

## THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN MEDIATING WORK EXPERIENCE AND INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT PT SANMAS SURABAYA

Indah Mei Pratiwi<sup>1</sup>, Tri Kartika Pertiwi<sup>2</sup>, Ika Korika Swasti<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jawa Timur, Indonesia

Ekonomi dan Bisnis / Magister Manajemen, UPN "Veteran" Jawa Timur

Corresponding E-mail: [indahmeip15@gmail.com](mailto:indahmeip15@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [tri.pertiwi.mnj@upnjatim.ac.id](mailto:tri.pertiwi.mnj@upnjatim.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>, [ikaks.ma@upnjatim.ac.id](mailto:ikaks.ma@upnjatim.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Work Experience and Individual Characteristics on Employee Performance, with *Employee Engagement* as a mediating variable at PT Sanmas Surabaya. The phenomenon behind this research is the importance of work experience and individual characteristics in improving employee performance, especially through *employee engagement* that originates from within the employee. The research approach used is quantitative with the *Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) method through the SmartPLS application to analyze the relationship between variables. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 83 respondents, employees of PT Sanmas Surabaya from various divisions. Each variable was measured using indicators whose validity and reliability have been tested based on previous literature reviews. The results showed that work experience and individual characteristics have a positive and significant influence on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through *employee engagement*. Furthermore, *employee engagement* contributes to strengthening the relationship between work experience and individual characteristics.

**Keywords:** Work Experience, Individual Characteristics, *Employee Engagement*, Employee Performance

### INTRODUCTION

One of the key factors influencing company productivity is employee performance. However, in today's competitive world, performance is a constant challenge for companies. Consequently, companies need to fully understand the various factors that can impact employee performance (Fitri & Sadikin, 2020). Therefore, to improve employee performance, companies need to provide support through competency development, ensuring high-quality skills and high loyalty. High-performing employees indicate a well-managed company, fundamentally resulting in effective management. Optimal employee performance can be measured by the results of work performed in accordance with company standards, as a company's success is directly influenced by employee performance.

This study used PT. Sanmas Surabaya as its subject, a company with 80 employees. Each employee has their own duties and responsibilities. Each department is interconnected. Essentially, the company is obligated to pay attention to the workload of all employees. This is important not only for employee attitudes and values, but also for how employees perform their jobs and responsibilities while adhering to concrete and binding regulations. In reality, employee performance issues at PT. Sanmas are still being identified, one of which is indicated by the company not achieving its targets. Consequently, the company experienced a decline in rice sales from 2022 to 2024. Although rice sales increased by 34,602,267 kg in 2023, this achievement still fell short of the company's target.

Work experience is an important factor because the longer an employee works, the more skills and knowledge they acquire. Similarly, individual characteristics, such as responsibility, discipline, creativity, and adaptability, influence how well an employee can perform their duties. According to (Asy'ari, 2018), individual characteristics are the physical and mental traits inherent in a person. The better a person's individual characteristics, the higher their ability to produce what is assigned to them. Individual characteristics consist of certain dimensions based on criteria distributed to each individual, so they differ from others (Iskandar, 2017).

*Employee engagement* is the feeling of enthusiasm that arises when employees participate in helping the company achieve its goals. *Employee engagement* creates a strong bond with the company, not just for a salary but also for employees who are motivated to improve their performance. In an unstable environment, *employee engagement* has become a strategic imperative, one that will be a key source of competitive advantage for

organizations that develop a committed employee base, not because they are paid to commit, but because they choose to commit. According to the Social Cognitive Theory perspective, work experience and individual characteristics do not only play separate roles, but interact with each other and shape internal processes (cognition) that influence employee engagement and performance in the workplace. In the context of modern organizations, *employee engagement* acts as a mediating variable that bridges the influence between work experience and individual characteristics on employee performance. *Employee engagement* describes the extent to which employees are emotionally, cognitively, and physically involved in their work. When employees feel competent (a result of experience and personal characteristics) and have self-*efficacy*, they are more likely to be fully engaged in their work. Based on the description above, the author is interested in conducting research with the title "The Role of Employee Engagement in Mediating Work Experience and Individual Characteristics on Employee Performance at PT Sanmas Surabaya."

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) states that individual behavior is the result of a dynamic interaction between personal factors (*cognitive or personal factors*), behavior, and the environment. Bandura in Kasenger (2013) defines *self-efficacy* as an individual's belief in their ability or inability to demonstrate a particular behavior or set of behaviors. *Self-efficacy* has three dimensions, as stated by Bandura, as quoted by Gist in (Sunyoto, Danang, & Burhanudin, 2015), namely *magnitude, strength, and generality*.

### **Work experience**

Work experience is the knowledge or skills a person has acquired and mastered as a result of actions or work performed over a period of time (Rulianti, 2019). The length of time a person has worked in a particular field is related to age. A person will be familiar with the field they are pursuing. In this regard, there are several definitions of work experience. Indicators used to measure work experience include length of service, level of knowledge and skills, and mastery of the job and equipment.

### **Individual Characteristics**

Individual characteristics are the behaviors or traits inherent in an employee, both positive and negative. Each employee possesses unique individual characteristics. *Locus of Control, Authoritativeness, and Abilities* are tools used to measure individual characteristics in achieving optimal work results. Individuals who possess self-confidence, follow superiors' instructions, and are capable of completing tasks (Herlina, 2021).

### **Employee Engagement**

*Employee engagement* is the bond an employee has with a company through a conscious willingness to be involved in matters related to the company and strive to contribute to achieving company goals. According to (Letsoin & Ratnasari, 2020), indicators of *employee engagement* include absorption, vigor, and dedication. *An employee with a high work interest will demonstrate loyalty to their work*, enabling them to complete it diligently. This fosters high levels of dedication in employees, and individual employees make their work meaningful and enthusiastic.

### **Employee performance**

Employee performance is the overall quality and quantity of work achieved by an employee in completing their tasks and responsibilities as assigned by the company to its employees. According to (Robbins & Judge, 2022) indicators, these include:

1. Job quality is measured by employee perceptions of the quality of work created and the completeness of tasks that match employee skills and abilities.
2. Quantity is the amount of production expressed in the number of units, the number of activity cycles that have been completed.
3. Punctuality is the level of activity completed within the specified time, seen from the aspect of coordinating output results and maximizing time availability.
4. Effectiveness is the maximum utilization of organizational resources (manpower, money, technology, raw materials) to increase the output of each unit of resources.
5. Independence is the level at which an employee is able to carry out work tasks while remaining loyal to their job.

Conceptual Framework

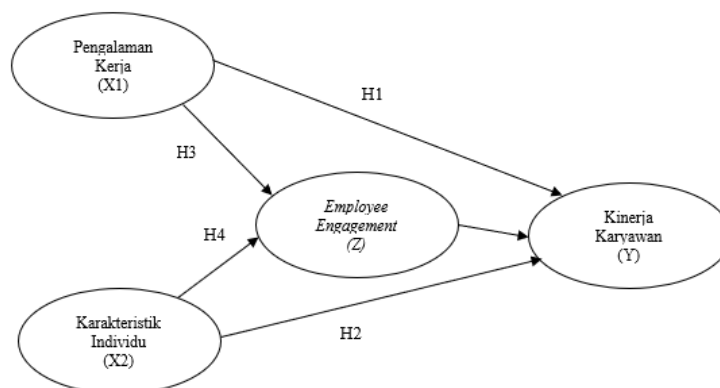


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis

- H1: Work Experience has a positive effect on Employee Performance
- H2: Individual Characteristics have a positive effect on Employee Performance
- H3: Work Experience Influences Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement*
- H4: Individual Characteristics Influence Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement*

RESEARCH METHODS

This finding utilizes a quantitative approach with PT Sanmas Surabaya as its object. A saturated sampling technique was used, namely all employees with a sample size of 83 employees. The employees were then given a questionnaire with a Likert scale to collect data. There are 4 (four) variables studied, including: two independent variables, namely Work Experience (X1) and Individual Characteristics (X2). While the other two, Employee Performance (Y) is the dependent variable, and *Employee Engagement* (Z) is the mediating variable. In addition, this study also aims to find the influence caused by the independent variables and the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

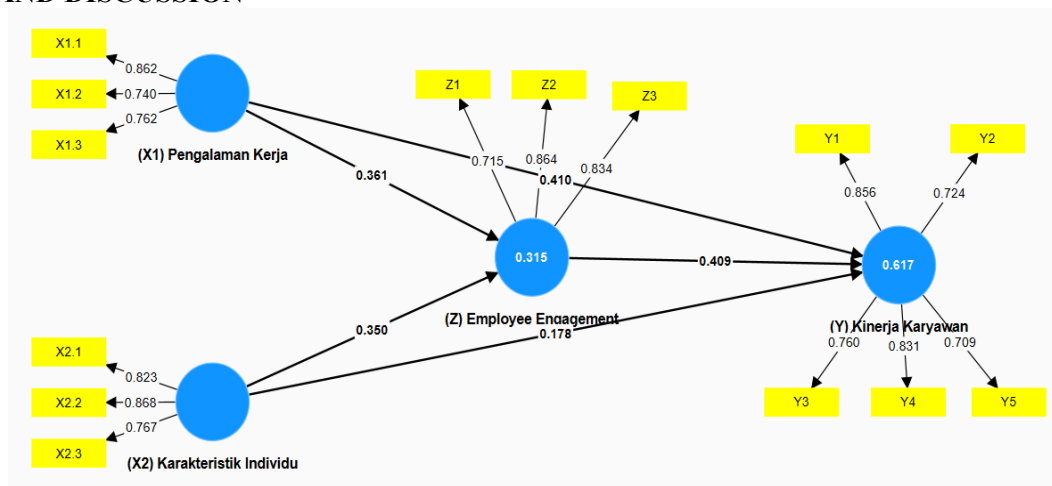


Figure 2 Outer Model with Factor Loading, Goodness of Fit (GoF) Test and R-Square

Based on the results above, it shows that all indicators in each variable have a loading factor value above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators have met the convergent validity criteria as recommended by Hair et al. (2019). In the Work Experience variable (X1), indicator X1.1 has the highest loading factor value of 0.863, indicating that the length of time working is the aspect that best reflects employee work experience. Meanwhile, in the Individual Characteristics variable (X2), indicator X2.2 shows the highest value of 0.868, illustrating that employee personality which tends to comply with instructions has a dominant contribution to individual characteristics. In the *Employee Engagement* variable (Z), indicator Z2 has the highest value of 0.864, indicating that the aspects of emotional attachment and employee work enthusiasm are the strongest components in representing overall employee

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engagement. Furthermore, in the Employee Performance variable (Y), indicator Y1 has the highest value of 0.856, indicating that the quality of employees in completing tasks well is the main reflection of performance.

**Table 1 Composite Reliability and AVE Results**

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
(X1) Work Experience	0.746	0.864	0.832	0.624
(X2) Individual Characteristics	0.759	0.781	0.860	0.673
(Y) Employee Performance	0.837	0.857	0.884	0.605
(Z) Employee Engagement	0.730	0.752	0.848	0.651

Based on the results in the table above, all research variables have *Composite Reliability* (rho\_c) values that exceed the minimum limit of 0.70, as recommended by (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019) those who state that a composite reliability value above 0.70 indicates good internal consistency. This means that the indicators used have consistently measured each construct reliably.

The *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) value for all variables has also exceeded 0.50, indicating that each construct has good convergent validity. The Individual Characteristics variable (X2) has the highest AVE value, namely 0.673, which means that 67.3% of the indicator variance can be explained by this construct. Meanwhile, the Employee Performance variable (Y) has an AVE value of 0.605, which also meets the minimum requirements for convergent validity. Other variables, namely Work Experience (X1) with a value of 0.624 and *Employee Engagement* (Z) with a value of 0.651, also show adequate validity.

**Table 2 R-Square Results**

	R-square	R-square adjusted
(Y) Employee Performance	0.617	0.603
(Z) Employee Engagement	0.383	0.397

The R-Square value obtained is 0.617 indicating that this model is able to explain the phenomenon/issue of employee performance by 61.7% and the remaining 38.2% is explained by other variables (besides work experience, individual characteristics and *employee engagement*) that are not included in the model. And the R-Square value of 0.603 indicates that this model can explain 60.3% of the variation in *employee engagement*. This means that the factors tested in this study such as work experience variables, individual characteristics and employee performance have explained 60.3% while the remaining 39.7% is influenced by other factors not included in this research model.

**Table 3 Results of Goodness of Fit (GoF) Calculation**

Variables	AVE	R-Square
Work Experience (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.624	–
Individual Characteristics (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.673	–
Employee Engagement (Z)	0.651	0.315
Employee Performance (Y)	0.605	0.617
<b>Average</b>	<b>0.638</b>	<b>0.466</b>

$$GoF = \sqrt{0,638 \times 0,466}$$

$$GoF = \sqrt{0,2975} = 0,545$$

A GoF value of 0.545 indicates that this research model falls into the high GoF category, thus concluding that the model has excellent overall model fit. This demonstrates an excellent balance between measurement validity (outer model) and predictive quality (inner model). With a high GoF value, it can be concluded that the model used in this study is not only valid in measuring variables but also effective in predicting the relationships between variables within the model.

Through the Outer Model test with Factor Loading, *Goodness of Fit* (GoF) Test and R-Square, the results of the hypothesis test in this finding are as follows:

**H1** : Work experience has a positive effect on employee performance. The test results show a path coefficient of 0.410, with a t-statistic of 4.876 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is <0.05, H1 is **accepted**.

**H2**: Individual Characteristics have a positive effect on Employee Performance. Based on the test results, the path coefficient value was 0.178, with a t-statistic of 2.734 and a p-value of 0.006. Since the p-value is <0.05, H2 is **accepted**.

**H3**: Work Experience influences Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement* . The test results show a path coefficient value of 0.148, with a t-statistic of 2.589 and a p-value of 0.010. Since the p-value <0.05, H3 is **accepted**.

**H4**: Individual Characteristics influence Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement* . Based on the test results, the path coefficient value was 0.143, with a t-statistic of 2.731 and a p-value of 0.006. Since the p-value <0.05, H4 is **accepted**.

Based on the cross-tabulation results, the majority of employees with longer tenure have higher levels of employee engagement and performance than those with shorter tenure. This suggests that work experience helps employees understand tasks and complete work more effectively. Furthermore, employees with positive individual characteristics, such as responsibility, adaptability, and high work initiative, tend to have better work engagement, which results in improved work quality, punctuality, and teamwork.

### **The Influence of Work Experience on Employee Performance**

The results of the study indicate that work experience contributes to employee performance at PT Sanmas Surabaya. In other words, work experience is a crucial factor determining an individual's effectiveness and productivity in the workplace. Work experience is a key determinant of ability. Employees with a long tenure tend to be more skilled at operating work equipment effectively. These findings align with those of Vega Riya Jaya (2022) , Priyono & Perkasa (2024) , and Lestari et al. (2021), which show that work experience has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. Employees with more work experience tend to have a better grasp of their tasks, enabling them to complete their work effectively. Therefore, equipment proficiency is an indicator of technical ability that can help them perform their work more professionally and achieve high performance. Therefore, the greater and more relevant work experience an employee has, the greater their ability to master work equipment.

### **The Influence of Individual Characteristics on Employee Performance**

The results of the study indicate that individual characteristics contribute to employee performance at PT Sanmas Surabaya. This means that the better an employee's individual characteristics, including self-confidence, work ability, and how they perceive authority, the higher their performance level. This finding indicates that differences in individual characteristics influence how employees behave, make decisions, and complete responsibilities in the workplace. Proactive individual characteristics can support effective and efficient performance improvement. (Mumpuni & Handayani, 2024)Based on the results of the study, the dominant aspect in shaping individual characteristics is that the majority of employees believe that success depends on their own efforts and following superiors' instructions. If an employee possesses positive characteristics such as discipline, responsibility, and confidence in their own abilities, they tend to work more effectively and produce better performance. These results are in line with previous findings and (Julianto & Adda, 2021) confirm that the combination of individual characteristics and work experience also influences employee performance.

### **Work Experience on Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement***

The research results show that work experience contributes to employee performance through *employee engagement* at PT Sanmas Surabaya. In other words, employee work experience plays a role both directly and indirectly through employees' emotional and psychological attachment to their work. Employees who feel engaged with the company will exhibit self-discipline. High discipline and a positive work culture will lead to high performance (Fitri & Swasti, 2025). *Employee engagement* at PT Sanmas Surabaya demonstrates a strong attachment to their work because they feel their work is meaningful and has a clear purpose. This study's findings align with research by Hidayat & Sari (2023), which found that *employee engagement* partially mediates the relationship between work experience and employee performance. This means that work experience can enhance employee engagement, and this engagement drives improved performance. Highly dedicated employees demonstrate enthusiasm, results orientation, and consistency in completing tasks, rather than simply fulfilling obligations. This allows employees to work for long periods without feeling excessively tired.

### The Influence of Individual Characteristics on Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement*

The results of the study indicate that individual characteristics contribute to employee performance through *employee engagement* at PT Sanmas Surabaya. These results demonstrate that *employee engagement* acts as a mediating variable contributing to the relationship between individual characteristics and employee performance. This means that strong personal characteristics, such as a sense of responsibility, self-confidence, and self-control, can increase employee work engagement, which ultimately impacts more optimal performance (Rahmawati, Nur, & Pertiwi, 2025). PT Sanmas Surabaya employees believe that success in their work depends heavily on their own effort and hard work, rather than on luck or external factors. This belief plays a significant role in building employee engagement, as employees tend to follow their superiors' instructions even when they have differing opinions. These results align with findings (Simatupang et al., 2021) showing that individuals with positive characteristics have higher levels of work engagement, which impacts increased productivity.

### CLOSING

Research conducted at PT Sanmas Surabaya, with work experience, individual characteristics, and employee engagement as mediating variables, has an influence on employee performance. Therefore, the longer a person's work experience, good individual characteristics, and high employee engagement will support that employee's performance. Companies need to pay attention to and create operational equipment training, employee skills development, and provide learning opportunities guided by senior employees. Meanwhile, management needs to instill positive work values such as responsibility, discipline, and integrity through soft skills training, motivational training, and the formation of a supportive work culture. Companies can also create a supportive work environment and employee engagement through performance-based reward programs, open internal communication, and the assignment of meaningful responsibilities. For future researchers, it is hoped that research variables and research objects and locations can be expanded.

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