

# THE IMPACT OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL WISDOM-BASED COMMUNICATION STRATEGY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE, MEDIATED BY EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of employee engagement as the mediating variable between inclusive leadership and employee performance, as well as between local wisdom-based communication strategy and employee performance. The study used structural equation modelling (SEM) methods to sample 107 district officers of Kabupaten Samosir. This study revealed that employee engagement mediated the relationship between local wisdom based communication strategy and employee performance, also the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee performance. Due to the lack of research on inclusive leadership, local wisdom based communication strategy and employee engagement on employee performance. Hence, this finding can help to identify the application of local wisdom in internal communication strategies in the organization, which is expected to increase employee engagement and employee performance in the organization's success. This study is original, as no previous research has investigated the inclusive leadership on employee performance, and the role of employee engagement as mediating variable between inclusive leadership on employee performance.

**Keywords:** Local Wisdom, Inclusive Leadership, Employee Engagement.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

An employee is regarded as one of the most important elements for the organization (Kim & Rhew, 2011), as one of the organizations key success factors. Employee performance is thought to be the engine that drives organizational performance. Organizations are putting in a lot of effort to improve employee performance. However, achieving employee performance has always been a significant challenge for the organization, particularly in determining the most appropriate causes to encourage employees to achieve their peak performance.

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical component of current business development. It has an impact on employee morale, productivity, and reasons for staying in the organization. In general, organizations use engaged employees to achieve strategic competence. Employees who are deeply committed to the organization tend to outperform their peers in terms of performance (Harter et al., 2002).

According to (Berger, 2008), can be explained by the organization's internal communication strategy. The Batak Toba culture and customs are practiced in daily life in the district of

Samosir, which is known as the birthplace of the Batak tribe. Samosir District Office incorporates Batak Toba culture's Local Wisdom into its internal communication strategy. This local wisdom, identified as Dalihan Na Tolu, is appropriate for implementation in the District Office of Samosir due to the Samosir people's persistence to preserve their culture, which is evident in language, philosophy, and life styles. Although various studies have looked into the relationship between internal communication strategy and employee engagement and performance, limited study has looked at the concept of an internal communication strategy that incorporates local wisdom.

Inclusive leadership is another crucial factor that might influence employee success. In order to develop favourable human resources, inclusive leadership is a crucial notion. Inclusive leaders inspire their colleagues to contribute to their job by acting as a driving force (Aslan, 2019). When analyzing the relationship between leadership and employee performance, inclusive leadership research can be explored. As a result, academics are challenged to investigate the impact of inclusive leadership on employee performance. As a result, by studying the influence of local wisdom-based communication strategy on employee performance as mediated by employee engagement, this study aims to add to the body of knowledge related to internal communication strategy on employee engagement and performance. Furthermore, this research looks into the impact of inclusive leadership on employee performance through the lens of employee engagement.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Local Wisdom-based Communication Strategy**

Local wisdom is an important part of the local culture that must be preserved. Local wisdom, according to (Sumarmi&Amirudin, 2014), is "local knowledge applied by local groups that blends belief systems, customs, and cultures." Lifelong traditions and myths reflect local wisdom. Dalihan Na Tolu or Tungku Nan Tiga is a well-known local wisdom among the Batak Toba community. The Batak Toba people's behaviour and deeds (attitude or pattern of activity) are governed by this value, which regulates, guides, and directs them. The three pillars of the furnace are known as Dalihan Na Tolu.

Hula-hula, DonganSabutuha, and Boru are Dalihan's three furnaces (Gultom, 1992). Dalihan Na Tolu's worldview promotes equality as important as one another. There is no prejudice, no differentiation made based on religion, color, or social class. The organization's internal communication strategy, which is founded on local wisdom, combines Dalihan Na Tolu's concept in internal communication. Hula-Hula represents the management in the existing organizational structure in order to protect employees. Boru represents the Boru, who operate under Hula-supervision Hula's and control. Meanwhile, at the employee level, the interaction between co-workers is marked by mutual respect, referred to as 'DonganSabutuha,' which encourages mutual understanding.

Each member of Dalihan Na Tolu has a responsibility to uphold the role and treat others with respect depending on their distinct roles. These three aspects in Dalihan Na Tolu are inextricably linked and cannot be separated. In any case, all three have the same

responsibility to assist and provide answers to current issues. Input is also provided in accordance with each element's capacity or role, and it is done through a deliberation process.

In fact, Dalihan Na Tolu's philosophy is not the same as the conventional traditional view, which takes a top-down approach, but instead emphasizes equality, as symbolized by the three furnaces that cannot stand alone. This notion works well with symmetrical internal communication, which encourages trust, openness, credibility, two-way communication, and bargaining within the company (Gunig, 2001). Dalihan Na Tolu adds to the company's internal communication strategy in order to improve employee relations.

## **2.2. Inclusive Leadership**

Leadership is defined as the ability to persuade people to achieve predetermined objectives (Elqadri et al., 2015). Based on the foregoing, a leadership style is a method or approach for motivating others and offering direction in order to achieve desired outcomes (Amirul and Daud, 2012). Effective leaders frequently choose a leadership style that encourages employees to think creatively, provides them with a vision, and gives them hope (Almutairi, 2016). According to the most recent advancements in leadership research, the process of influencing a leader must be inclusive. That is, it should be more 'follower' focused rather than 'leader' oriented, and it should include all 'followers,' regardless of gender, ethnicity, or other characteristics. The term "influential leadership" was coined by Nembhard and Edmondson (2006), who described it as "activities taken by leaders who value the contributions of their followers." Inclusive leadership is a key concept in developing positive resources for employees. Inclusive leaders inspire their colleagues to contribute to their job by acting as a driving force (Aslan, 2019). According to Carmeli et al., (2010), inclusive leaders are persons who are open, always present, and available to employees who bring up new ideas, hence establishing environments in which people feel psychologically comfortable sharing thoughts that may not necessarily match with the norm.

## **2.3. Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement was defined by (Schaufeli et al., 2002) as an individual's deep identification with his or her work, which encompassed many factors, including (1) passion (full of energy, enthusiasm, and toughness), (2) commitment (in-depth connection with the job including significance, motivation, and challenge), and (3) absorption (being fully participated with work tasks).

In their work on organizational success, Katz and Kahn (1966) mentioned the concept of involvement. However, it was noted as one of a number of requirements that must be met in order to create an inventive and collaborative work atmosphere that leads to increased productivity and effectiveness. Employee engagement was first proposed by Kahn (1990), who gave the now-famous description, "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, employees employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally throughout role performances." Meaningfulness (job elements), safety (social elements, including management style, process, and organizational norms), and availability (work elements) are the three psychological engagement criteria, according to

Kahn (individual distractions). Employees that are engaged invest a lot of effort into their primary job tasks, responsibilities, and extra-role actions. Partly because there is the participation of an individual's working experience, its influences on performance, rather than just work attitudes connected to performance, engagement is considered as a different concept in respect to other organizational behaviour variables (Saks, 2011).

#### **2.4. Employee Performance**

Employee performance can be defined as an employee's behaviour while working on a job or completing a task (El-Zeiny, 2012). It is the end product or result of the organization's workforce (Adewale et al., 2014). Employee performance refers to an employee's accomplishments in accordance with the organization's rules, expectations, and standards. Employee performance is determined by their ability, effort, and perception of the task. (Hee et al., 2016; Ping et al., 2016; Hee et al., 2016). Employee performance, in the context of an organization, is the degree to which a member of the organization contributes to the achievement of the organization's goals (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Job performance is described as the actions that individuals exhibit at work that contribute to the organization's desired objectives in terms of job quality, quantity, and time (Na-Nan et al., 2018). According to Peterson and Plowman (1953), achieving defined criteria and standards for procurement, manufacture, quality inspection, and delivery of goods and services constitutes job quality. The units of output produced by employees' behaviours, such as product amount, trash quantity, and sales statistics, are referred to as job quantity (Peterson and Plowman, 1953). The amount of time it takes to execute work-related activities is connected to the difficulty of the tasks. Employees meet job-time goals if the required tasks are completed accurately and in an acceptable amount of time.

#### **2.5. Local Wisdom-based Communication Strategy, Employee Engagement, and Employee Performance**

Employee engagement is influenced by communication (Wiley et al., 2010; Kahn, 1992; Macleod & Clarke, 2009). Employees require clear communication from superiors in order to connect their tasks to the leadership vision (Macleod & Clarke, 2009). Internal communication is very vital in an organization since it aids people and groups in achieving their objectives. Internal communication that is both effective and efficient is critical to enhancing performance (Berger, 2008).

Through a local wisdom-based communication strategy, the organization may successfully communicate the values to all employees, resulting in employee support for the organization's aims. Employee engagement will be improved by using Dalihan Na Tolu and symmetrical communication as the core of the organization's communication strategy. Employees and organizations share a sense of trust, openness, and interdependence, which creates a conducive environment for the growth of their relationships with their jobs and organizations. As a result, internal communication is critical to ensuring employee engagement (Bindl & Parker, 2010; Bakker, 2007; Welch, 2011). Employee engagement has been linked to higher employee performance, which leads to improved organizational success, according to

previous research (Tower, 2006; Gallup, 2006). As a result, the importance of employee engagement in the relationship between local wisdom-based communication strategy and employee performance is significant.

H1: Local Wisdom-based Communication Strategy is positively related to Employee Performance mediated by Employee Engagement.

## **2.6 Inclusive Leadership, Employee Engagement, and Employee Performance**

Researchers propose employee engagement as a variable mediator in the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee performance. Employee engagement is one of the important variables fostering high levels of employee performance. According to (Katz and Kahn, 1966), the concept of employee engagement is linked to organizational effectiveness. However, it was noted as one of a number of requirements that must be met in order to create an inventive and collaborative work atmosphere that leads to increased productivity and effectiveness. According to (Nguyen et al., 2019), which discusses the relationship between inclusive leadership and job performance through mediators, this study focuses on inclusive leadership in its relationship with employee well-being, person-job fit, and innovative behaviour, and how these factors work to enhance job performance..

Considering the significance of work engagement, researchers have looked at its antecedents, with leadership being one of the most crucial. Despite the fact that multiple studies have looked at the relationship between leadership and various forms of leadership and work engagement, such as transformational leadership (Bui et al., 2017) and empowering leadership (Cai et al., 2018), inclusive leadership has received little attention. Inclusive leadership, according to Suk et al. (2015), can improve employee work engagement. Inclusive leadership has been found to have a strong influence on employee work engagement, according to (Cenkci et al., 2020). In their relationships with followers, inclusive leaders demonstrate openness, accessibility, and availability (Carmeli et al., 2010). When compared to other forms of leadership, inclusive leadership may play a unique role in boosting work engagement since it is defined by its fundamental focus on addressing employees' uniqueness and belongingness demands, whereas other forms of leadership diverge in this respect (Rodriguez. 2018). Employees that are engaged in their work are more attentive, connected, and focused on their tasks (Lai et al., 2020)

H2: Inclusive Leadership is positively related to Employee Performance mediated by Employee Engagement.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Research Methodology**

This research was conducted at the district office of Kabupaten Samosir, while the objects in this study were 107 employees at BPKPD Kabupaten Samosir. To test the validity and fit of the model, use the Loading Factor and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The hypothesis is tested by using Structural Equation Model (SEM) method.

### 3.2. Measures

This study uses a five-point Likert scale measure, whereby 1 represents for strongly disagree and strongly agree is represented by 5. All the measurements were adapted from the existing literature and demonstrated with good levels of reliability and validity. Inclusive leadership is evaluated through openness, usability, and accessibility, developed by (William & Anderson, 1991). Local Wisdom-based Communication Strategy (6-item) was operationalized by adapting from (Dozier et al., 1995) and incorporate the philosophy of Dalihan Na Tolu. Employee engagement (10-item) was operationalized by adopting from (Rich et al., 2010). Employee performance (9-item) was operationalized by adapting from (Abelsen et al., 2015).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Validity and Reliability Test

Based on the validity and reliability test, the following results were obtained:

##### A. Validity

The validity testing from the result above demonstrated the entire loading value is  $> 0.7$ . It can be concluded that all requirements are achieved.

**Table 4.1: The Value of Validity Testing according to Average Variance Extracted**

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EE	0.605
IL	0.615
EP	0.577
LWC	0.631

Based on the result, all the requirements for validity are met, which are  $>0.5$  [26]. Furthermore, reliability testing was carried out based on the composite reliability (CR) value.

##### B. Reliability

Furthermore, a reliability test is conducted based on composite reliability (CR) values.

**Table 4.2: Pengujian Reliabilitas berdasarkan Composite Reliability (CR)**

	Composite Reliability
EE	0.932
IL	0.935
EP	0.932
LWC	0.911

The recommended Composite Reliability value is higher than 0.7 (Fornell Larcker, 1981). As we all know, all Composite Reliability values  $>0.7$  which means that they have qualified reliability based on Composite Reliability.

#### 4.1.2 Bootstrapping

Table 4.3 presents the bootstrapping test results.

**Table 4.3: Bootstrapping**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
<b>EE -&gt; EP</b>	0.304	0.316	0.098	3.100	<b>0.002</b>
<b>IL -&gt; EE</b>	0.223	0.233	0.061	3.653	<b>0.000</b>
<b>IL -&gt; EP</b>	0.316	0.314	0.056	5.622	<b>0.000</b>
<b>LWC-&gt;EE</b>	0.745	0.736	0.061	12.281	<b>0.000</b>
<b>LWC-&gt; EP</b>	0.382	0.372	0.101	3.766	<b>0.000</b>

Based on the results in Table 4.3 obtained results:

- 1) EE positively affects ep, with path coefficient value 0.304 (original sample), and significant with p-values  $0.002 < 0.05$ .
- 2) IL has a positive effect on EE, with a path coefficient value of 0.223 (original sample), and significantly with a P-Values value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ .
- 3) IL has a positive effect on the EP, with a path coefficient value of 0.316 (original sample), and significant with a P-Values value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ .
- 4) LWC has a positive effect on EE, with a path coefficient value of 0.745 (original sample), and significantly with a P-Values value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ .
- 5) LWC has a positive effect on the EP, with a path coefficient value of 0.382 (original sample), but not significant with a P-Values value of  $0.000 > 0.05$ .

Table 4.4 presents the r-square value (coefficient of determination) for each endogenous variable.

**Table 4.4: Koefisien Determinasi (R-Square)**

	R Square
<b>EE</b>	0.891
<b>EP</b>	0.929

Based on the results in Table 4.4:

1. Known the value of the coefficient of determination (r-square) of EE is 0.891. The value can be interpreted that the influence of LWC and IL on EE is 89.1%.
2. Known value of the coefficient of determination (r-square) of EP is 0.929. The value can be interpreted that the influence of LWC, IL, EE on KRS is 92.9%.

### 4.1.3 Mediation Test

Table 4.5 presents the results of the mediation test.

**Table 4.5: Mediation Test**

	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T Statistics ((O/STDEV))</b>	<b>P Values</b>
<b>IL -&gt; EE -&gt; EP</b>	0.068	0.073	0.029	2.310	<b>0.021</b>
<b>LWC -&gt; EE -&gt; EP</b>	0.227	0.233	0.076	2.967	<b>0.003</b>

Based on the results of mediation testing in Table 4.5 obtained results:

1. EE significantly mediated the relationship between IL and EP, with the value of P-Values = 0.021 < 0.05.
2. EE significantly mediated the relationship between LWC and EP, with the value of P-Values = 0.003 < 0.05.

## 4.2 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The goal of this study is to look at how employee engagement influences the relationship between local wisdom-based communication strategy and employee performance. Employee engagement, according to the study's findings, acts as a mediator between local wisdom-based communication strategy and employee performance. Employee performance is defined as an employee's behaviour while completing a job or task in accordance with the organization's regulations, expectations, and requirements. This expected performance can be attained if the person is deeply invested in his or her work, has a strong passion for it, is enthusiastic about it, and is dedicated to the job tasks (Schaufeli et al., 2002). An engaged employee will be given a lot of responsibility and will put out a lot of effort to succeed in their career. Employee engagement is a result of the organization's ability to communicate effectively (Wiley et al., 2010). According to MacLeod & Clarke (2009), the necessity for employees to receive clear communication from superiors in order to connect their tasks to the leadership vision is a critical aspect in increasing employee engagement. Employees will be more likely to share their ideas, consult their concerns, express their demands, and receive feedback if they use a local wisdom-based communication strategy based on the values of respect, protection, trust, openness, and equality. Superior plays the role of The Hula-Hula, who defends The Boru, and Boru will provide an exceptional performance under Hula-supervision Hula's and control. While serving as DonganSatubu, if there is a problem with Boru, he will consult Hula-Hula. As a result, an internal communication strategy based on Dalihan Na Tolu may be asserted to inspire workers to interact with their jobs and organizations, resulting in good performance.

Employee engagement is mediated by the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee performance, according to this study. There has previously been no research on the

impact of inclusive leadership on employee performance as measured by employee engagement. In their relationships with followers, inclusive leaders demonstrate openness, accessibility, and availability (Carmeli et al., 2010). When compared to other forms of leadership, inclusive leadership may play a unique role in boosting work engagement since it is defined by its fundamental focus on addressing employees' uniqueness and belongingness demands, whereas other forms of leadership diverge in this respect (Rodriguez., 2018). As a result, during role performances, people "use and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally." Employee engagement is one of the most important factors in supporting high levels of employee performance, as numerous studies have proven (Macey et al., 2009; Mone and London, 2010).

The following is an explanation of inclusive leadership. Employees are more likely to feel respected and that their thoughts and efforts will be acknowledged by the organization if inclusive leaders are open to them and willing to discuss new ideas and opportunities with them (Carmeli et al., 2010). Second, because inclusive leaders are present and accessible to employees anytime they need them, employees have a positive perception of their leaders and work environment (Qi et al., 2019). Third, because inclusive leaders value employees and invite them to participate to the organization (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006), they foster a sense of belonging among employees and show them that their individuality is recognized and accepted (Randel et al., 2018). This is supported by a study (Nguyen et al., 2019), which found that improving inclusive leadership practices, working motivations, and mutual recognized respect in the workplace improves job performance. To boost employee motivation, leaders should deliberately demonstrate their openness, availability, and accessibility in their contacts with people. Second, a better working environment that stresses mutual recognition, respect, and inventive conduct is critical, particularly a workplace where employees may realize their feeling of self-worth and freely share their ideas and opinions.

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