



The Effect of Employee Engagement and Psychological Empowerment on Employee Performance with Organizational Culture as a Mediator

Erdyta Zulreino¹, Triyonowati²,

^{1,2}, S2 Magister Management, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Indonesia (STIESIA) Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: ¹erdyta_zulreino@yahoo.com, ²trionowati@stiesia.ac.id,

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effect of Employee Engagement and Psychological Empowerment on Employee Performance with Organizational Culture as a mediating variable among ship crew at PT. XYZ Surabaya. Using a quantitative approach with survey method, the study involved 86 respondents selected through saturated sampling. Data were collected via Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 3.0. The results indicate that: (1) Employee Engagement positively and significantly affects Employee Performance ($\beta=0.239$; $p=0.007$); (2) Psychological Empowerment positively and significantly affects Employee Performance ($\beta=0.322$; $p=0.001$); (3) Organizational Culture positively and significantly affects Employee Performance ($\beta=0.379$; $p=0.000$); (4) Employee Engagement positively and significantly affects Organizational Culture ($\beta=0.322$; $p=0.021$); (5) Psychological Empowerment positively and significantly affects Organizational Culture ($\beta=0.435$; $p=0.000$); (6) Organizational Culture partially mediates the effect of Employee Engagement on Performance ($\beta=0.122$; $p=0.048$); and (7) Organizational Culture partially mediates the effect of Psychological Empowerment on Performance ($\beta=0.165$; $p=0.004$). The R^2 values are 48.3% for Organizational Culture and 68.1% for Employee Performance.

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INTRODUCTION

The maritime transportation industry is a strategic sector for Indonesia as an archipelagic nation. The Directorate of Distribution Statistics (2024) reported that more than 90 percent of inter-island trade in Indonesia is served by maritime transportation, making this industry the backbone of national connectivity. In this context, shipping companies are required to maintain high operational standards, including human resource management which is at the forefront of ship operations.

Ship crew have unique work characteristics compared to employees in other sectors: isolated at sea for months, subject to strict international maritime safety regulations, working in long shift rotations, and facing high operational risks. These conditions demand not only technical competence but also stable psychological conditions, high work involvement, and a sense of empowerment in independent decision-making.

Internal data from PT. XYZ reveals alarming ship crew turnover rates, never dropping below 60% throughout 2020-2025, far exceeding the normal threshold of 5-15% (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). This high turnover is theoretically linked to low employee engagement. Gallup (2023) reported that only 23% of global employees are truly engaged, and disengaged employees are 3.8 times more likely to leave their organizations.

Beyond engagement, psychological empowerment becomes a critical factor affecting crew performance and retention. Spreitzer (1995) explains that employees who perceive meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact in their work demonstrate higher intrinsic motivation and optimal performance. In a ship environment that demands quick and independent decision-making, a sense of empowerment becomes an indispensable psychological competence.

The effectiveness of engagement and empowerment in driving performance does not occur automatically. There is a contextual factor serving as a connecting mechanism: organizational culture. Schein (2010) states that organizational culture encompasses value systems, norms, and basic assumptions that direct how members think and work. In the shipping industry, a strong organizational culture emphasizing safety, discipline, and collaboration plays a vital role in translating positive psychological conditions into high-performing work behavior.

Research on the effects of employee engagement and psychological empowerment on employee performance has been extensively conducted, but most focuses on banking, manufacturing, and education sectors (Alonso et al., 2024; Makhamreh et al., 2022). Studies integrating both psychological variables with organizational culture as a mediator, particularly in the maritime industry context with ship crew, remain limited. This research offers novelty in: (1) integrating employee engagement and psychological empowerment simultaneously; (2) positioning organizational culture as a mediating variable; (3) the maritime industry context which has been underexplored.

Based on this elaboration, this study aims to analyze the effect of employee engagement and psychological empowerment on employee performance with organizational culture as a mediating variable among ship crew at PT. XYZ.

.LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by Blau (1964), serves as the theoretical foundation of this research. SET posits that employment relationships contain social and psychological dimensions that mutually influence each other. When organizations provide support, recognition, and a conducive environment, employees respond with positive work behaviors, including higher engagement, a sense of empowerment, and better performance.

Saks (2019) emphasizes the norm of reciprocity as the primary mechanism driving behavior in social exchange. In the organizational context, this norm creates conditions where employees feel obligated to reciprocate organizational investments through improved work quality and deeper involvement. The relevance of SET in the ship crew context is particularly high, given the work environment demands mutual trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) first introduced employee engagement as a psychological condition in which individuals fully express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally while performing their roles. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) define engagement as a positive mental state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Research by Corbeanu and Iliescu (2025) confirms the positive and significant relationship between work engagement and job performance. Liu et al. (2022) found that engagement mediates the

relationship between HRM practices and performance in the service industry. Lestari and Deviastri (2024) proved that engaged employees demonstrate higher productivity and loyalty. In the ship crew context, engaged employees perform safety procedures more meticulously, maintain more consistent watch duties, and actively coordinate with team members.

H1: Employee Engagement has a positive effect on Employee Performance.

Psychological Empowerment

Spreitzer (1995) defines psychological empowerment as a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) emphasize psychological empowerment as a subjective individual perception influenced by the interaction of organizational structure, leadership style, and work experience.

Makhamreh et al. (2022) state that psychological empowerment enhances individual initiative and job satisfaction, impacting task performance. Pacheco et al. (2023) found that the effect of empowerment on performance operates through strengthening self-efficacy and affective commitment. In the shipping context, the self-determination and impact dimensions are most critical because crew members often make quick and independent operational decisions at sea.

H2: Psychological Empowerment has a positive effect on Employee Performance.

Organizational Culture

Schein (2010) and Victoria et al. (2021) define organizational culture as a pattern of basic assumptions created by a group as it learns to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration. Denison et al. (2003) categorize culture into four dimensions: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission.

Faqqor and Atho'llah (2023) proved that employee engagement has a significant effect on organizational culture, where engaged employees become effective cultural agents. Khoirunnisa et al. (2025) assert that a strong organizational culture is formed from employees who feel empowered to innovate and contribute. Hendri (2025) demonstrated that cultural dimensions have significant positive relationships with all three dimensions of engagement.

H3: Employee Engagement has a positive effect on Organizational Culture.

H4: Psychological Empowerment has a positive effect on Organizational Culture.

Employee Performance

Villanova et al. (1993) define performance as the record of outcomes from specific job functions over a certain period. Mathis and Jackson (2011) view performance as the interaction of individual ability, organizational support, and effort exerted. Measurement in this study refers to five indicators from Villanova et al. (1993): quantity of work, quality of work, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and interpersonal impact.

Bagga et al. (2023) found that organizational culture oriented toward results and empowerment positively affects motivation and performance. Hartnell et al. (2011), through meta-analysis, confirmed that culture type and strength correlate with organizational effectiveness.

H5: Organizational Culture has a positive effect on Employee Performance.

The Mediating Role of Organizational Culture

Positioning organizational culture as a mediator is based on the argument that employees' psychological conditions do not directly translate into performance but first shape and strengthen patterns of values,

norms, and collective behavior. Engaged employees internalize values of dedication and cooperation; empowerment strengthens culture through enhanced autonomy and sense of belonging.

Setiawan et al. (2023) proved that organizational culture mediates the effect of employee engagement on performance in maritime transportation companies. Faqqor and Atho'llah (2023) found that culture mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational excellence. Pacheco et al. (2023) added that the effect of psychological empowerment on performance operates through strengthening self-efficacy and affective commitment shaped by a conducive culture.

H6: Organizational Culture mediates the effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance.

H7: Organizational Culture mediates the effect of Psychological Empowerment on Employee Performance.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical review, the conceptual framework illustrates that Employee Engagement (X1) and Psychological Empowerment (X2) have direct effects on Employee Performance (Y) as well as indirect effects through Organizational Culture (Z) as a mediating variable.

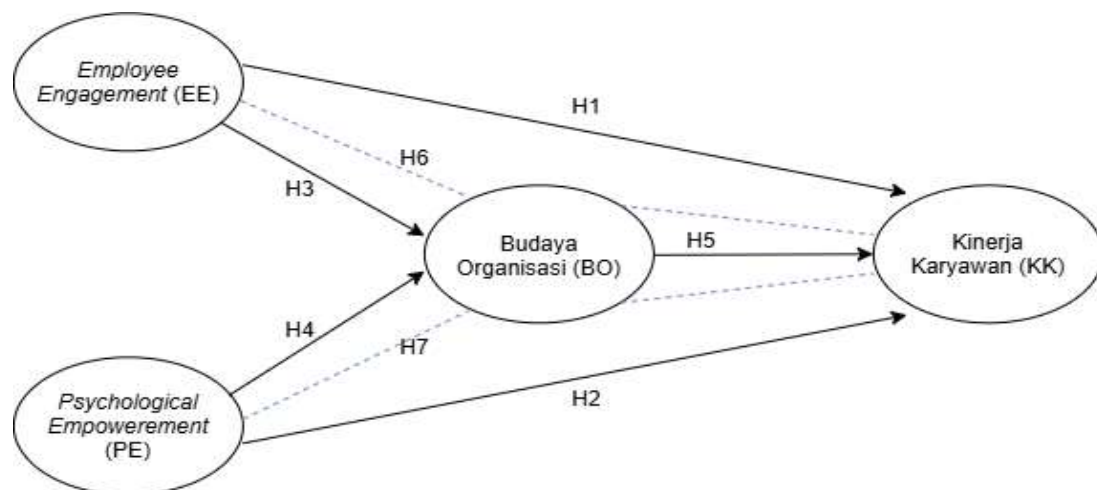


Figure 1. Research Framework

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal explanatory design. A survey method was used as the data collection technique through questionnaires. The population comprised all ship crew members of PT. XYZ Surabaya, totaling 86 individuals, consisting of permanent employees and Sea Work Agreement (PKL) employees. A saturated sampling technique was employed, making the entire population respondents. The questionnaire used a 1-5 Likert scale. Variables were measured using: (1) Employee Engagement: 3 indicators (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) - vigor, dedication, absorption. (2) Psychological Empowerment: 4 indicators (Spreitzer, 1995) - meaning, competence, self-determination, impact. (3) Organizational Culture: 4 indicators (Denison et al., 2003) - involvement, consistency, adaptability, mission. (4) Employee Performance: 5 indicators (Villanova et al., 1993). Validity testing using Pearson Product Moment correlation showed all items were valid ($r > 0.3$). Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed all variables were reliable ($\alpha > 0.6$). Data analysis used Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0. Model evaluation included outer model (convergent validity, discriminant validity, reliability) and inner model (R^2 , path coefficients, hypothesis testing). Mediation testing used bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples.

RESULT

Model Measurement

All respondents were male (100%). The age group of 20-30 years dominated (38.4%), followed by 31-40 years (31.4%). Senior high school/vocational education was the largest (72.1%). The largest position was Deck Crew/ABK (45.3%), followed by Officer (18.6%), and Engineer (16.3%). PKL status dominated (95.3%). Work tenure of 6-12 months was the largest (38.4%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic of Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Employee Engagement	3.81	0.81	Very High
Psychological Empowerment	3.74419	0.84	Very High
Organizational Culture	4.06686	0.73	Very High
Employee Performance	3.707	0.81	Very High

Outer model evaluation

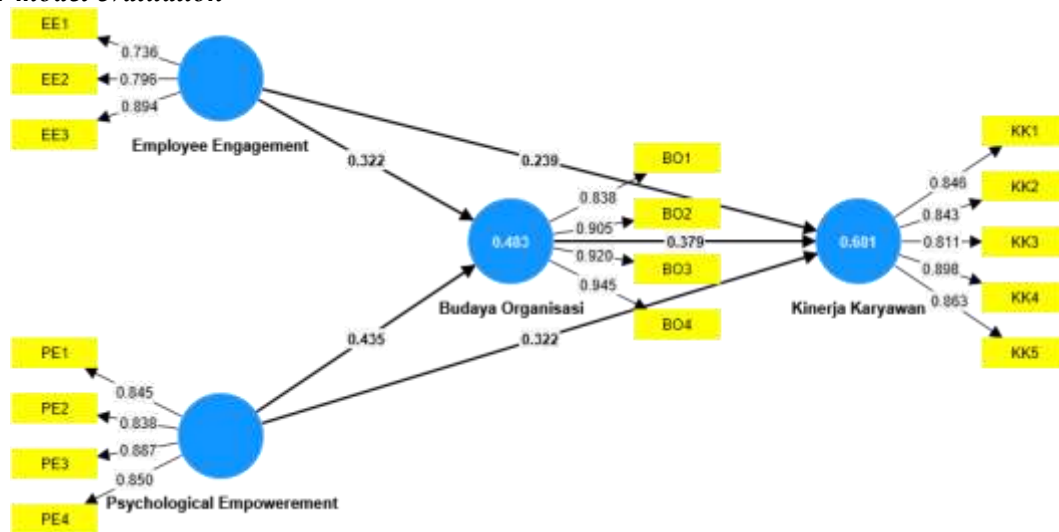


Figure 2. Outer Model

According to Figure 2, the purpose of this external model test is to assess the validity and reliability of the employed constructs or indicators. Validity and reliability tests are employed to assess the indicated measurement model. The results of factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite factors, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) from this study are displayed in Figure 2.

Table 2. Test Outer Model

VARIABLE	Item	Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Employee Engagement	EE1	0,736	0.737	0.852	0.658
	EE2	0,796			

Psychological Empowerment	EE3	0,894	0.878	0.916	0.731
	PE1	0,845			
	PE2	0,838			
	PE3	0,887			
	PE4	0,850			
Organizational Culture	BO1	0,838	0.924	0.946	0.815
	BO2	0,905			
	BO3	0,920			
	BO4	0,945			
Employee Performance	KK1	0,846	0.906	0.930	0.727
	KK2	0,843			
	KK3	0,811			
	KK4	0,898			
	KK5	0,863			

Based on Table 2, All indicators exceeded the recommended threshold (outer loading >0.70, AVE >0.50), confirming convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios (<0.90) confirmed discriminant validity. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeded 0.70, confirming reliability.

Table 3. Fornell-Lacker Validity Test

Variable	Organizational Culture	Employee Engagement	Employee Performance	Psychological Empowerment
Organizational Culture	0.903			
Employee Engagement	0.617	0.811		
Employee Performance	0.737	0.691	0.853	
Psychological Empowerment	0.653	0.677	0.732	0.855

Base on table 3, The Fornell-Larcker criterion is used to assess discriminant validity, which ensures that each construct in the research model is truly distinct from other constructs. Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, and Psychological Empowerment measure different concepts. There is no significant overlap or redundancy among the constructs. The measurement model is valid for further hypothesis testing

Table 4. HTMT Validity Test

Variable	Organizational Culture	Employee Engagement	Employee Performance	Psychological Empowerment
Organizational Culture				
Employee Engagement	0.739			
Employee Performance	0.792	0.846		
Psychological Empowerment	0.716	0.840	0.813	

Based on the Table 4, The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is a more advanced criterion for assessing discriminant validity. It measures the ratio of between-trait correlations to within-trait correlations. Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, and Psychological Empowerment each measure unique concepts. The constructs are empirically

distinguishable despite some natural relationships between them. The measurement model is valid and suitable for structural equation modeling analysis

Inner Model

The coefficient of determination Q-square, F-square, and significance tests are used to assess the structural model (inner model). To ascertain the degree to which exogenous variables impact endogenous variables, SEM analysis employs the influence of determination analysis. The coefficient of determination (R^2) determines R-squared. The following are the findings of this study's coefficient of determination (R-squared) and Q-square test:

Table 5. R-Square (R^2) and Q-square (Q^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2 Adjusted
Organizational Culture	0.483	0.470	0.835
Employee Performance	0.681	0.669	

Based on Table 5, the R^2 for Organizational Culture is 0.483, meaning Employee Engagement and Psychological Empowerment collectively explain 48.3% of its variance, while the remaining 51.7% is influenced by other factors outside the model. The R^2 for Employee Performance is 0.681, indicating that Employee Engagement, Psychological Empowerment, and Organizational Culture together explain 68.1% of performance variance, with 31.9% attributed to external variables. The Q^2 value of 0.835 (calculated from both R^2 values) demonstrates very strong predictive relevance, as $Q^2 > 0$ confirms the model's predictive capability, and values above 0.5 are considered excellent. Overall, the structural model exhibits moderate to strong explanatory power and excellent predictive ability regarding ship crew performance at PT. XYZ Surabaya.

Hypothesis Test

To test the hypothesis, the coefficient value for each line will be ascertained. In this analysis, a significance level of 0.05 is accepted. The direct effect hypothesis and indirect effect hypothesis tests presented the following results:

Table 7. Direct effect hypothesis

Relationship	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Employee Engagement → Employee Performance	0.239	2.678	0.007	Significant
Psychological Empowerment → Employee Performance	0.322	3.383	0.001	Significant
Employee Engagement → Organizational Culture	0.322	2.307	0.021	Significant
Psychological Empowerment → Organizational Culture	0.435	3.595	0.000	Significant
Organizational Culture → Employee Performance	0.379	4.580	0.000	Significant

Based on Table 7, the results of direct hypothesis testing are as follows:

The p-value is $0.007 < 0.05$ and the T-statistic value is $2.678 > 1.96$. With a path coefficient of 0.239, this suggests that Employee Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance. The p-value is $0.001 < 0.05$ and the T-statistic value is $3.383 > 1.96$. With a path coefficient of 0.322, this suggests that Psychological Empowerment has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.

The p-value is $0.021 < 0.05$ and the T-statistic value is $2.307 > 1.96$. With a path coefficient of 0.322, this suggests that Employee Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Organizational Culture. The p-value is $0.000 < 0.05$ and the T-statistic value is $3.595 > 1.96$. With a path coefficient of 0.435, this suggests that Psychological Empowerment has a positive and significant effect on Organizational Culture.

The p-value is $0.000 < 0.05$ and the T-statistic value is $4.580 > 1.96$. With a path coefficient of 0.379, this suggests that Organizational Culture has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance.

Table 7. Mediation Effect Hypothesis

Relationship	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Result
<i>Employee Engagement → Organizational Culture → Employee Performance</i>	0.122	1.976	0.048	Partial Mediation
<i>Psychological Empowerment → Organizational Culture → Employee Performance</i>	0.165	2.914	0.004	Partial Mediation

Based on Table 7, the results of direct hypothesis testing are as follows:

The p-value is $0.048 < 0.05$ and the T-statistic value is $1.976 > 1.96$. With an indirect effect coefficient of 0.122, this suggests that Organizational Culture significantly mediates the effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance. Since the direct effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance remains significant ($\beta = 0.239$; $p = 0.007$), the mediation type is partial mediation.

The p-value is $0.004 < 0.05$ and the T-statistic value is $2.914 > 1.96$. With an indirect effect coefficient of 0.165, this suggests that Organizational Culture significantly mediates the effect of Psychological Empowerment on Employee Performance. Since the direct effect of Psychological Empowerment on Employee Performance remains significant ($\beta = 0.322$; $p = 0.001$), the mediation type is partial mediation.

DISCUSSION

The findings support H1 that employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on performance ($\beta=0.239$; $p=0.007$). This result aligns with Corbeanu and Iliescu (2025) confirming the positive relationship between work engagement and job performance. Through the JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), engaged crew members possess sufficient psychological resources to face demanding job conditions without mental exhaustion. From the SET perspective (Blau, 1964), engagement is a response to organizational investment manifested in higher performance. The mean score of EE1 (4.26) indicates good energy and mental resilience, while EE2 (3.48) suggests dedication still requires improvement.

The findings support H2 that psychological empowerment has a positive and significant effect on performance ($\beta=0.322$; $p=0.001$), making it the strongest direct predictor. This result is consistent with Alonso et al. (2024) and Makhamreh et al. (2022). Through Spreitzer's (1995) cognitive-motivational approach, all four empowerment dimensions collectively form a strong motivational orientation. The mean score of PE2 (3.91) indicates good competence, while PE4 (3.63) suggests the perception of impact requires attention. In the shipping context, the self-determination and impact dimensions are most critical because crew members often make independent decisions at sea.

The findings support H3 that employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on organizational culture ($\beta=0.322$; $p=0.021$). This result aligns with Faqqor and Atho'illah (2023) and Hendri (2025). Engaged employees become effective cultural agents who internalize and disseminate organizational values. The internalization process is cumulative: the more engaged employees there are, the stronger the culture becomes. The mean score of EE3 (3.70) indicates absorption still has room for improvement.

The findings support H4 that psychological empowerment has a positive and significant effect on organizational culture ($\beta=0.435$; $p=0.000$), making it the most dominant factor. This result is consistent with Khoirunnisa et al. (2025) and Juyumaya (2022). Empowered employees have a stronger sense of ownership and actively participate in building positive culture. The self-determination dimension encourages initiative that strengthens involvement and adaptability, while impact motivates contribution according to organizational value standards.

The findings support H5 that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on performance ($\beta=0.379$; $p=0.000$), with the highest T-statistic. This result aligns with Bagga et al. (2023) and Khoirunnisa et al. (2025). A strong culture forms behavioral standards that guide all members' work, creating consistency in task execution without direct supervision. The average culture score (4.07) reflects a sufficiently strong condition, especially in the involvement (4.17) and consistency (4.16) dimensions.

The findings support H6 and H7 that organizational culture partially mediates the effect of employee engagement and psychological empowerment on performance. The mediation coefficient for $PE \rightarrow OC \rightarrow EP$ ($\beta=0.165$; $p=0.004$) is larger than $EE \rightarrow OC \rightarrow EP$ ($\beta=0.122$; $p=0.048$). The proportion of indirect effects to total effects is 33.8% and 33.9% respectively. These results align with Setiawan et al. (2023) and Faqqor and Atho'illah (2023).

Partial mediation means the effect occurs through two simultaneous mechanisms: direct (individual psychological conditions directly drive performance) and indirect (psychological conditions strengthen culture, which then drives collective performance). These findings confirm that organizational culture is not a passive contextual variable but a strategic integrator that optimizes the contribution of engagement and empowerment into sustainable performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis results, all seven hypotheses are accepted. Psychological empowerment is the strongest direct predictor of performance ($\beta=0.322$) and simultaneously the most dominant factor in shaping organizational culture ($\beta=0.435$). Organizational culture has the largest effect on performance ($\beta=0.379$) and is proven to partially mediate the effect of both independent variables. The R^2 value for employee performance of 68.1% indicates the model has strong explanatory capability. The findings confirm that improving ship crew performance requires synergy between high work engagement, strong sense of empowerment, and conducive organizational culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance employee performance and organizational culture at PT. XYZ, management should design comprehensive engagement enhancement programs that include performance-based rewards and clear career paths for PKL employees, while simultaneously paying special attention to the dedication dimension (mean 3.48) and impact dimension (mean 3.63) through regular sharing sessions and constructive feedback systems to strengthen employees' emotional attachment and sense of contribution. Furthermore, work quality should be improved through structured safety training and transparent evaluation systems that ensure consistent performance standards, and most importantly, management must prioritize the systematic strengthening of work culture through comprehensive new crew orientation programs, cultural rituals that reinforce core values, and consistent leadership that

exemplifies the desired behaviors, as organizational culture has proven to be the strategic integrator that translates psychological conditions into sustained.

RESEARCH LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged, including the fact that it was conducted at only one shipping company, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other maritime organizations with different operational and cultural contexts, while the use of self-report measurements may introduce social desirability bias as respondents might overstate their engagement or performance levels, and the unique characteristics of ship crew work, such as rotating schedules, limited internet access, and time constraints, may have affected the quality and completeness of data collected, in addition to the R^2 values for organizational culture (48.3%) and employee performance (68.1%) which, although moderate to strong, indicate that other variables such as leadership style, compensation systems, work environment, and career development opportunities may also play significant roles and should be incorporated in future research to develop a more comprehensive model of crew performance.

FUTURE RESEARCH

For future research, it is recommended to involve multiple shipping companies to enhance the generalizability of findings across the maritime industry, while employing a longitudinal design to capture the dynamic changes in relationships among variables over time and better establish causal directions, as well as incorporating moderating variables such as the master's (captain's) leadership style, ship type, or voyage routes to understand the contextual factors that may strengthen or weaken the effects of engagement and empowerment on performance, and finally integrating objective performance data such as safety records, fuel consumption efficiency, on-time arrival rates, and technical violation logs alongside self-report measures to reduce perception bias and provide more robust validation of the findings.

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