrents that influence and determine employee performance is not just essential but critical. Work engagement has surfaced as a focal point in this evolving dialogue, carving out its niche as a pivotal determinant of employee

performance and organizational success Unlike the traditional, somewhat static, measures of job satisfaction and commitment, work engagement (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2012). engagement encapsulates a dynamic energy, encapsulating the vigor, dedication, and absorption employees exhibit towards their roles. Work engagement has been positively associated with enhanced service provision, increased client satisfaction, and improved service quality (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2016; Bailey et al., 2017; Noesgaard & Hansen, 2018).

While the pivotal role of work engagement in fostering exemplary employee performance is undeniable, numerous studies have also emphasized the profound relationship between job satisfaction and performance outcomes. highlighted how job satisfaction significantly influences employee performance. In a parallel finding, Ferdiyono et al. (2018) observed a positive correlation between job satisfaction and the performance. Adding to this discourse, Mardiani & Dewi (2015) showcased that job satisfaction, combined with organizational commitment, favorably impacts the performance of public employees, both on individual and collective fronts. Moreover, Gede Riana et al. (2020) drew attention to the inverse relationship between job satisfaction and employees' propensity to change jobs. This research accentuated the indispensable role of job satisfaction in curtailing job insecurity. As deduced, contented employees demonstrate a higher tendency to remain loyal to their organizations, contributing to their fullest potential

It's essential for organizations to prioritize employee satisfaction and work engagement when aiming to optimize employee performance. The necessity of a detailed and nuanced exploration into the relationship between these elements becomes evident, especially within the public sector. This paper is committed to intricately dissecting these dynamics, aiming to illuminate the individual and collective impacts they impose on employee performance, with a specific focus on the Indonesian public sector. This sector, marked by its distinct challenges and opportunities, enriched by a diverse workforce, and tasked with varied service delivery mandates, epitomizes a complex environment facing an urgent call for amplified efficiency and productivity.

Transitioning to the core content of this paper, a meticulous review of literature is presented. This section encapsulates a comprehensive analysis of existing theories, models, and empirical findings that highlight the intricate intersections between work engagement, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The research methodology employed is then elaborated upon, unveiling a systematic approach to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data within the operational context of the Indonesian public sector. The paper concludes with a synthesis of the findings, offering a consolidated overview that delineates the extrapolated

implications for policy formulation, professional practice, and the trajectory of future scholarly investigations, spotlighting potential avenues for more in-depth exploration and understanding in this pivotal area of organizational and employee development.

Literature Review

Employee Performance

Performance evaluation is crucial for organizations as it ensures their ongoing viability and sustainability (Zhang & Bartol, 2017). Employee performance is characterized by controlled behaviors that are guided by established boundaries, eliminating irrelevant activities (Dewettinck & Van Ameijde, 2011). It's measured by the quality and quantity of work that an employee accomplishes, aligned with the responsibilities assigned to them (Suwandana, 2018). For optimal outcomes, it's incumbent upon the organization to foster an environment that not only encourages but also facilitates the continuous development and enhancement of employees' skills and capabilities (Rahman & Prasetya, 2018). Employees who perceive a high level of organizational support (POS) often feel an increased sense of responsibility, contributing effectively towards the attainment of organizational goals. This heightened sense of duty is often correlated with enhanced rewards for key performances, fostering an environment where these employees are markedly committed to their organizations (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012).

Traditionally, the evaluation of employee performance was solely based on the completion of tasks specified in an employee's role description (Campbel III, 1993). However, over the past four decades, this perspective has expanded. Influential studies by Campbel et al. (1990) and Campbel III (1993) redefined performance to include a broader spectrum of activities. These are not explicitly outlined in job descriptions but contribute to enhancing organizational productivity and fostering a positive work environment (Griffin et al., 2017). Task Performance (TP) and Contextual Performance (CP) have emerged as the two primary dimensions accentuated in modern evaluations. Pattnaik & Jena (2020) explains that TP encompasses role-specific activities that are obligatory for employees, with formal recognition and rewards attached. In contrast, CP involves voluntary actions that are not explicitly tied to the formal role and might not be directly rewarded or recognized by the organization, nor are there penalties for neglecting them. Empirical study has validated the distinct impacts that Task Performance (TP) and Contextual Performance (CP) have on overall performance metrics, including job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment (AOC), and employee turnover, applicable to both managerial and non-managerial roles.

Becton et al. (2017) demonstrated that TP and CP influence voluntary turnover differently, with the complexity of the job moderating these effects. In a separate study focusing on the public sector, Pattnaik & Jena (2020) established that TP and CP each exert unique effects on organizational effectiveness in the public sector context.

Work Engagement

Work engagement, as defined by Ridwan et al. (2020) is described as a favorable psychological state wherein employees are primed to contribute in physical, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, marked by a profound infusion of energy and mental resilience at work. It's a condition reflecting a deep, rewarding, affective-motivational connection to work, standing in stark contrast to the experience of burnout. This perspective is echoed by Adi & Indrawati (2019) who characterize work engagement as a realm of well-being where employees exhibit notable vitality and enthusiasm. In this state, individuals are not merely present but are energetically and passionately involved in their tasks, exhibiting a level of commitment and vibrancy that underscores their optimal performance and well-being in the workplace. Moreover, work engagement is identified as a favorable attitude towards work, encapsulated by three core elements which is vigour, dedication, and absorption (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Dwinijanti et al., 2020; De Waal & Pienaar, 2013). It's elaborated by Bakker (2011) as a positive mental state characterized by an individual displaying these three distinct yet interconnected attributes. Vigour reflects the energy and effort an employee invests in accomplishing tasks. Moving to the second element, dedication is marked by an individual's total immersion in their role, underpinned by inspiration, a sense of pride, and a readiness to tackle emerging challenges with enthusiasm. Absorption, the third attribute, is depicted as a state of deep immersion where individuals are so engrossed in their tasks that they derive genuine enjoyment from their work.

Work engagement is instrumental in amplifying both job satisfaction and performance. When employees are thoroughly engaged, a noticeable elevation in their professional output and organizational commitment is observed. This intense engagement spawns positive workplace experiences, leading to enhanced satisfaction. A complex, yet harmonious, relationship exists where engagement fuels satisfaction, which in turn potentially uplifts performance. The intricate connections between these elements are validated by an array of academic studies. Eldor & Shoshani (2016), Klassen et al. (2012), and Simbula (2010) provide empirical evidence linking heightened work engagement to increased job satisfaction. Similarly, contributions from Breevaart et al. (2016), Chaurasia & Shukla

(2014), Gruman & Saks (2011), and Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2013) illustrate the positive correlation between work engagement and augmented employee performance.

H₁: Work engagement positively influence job satisfaction.

H₂: Work engagement positively influence employee performance.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be characterized as an emotional response to how employees perceive their roles, be it favorable or otherwise (Gede et al., 2017). It's a subjective experience, with individuals interpreting their satisfaction levels based on their unique value systems (Pramana & Mujiati, 2020; Rahmawati & Frinaldi, 2021; Susanti & Fahmy, 2020; Yuliana & Latrini, 2016). It manifests as a positive emotional state arising from an individual's appraisal of their job and the extent to which it aligns with their values (Hendra & Hill, 2022). This satisfaction, or the lack thereof, invariably impacts performance. A plethora of research reinforces this relationship. found that job satisfaction directly influences employee performance. Similarly, Ferdiyono et al. (2018) reported a positive correlation between job satisfaction and the performance of government civil servants. Mardiani & Dewi (2015) demonstrated that job satisfaction, in tandem with organizational commitment, has a significant impact on the performance of state-owned bank employees. In contrast, Gede Riana et al. (2020) indicated that increased job satisfaction reduces an employee's inclination to change jobs. Collectively, these findings underscore the undeniable influence of job satisfaction on employee performance.

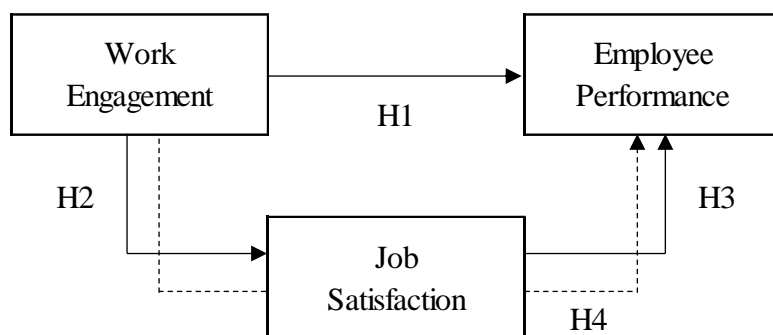
H₃: Job satisfaction positively influence employee performance.

Additionally, the existing literature suggests that when employees perceive their tasks positively (Arieli et al., 2020; Guerci et al., 2022; Sotiropoulou et al., 2022), feel a sense of organizational support (Mo et al., 2020), and are genuinely engaged (Karatepe, 2013; Yeh, 2013), they anticipate greater opportunities for career and skill advancement from their employers (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Within this framework, employees tend to display enhanced job satisfaction (Wirawan et al., 2020). This elevated satisfaction subsequently impacts their performance metrics, elevating productivity and efficiency. Given these interrelations, the study further explores the mediation hypotheses.

H₄: Job satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between work engagement and employee performance.

Methods

Figure 1. Research Framework



This study adopts a strategy that meticulously outlines steps to gather and analyze data that aligns with specific research variables and objectives. An ex-post facto research design is employed, which involves analyzing data after events have occurred. A quantitative, causal-correlational approach is applied, systematically unpacking the intricate relationships among employee performance, work engagement, and job satisfaction. The study focuses on a population of 1040 civil servants in the regional government of Bali, Indonesia. A sample of 538 respondents is derived, satisfying the criteria set by Slovin's guidelines, ensuring a representative and statistically significant subset for an accurate and comprehensive analysis. Each respondent's insights and experiences are captured using five-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), ensuring nuanced, qualitative insights are quantified for a robust analysis. The detailed abstraction of the relationship between variables can be seen in Figure 1.

In this study, the measurement of employee performance is influenced by the frameworks established by Alqudah et al. (2022). The assessment tools integrated into this study include statements such as “*I ensured my tasks were completed properly*”, “*I meet the formal performance requirements of the job*”, “*I fulfil responsibilities specified in my job*”, “*I say things to make people feel good about themselves or the work group*”, and “*I initiated better ways of doing my core tasks*”. Concurrently, the assessment of work engagement leverages the Chinese Version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, as validated by Chan et al. (2020) and Miswanto et al. (2020). This scale is comprehensively structured to encapsulate three pivotal elements of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Sample items illustrating these dimensions include “*At my work, I feel bursting with energy*” (vigor), “*I am enthusiastic about my job*” (dedication), and “*I feel happy when I am working intensely*” (absorption). Lastly, job satisfaction was measured by using the combination of

Cheng et al. (2015) and Ampofo (2020). An example of job satisfaction items adopted in this study was *“All in all, I am satisfied with my job”*, *“If I had to do it all over again, I would choose another job”*, *“I feel that my job is satisfying”*, *“In my job, I feel that I am doing something worthwhile”*, *“In general, I like working here”* and *“I feel that my job is interesting”*.

For data analysis, the study employs path analysis to simplify and interpret data statistically. This method is instrumental in understanding the impacts of work engagement and job satisfaction on employee performance. The data analysis proceeds in a structured manner, including data description, prerequisite analysis testing, and hypothesis testing, each step building on the previous to ensure a comprehensive and thorough examination of the data. Before carrying out the regression analysis test, the classical assumption test is carried out in the form of a normality test, autocorrelation test, multicollinearity test, and heteroscedasticity test as conditions that need to be considered in parametric and statistical analysis where data must approach a normal distribution. The data normality test was carried out using the Kolmogorov Smirnov test, with the condition that if the significance value is above 5% or 0.05, the data has a normal distribution. Through the results of the normality test in the SPSS application, it can be seen that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.200. In accordance with the provisions of the Kolmogorov Smirnov test, where Sig. > 0.05, then this indicates that the distribution of data is normally distributed or meets the assumption of normality. Multicollinearity test was conducted to test whether there is a high or perfect correlation between the independent variables or not in the regression model. To detect a high correlation between independent variables, it can be done with the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value between the independent variables. A low tolerance equals a high VIF value. A good regression model does not have multicollinearity. This is indicated if the VIF value is <10.00 or the tolerance value is greater than 0.10. The Heteroscedasticity Test was carried out to determine the uniformity between the dependent variable data sets for each independent variable. The technique used to find non-uniform distributions is to use the SPSS 25.0 for Windows program. Through the Glejser Test, if the significance value or sig. (2-tailed) > value 0, 05, it can be said that there is no heteroscedasticity. Through the results of the heteroscedasticity test it is known that the value of Sig. is greater than 0.05, namely 0.401 for the work engagement variable and 0.383 for the job satisfaction variable. From these results it can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity in the independent variable.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Sig.	Decision
H ₁ Work Engagement -> Job Satisfaction	0.040	Accepted
H ₂ Work Engagement -> Employee Performance	0.030	Accepted
H ₃ Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.029	Accepted
H ₄ Work Engagement -> Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.021	Accepted

In an examination of the intricacies between work engagement, job satisfaction, and employee performance, the findings delineated in Table 1 shed crucial light on their interrelation within the context of the public sector. All proposed hypotheses met the acceptance threshold. Starting with H₁, a definitive linkage between work engagement and job satisfaction is substantiated, with a p-value of 0.040. This statistical evidence elucidates a scenario wherein heightened work engagement resonates with elevated levels of job satisfaction. Each increment in work engagement is correlated with a concomitant enhancement in job satisfaction, illustrating a positive, linear relationship. The affirmation of H₂, with a significance value of 0.030, advances this narrative by embedding employee performance within this association. It signifies that employee who are ardently engaged in their roles not only exhibit increased job satisfaction but also demonstrate enhanced performance. This triad relationship is underpinned by the conviction that an engaged workforce is a productive workforce, where invigoration and enthusiasm in roles translate to measurable performance metrics. Moreover, in the context of H₃, the discernible p-value of 0.029, again less than the 0.050 threshold, accentuates the correlation between job satisfaction and employee performance. This finding illuminates the direct impact of satisfaction levels on performance outcomes. Employees who are satisfied with their roles, the workplace environment, and organizational support are not just content but are also instrumental in elevating organizational productivity and efficacy. Lastly, the Sobel test, a statistical tool adept at deciphering the mediation effect, was instrumental in evaluating H₄. A test result of 2.022 was achieved with a one-tailed probability of 0.021. This value, falling beneath the 0.050 standard, confirms the mediation role of job satisfaction in bridging work engagement and employee performance, especially within the studied public sector context.

The study's findings indicate a significant influence of work engagement on the job satisfaction of employees within the observed public sector, as evidenced by a significance

value (sig.) less than 0.05. In essence, the degree to which an employee feels engaged or connected to their work plays a pivotal role in determining their level of job satisfaction. Work engagement encapsulates an individual's trust, commitment, and sentiment towards their work. When employees resonate with their tasks and feel deeply involved, they are often infused with heightened motivation, cultivating a sense of responsibility towards achieving the organization's objectives.

Adi & Indrawati (2019) conceptualize work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state, distinct from burnout, where engaged employees exude high energy levels and immerse enthusiastically in their tasks. Expanding on this, Aidina & Prihatsanti (2018) describe work engagement as an outpouring of both physical and mental energy at the workplace, accompanied by profound involvement and focus. Similarly, Sofiyan (2018) emphasizes the high energy and robust identification associated with one's work as hallmarks of work engagement. Collectively, these definitions underscore that work engagement is not merely a state but an invigorating condition that propels employees to excel, characterizing it by high energy, intense involvement, and a sense of accomplishment.

The implications of work engagement extend beyond the individual, creating ripples throughout the organization. An engaged employee is not only passionate about their tasks but also feels cognitively and emotionally aligned with their work, leading to a richer comprehension of both their role and the broader organizational objectives. Such heightened engagement not only bolsters individual motivation, performance, and job satisfaction but also augments the collective organizational output.

Also, the study indicates a positive relationship between work engagement and employee performance within the observed public sector, as supported by a significance value of less than 0.05. This relationship suggests that elevated levels of work engagement directly correspond with enhanced employee performance. As employees become more engaged, their motivation and energy are amplified, fostering a commitment to organizational objectives and optimal contributions. Engaged employees exhibit heightened dedication and responsibility, leading to enhanced quality and efficiency in task execution. Moreover, their active participation and collaborative nature bolster team dynamics, facilitating knowledge sharing and mutual support.

Employee performance is delineated by the attainment level in executing activities and programs aligned with organizational objectives, as articulated in the strategic planning (Didi et al., 2019). It is the execution of activities congruent with bestowed responsibilities aimed at achieving predefined objectives (Harsan et al., 2020). These viewpoints align with

Ardiansyah (2016) perspective which portrays performance as the qualitative and quantitative output derived from an employee's execution of assigned responsibilities. Performance encompasses perspectives, outcomes, processes, or behaviors instrumental in realizing organizational objectives (Jackson & Arianto, 2017). It is epitomized by the quality and quantity of output resulting from employees' adherence to their responsibilities (Suwandana, 2018).

Maximizing performance entails cultivating an environment that empowers employees to hone and amplify their skills and capabilities (Rahman & Prasetya, 2018). The study underscores that augmented work engagement correlates with enhanced performance. Employees, when emotionally and psychologically attuned to their roles and organization, exhibit increased energy, engagement, and commitment. This alignment translates into heightened motivation, productivity, and work quality. Engaged employees are also predisposed to initiative-taking, collaborative endeavors, and pursuit of professional development, culminating in job satisfaction and positive organizational perceptions. This synergy underscores the pivotal role of organizational and managerial efforts in fostering a conducive environment characterized by effective communication, managerial support, recognition, and a positive climate, all instrumental in amplifying work engagement.

The study's findings confirm the significant impact of job satisfaction on employee performance, evidenced by a significance value of less than 0.05. A profound correlation emerges between these two variables, highlighting that enhanced job satisfaction invariably elevates employee performance. Factors integral to this correlation encompass intrinsic motivation, engagement, commitment, psychological well-being, creativity, innovation, retention, and loyalty. Each is intricately woven into the fabric of job satisfaction. Employees exhibiting higher levels of job satisfaction are characterized by amplified motivation, emotional and psychological investment in their roles, augmented well-being, and an innovative and creative disposition. Their allegiance to the organization is also fortified, all contributing to heightened performance metrics including productivity and work quality.

Handoko & Rambe (2018) characterize job satisfaction as an individual's emotional orientation towards their role, underscoring the prevalence of affirmative attitudes and affinity for their job. Abdurrahmat (2006) elucidates that such satisfaction is gleaned from the attainment of work objectives, optimal placement, favorable treatment, and a conducive working milieu. In this context, remuneration, though pivotal, is often secondary to the intrinsic satisfaction derived from the work itself, as opined by Latief et al. (2018)

Dewi & Sujana (2021) affirm that roles yielding intrinsic satisfaction are perceived as enjoyable, while the converse precipitates job dissatisfaction. Ahmad et al. (2010) accentuate the industrial implications of job satisfaction. Satisfied employees showcase commendable attendance, minimal absenteeism, and reduced lateness. Their propensity for job turnover is diminished, indicating prolonged tenure within organizations. Furthermore, their passive engagement in union activities is often attributed to contentment with working conditions and organizational relationships.

In addition, employees who are satisfied with fatigue tend to achieve better work performance compared to other employees. Job satisfaction can increase their motivation and commitment to work, so they are more motivated to achieve good results. Conversely, employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs can have a negative impact on the industry. They may experience absenteeism (absenteeism), which is often absent or late for work. A high rate of job turnover is also possible, which employees tend to leave the company more quickly. Dissatisfied employees may also display a lag in getting work done, which can hinder productivity and efficiency. They may be more prone to self-harm earlier in their jobs, looking for more satisfying opportunities. Not only that, employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs can also become more active in labor unions, trying to advocate for their interests and rights. This can create tension between management and unions, which can undermine harmony and productivity in the workplace. In addition, negative impacts can also occur on the physical and mental health of dissatisfied employees. They may experience stress, burnout, and demotivation, which can potentially affect their overall well-being. Therefore, it is important for companies to pay attention to and increase employee job satisfaction by creating a supportive work environment, providing recognition for achievements, providing opportunities for career development, opportunities, and paying attention to the welfare of employees as a whole.

Conclusion and Suggestion

In conclusion, the statistical tests conducted in this study unequivocally underscore the substantial interconnections between work engagement, job satisfaction, and employee performance. It is evident that employees who exhibit higher levels of engagement in their work roles are not only more satisfied but also showcase enhanced performance metrics. This underlines the salience of fostering a work environment that nurtures engagement and satisfaction, as these attributes become pivotal drivers of organizational success.

Moreover, the pronounced impact of job satisfaction on performance highlights the importance of continuous monitoring and improvement in organizational practices, ensuring that the workforce remains satisfied and motivated. A satisfied employee is not just a productive asset but also becomes an ambassador for the organization, further influencing team dynamics, organizational culture, and even external perceptions.

Future research should focus on broadening the scope of study to include diverse sectors, industries, and cultural contexts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of work engagement, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the evolving nature of these dynamics over time. The impact of technological advancements and digital transformation on these variables also warrants exploration. Furthermore, a closer look at how various leadership styles and psychological well-being influence this triad can offer valuable insights. These expanded focuses will contribute to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the interplay between these crucial organizational elements.

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