

The Effect Perceived Supervisor Support, Trust, and Intrinsic Motivation in Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationships among perceived supervisor support, trust, intrinsic motivation, and employee engagement among employees of PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat. A quantitative causal-associative design was applied to 264 employees selected from a population of 779 employees. Data were collected using a five-point Likert questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares through SmartPLS. The measurement model was evaluated using convergent validity, discriminant validity, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability, while the structural model was evaluated using R-square and bootstrapping. The findings show that perceived supervisor support does not have a significant direct effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.055$; $t = 0.702$; $p = 0.483$). However, perceived supervisor support has positive and significant effects on trust ($\beta = 0.694$; $t = 14.992$; $p < 0.001$) and intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.470$; $t = 5.125$; $p < 0.001$). Trust ($\beta = 0.234$; $t = 3.644$; $p < 0.001$) and intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.492$; $t = 7.087$; $p < 0.001$) significantly increase employee engagement. Both intrinsic motivation (indirect $\beta = 0.231$; $p = 0.001$) and trust (indirect $\beta = 0.162$; $p < 0.001$) significantly mediate the relationship between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement. The results indicate that supervisor support becomes more effective when it strengthens employees' internal motivation and trust.

Keywords: Perceived Supervisor Support, Trust, And Intrinsic Motivation In Employee Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is an important issue in human resource management because employees who are engaged tend to demonstrate greater energy, dedication, and concentration in carrying out their work. Employee engagement is therefore considered an important factor in supporting organizational effectiveness and the achievement of organizational goals (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This issue is particularly relevant at PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat, where employees are required to maintain service quality while supporting organizational transformation. The Employee Engagement Survey conducted by the company during

2019–2024 also indicated changes in several engagement-related indicators, including recognition, performance management, leadership and supervision, company policy, and career management (PT PLN (Persero), 2024).

One factor that may influence employee engagement is Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS), which refers to employees' perceptions that supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being. Through supportive behavior, supervisors can provide assistance, feedback, information, and attention to employees' needs. Based on Social Exchange Theory, employees who receive positive treatment from supervisors may reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviors, including greater involvement in their work (Blau, 1964; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Previous studies have generally found a positive relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement, although the strength of this relationship varies across organizational contexts (Jose & Mampilly, 2015; Wang & Zhang, 2022).

The inconsistent findings regarding the direct relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement indicate that other psychological mechanisms may explain this relationship. Trust is one potential mechanism because consistent and supportive supervisory behavior can increase employees' perceptions of supervisor integrity, competence, and concern for their welfare. When employees trust their supervisors, they are more likely to feel secure and willing to invest themselves in their work (Mayer et al., 1995; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Previous research has also indicated that trust can strengthen employee engagement and may function as a mechanism connecting supportive leadership with positive employee outcomes (Ugwu et al., 2014).

Another potential mechanism is Intrinsic Motivation. According to Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation develops when employees experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their work environment. Supervisors can support these psychological needs through constructive feedback, recognition, autonomy, and opportunities for development, which may subsequently encourage employees to become more engaged in their work (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Previous research has similarly demonstrated that intrinsic motivation is positively associated with employee engagement because employees who find their work meaningful and satisfying tend to invest greater effort and attention in their work (Ghosh et al., 2020; Aldabbas et al., 2023).

Although previous studies have examined supervisor support, trust, intrinsic motivation, and employee engagement, limited research has simultaneously examined Trust and Intrinsic Motivation as mediating mechanisms between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement, particularly in the context of PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat. This research gap is important because the thesis findings indicate that the direct relationship between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement may differ from the relationships formed through psychological mechanisms. Therefore, examining both mediators may provide a more comprehensive explanation of how supervisor support contributes to employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Khan et al., 2021).

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on Employee Engagement and the mediating roles of Trust and Intrinsic Motivation among employees of PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat. The study contributes theoretically by integrating Social Exchange Theory and Self-Determination Theory to explain the relational and motivational mechanisms underlying employee engagement. Practically, the findings provide a basis for PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat to strengthen supervisory practices that build employee trust and intrinsic motivation as part of efforts to improve employee engagement (Blau, 1964; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

METHOD

This study used a quantitative research design with a causal-associative approach. The study was conducted to examine the relationships among Perceived Supervisor Support, Trust, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Engagement among employees of PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat. The research model examined both direct and indirect relationships, with Trust and Intrinsic Motivation positioned as mediating variables. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS).

The population of this study consisted of 779 employees of PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat, including employees within the Unit Induk Distribusi and its relevant operational units. The sample consisted of 264 employees. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. Respondents were selected from the employees included in the research population and completed the questionnaire used for data collection.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 264 respondents. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire measured four variables: Perceived Supervisor Support, Trust, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Engagement. Perceived Supervisor Support was measured through indicators related to supervisor attention, emotional and practical support, guidance, feedback, information, and career development. Trust was measured through openness, integrity, competence, and concern for employee welfare. Intrinsic Motivation included autonomy, competence, meaningfulness, appreciation, and personal achievement, while Employee Engagement covered vigor, dedication, and absorption.

The data were analyzed using SmartPLS through the SEM-PLS approach. The analysis consisted of evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and structural model (inner model). The outer model was evaluated using outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and discriminant validity. The inner model was evaluated using R-square (R^2) and hypothesis testing through bootstrapping. The hypotheses were assessed based on the path coefficient (β), T-statistics, and P-values, with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). A hypothesis was considered supported when the P-value was below 0.05 and the T-statistics exceeded 1.96. Mediation

analysis was conducted by examining the significance of the indirect effects of Perceived Supervisor Support on Employee Engagement through Trust and Intrinsic Motivation.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

The research was conducted on 264 employees of PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat. The analysis examined the relationships between Perceived Supervisor Support, Trust, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Engagement using the SEM-PLS approach. The results are presented through descriptive statistics, measurement model evaluation, coefficient of determination, and hypothesis testing.

The descriptive results show that Employee Engagement had an average score of 4.468 with a TCR of 89.360%, Perceived Supervisor Support had an average score of 4.389 with a TCR of 87.775%, Trust had an average score of 4.425 with a TCR of 88.504%, and Intrinsic Motivation had an average score of 4.429 with a TCR of 88.571%.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	TCR (%)
Employee Engagement	4.468	89.360
Perceived Supervisor Support	4.389	87.775
Trust	4.425	88.504
Intrinsic Motivation	4.429	88.571

The measurement model was evaluated using outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability. The results show that the AVE values for Employee Engagement, Intrinsic Motivation, Perceived Supervisor Support, and Trust were 0.510, 0.512, 0.580, and 0.613, respectively. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.789 to 0.896, while Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.862 to 0.917.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Results

Variable	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Employee Engagement	0.510	0.839	0.879
Intrinsic Motivation	0.512	0.807	0.862
Perceived Supervisor Support	0.580	0.896	0.917
Trust	0.613	0.789	0.863

The coefficient of determination results show that Intrinsic Motivation had an R-square value of 0.221, Employee Engagement had an R-square value of 0.460, and Trust had an R-square value of 0.482.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship			β	T-Statistics	P-Values	Result
H1	PSS	→	Employee Engagement	0.055	0.702	0.483	Not Supported
H2	PSS → Trust			0.694	14.992	0.000	Supported
H3	PSS → Intrinsic Motivation			0.470	5.125	0.000	Supported
H4	Trust	→	Employee Engagement	0.234	3.644	0.000	Supported
H5	Intrinsic Motivation	→	Employee Engagement	0.492	7.087	0.000	Supported
H6	PSS → Intrinsic Motivation → Employee Engagement			0.231	3.413	0.001	Supported
H7	PSS → Trust → Employee Engagement			0.162	3.609	0.000	Supported

The results indicate that H1 was not supported, because Perceived Supervisor Support had no significant direct effect on Employee Engagement ($\beta = 0.055$; $T = 0.702$; $P = 0.483$). In contrast, H2 and H3 were supported, showing that Perceived Supervisor Support had significant positive effects on Trust ($\beta = 0.694$; $T = 14.992$; $P < 0.001$) and Intrinsic Motivation ($\beta = 0.470$; $T = 5.125$; $P < 0.001$). Furthermore, H4 and H5 were supported, indicating that Trust ($\beta = 0.234$; $T = 3.644$; $P < 0.001$) and Intrinsic Motivation ($\beta = 0.492$; $T = 7.087$; $P < 0.001$) had significant positive effects on Employee Engagement.

For the mediation relationships, H6 was supported, with an indirect effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on Employee Engagement through Intrinsic Motivation of $\beta = 0.231$, $T = 3.413$, and $P = 0.001$. H7 was also supported, with an indirect effect through Trust of $\beta = 0.162$, $T = 3.609$, and $P < 0.001$. These results show that both Trust and Intrinsic Motivation were significant mediating variables in the relationship between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement.

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on Employee Engagement

The results show that Perceived Supervisor Support does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Engagement. This is indicated by a path coefficient of 0.055, T-statistics of 0.702, and P-value of 0.483, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, H1 is rejected. Although the descriptive results show that Perceived Supervisor Support was relatively high, with a mean of 4.389 and TCR of 87.775%, this level of supervisor support did not translate directly into higher employee engagement.

This finding indicates that supervisor support alone may not be sufficient to increase employees' engagement. Employees may perceive their supervisors as supportive in providing assistance, information, feedback, and attention, but these forms of support

may need to be transformed into internal psychological conditions before they influence engagement. This finding differs from previous research that found a positive relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement (Jose & Mampilly, 2015; Wang & Zhang, 2022).

The result can be explained through the Job Demands–Resources theory, which views supervisor support as a job resource that can stimulate employee motivation. However, job resources do not necessarily influence engagement only through a direct relationship. Their effects may operate through psychological mechanisms that influence how employees perceive and internalize the support they receive (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In this study, the significant mediation effects of Trust and Intrinsic Motivation provide evidence that these psychological mechanisms are important in explaining the relationship.

Practically, the finding indicates that PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat should not focus only on increasing the quantity of supervisor support. Supervisors also need to ensure that support strengthens employees' trust and internal motivation. Supportive communication, recognition, constructive feedback, opportunities for development, and appropriate autonomy may therefore be more important in converting supervisory support into employee engagement.

The Effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on Trust

The results demonstrate that Perceived Supervisor Support has a positive and significant effect on Trust, with a path coefficient of 0.694, T-statistics of 14.992, and P-value of 0.000. Therefore, H2 is supported. This represents the strongest direct relationship among the relationships involving Perceived Supervisor Support in the research model.

The result indicates that employees who perceive greater support from their supervisors also tend to have greater trust in their supervisors. Support provided through attention, assistance, communication, guidance, and concern for employee welfare can create positive perceptions regarding the supervisor's intentions and reliability. This finding is consistent with the concept of organizational exchange, in which positive treatment from supervisors can strengthen reciprocal relationships between employees and supervisors (Blau, 1964).

The finding is also consistent with the organizational trust perspective proposed by Mayer et al. (1995), which explains that trust develops from perceptions regarding ability, benevolence, and integrity. When supervisors consistently demonstrate competence, concern, and integrity in their interactions with employees, employees are more likely to develop confidence in their supervisors. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) similarly demonstrated that trust in leadership is associated with important employee attitudes and organizational outcomes.

The practical implication is that supervisors at PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat need to maintain consistency, openness, integrity, and responsiveness in their relationships with employees. The high path coefficient indicates that supervisory support is strongly associated with the development of employee trust.

Therefore, strengthening supervisor support can become an important organizational strategy for developing trust between supervisors and employees.

The Effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on Intrinsic Motivation

The results show that Perceived Supervisor Support has a positive and significant effect on Intrinsic Motivation, with a path coefficient of 0.470, T-statistics of 5.125, and P-value of 0.000. Therefore, H3 is supported. The result indicates that greater perceived support from supervisors is associated with greater intrinsic motivation among employees.

This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which explains that employees' intrinsic motivation can be strengthened when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Supervisors can support these needs by providing employees with opportunities to make appropriate decisions, providing constructive feedback, recognizing employee capabilities, and creating supportive interpersonal relationships.

The finding is also consistent with Gagné and Deci (2005), who explained that supportive management practices can encourage autonomous forms of work motivation. Olafsen et al. (2015) similarly emphasized the importance of managerial support in fulfilling employees' psychological needs and strengthening intrinsic work motivation. The descriptive results in this study also show a high level of Intrinsic Motivation, with a mean of 4.429 and TCR of 88.571%.

Therefore, the practical implication is that supervisors should provide employees with opportunities to develop competence, participate in work-related decision-making, receive constructive feedback, and experience meaningful work. Such practices can strengthen employees' internal motivation rather than relying solely on external rewards.

The Effect of Trust on Employee Engagement

The results indicate that Trust has a positive and significant effect on Employee Engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.234, T-statistics of 3.644, and P-value of 0.000. Therefore, H4 is supported. The result demonstrates that higher levels of employee trust are associated with higher levels of employee engagement.

Trust can create a sense of psychological security in the relationship between employees and supervisors. When employees believe that their supervisors are competent, honest, consistent, and concerned about their welfare, they may be more willing to communicate, accept responsibilities, and invest themselves in their work. Thus, trust can reduce uncertainty in the supervisor–employee relationship and support employees' psychological involvement in their work (Mayer et al., 1995; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

This result is also consistent with Ugwu et al. (2014), who found a relationship between organizational trust and employee engagement. The finding indicates that trust is not only an interpersonal characteristic but also an organizational resource that can contribute to employees' willingness to become more involved in their work.

For PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat, maintaining trust requires supervisors to demonstrate transparency, consistency, integrity, and concern for

employees. Employees who have confidence in their supervisors may be more willing to invest effort and become psychologically involved in achieving organizational objectives.

The Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on Employee Engagement

The results demonstrate that Intrinsic Motivation has a positive and significant effect on Employee Engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.492, T-statistics of 7.087, and P-value of 0.000. Therefore, H5 is supported. Among the direct predictors of Employee Engagement in the model, Intrinsic Motivation has the larger coefficient compared with Trust.

This result indicates that employees' internal motivation is an important factor in explaining employee engagement. Employees who experience autonomy, competence, meaningfulness, recognition, and personal achievement are more likely to demonstrate energy, dedication, and concentration in performing their work. This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in encouraging sustained and self-determined work behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

The finding is also consistent with previous empirical research showing that intrinsic motivation is positively related to employee engagement. Ghosh et al. (2020) found that intrinsic motivation contributes to employee engagement, while Aldabbas et al. (2023) demonstrated the importance of intrinsic motivation in encouraging employee involvement in work. The result therefore emphasizes the importance of creating working conditions in which employees experience their work as meaningful and personally satisfying.

In practical terms, PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat should strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation by providing meaningful responsibilities, opportunities for competence development, recognition of achievements, and appropriate autonomy. Because Intrinsic Motivation has the strongest direct effect among the two mediating variables, strengthening employees' internal motivation may be an important strategy for improving Employee Engagement.

The Mediating Effect of Intrinsic Motivation on the Relationship Between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement

The results show that Intrinsic Motivation significantly mediates the relationship between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement. The indirect effect has a coefficient of 0.231, T-statistics of 3.413, and P-value of 0.001. Therefore, H6 is supported.

The finding indicates that supervisor support contributes to employee engagement through the development of employees' intrinsic motivation. In other words, supervisor support becomes more effective when it helps employees develop a sense of competence, autonomy, meaningfulness, and personal satisfaction in their work. This provides an explanation for the insignificant direct effect found in H1.

The result supports Self-Determination Theory, which explains that supportive social environments can facilitate the fulfillment of psychological needs and subsequently strengthen self-determined motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Gagné and Deci (2005) also

emphasized the role of supportive managerial practices in strengthening autonomous motivation. Thus, the findings indicate that the psychological process generated by supervisor support is important for employee engagement.

The mediation result has an important practical implication. Supervisors should not merely provide assistance when employees experience problems but should use their support to develop employees' confidence, autonomy, competence, and sense of meaningfulness. Through this mechanism, supervisor support can contribute more effectively to employee engagement.

The Mediating Effect of Trust on the Relationship Between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement

The results demonstrate that Trust significantly mediates the relationship between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement. The indirect effect has a coefficient of 0.162, T-statistics of 3.609, and P-value of 0.000. Therefore, H7 is supported.

The finding indicates that supervisor support can strengthen employee engagement by first developing trust between employees and supervisors. Supportive supervisory behavior can create positive expectations regarding the supervisor's ability, integrity, and concern for employee welfare. Once trust has developed, employees may become more willing to invest themselves in their work and participate actively in achieving organizational objectives (Mayer et al., 1995; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

The mediation coefficient through Trust (0.162) is lower than the mediation coefficient through Intrinsic Motivation (0.231). Based on the results of this study, Intrinsic Motivation therefore has a stronger indirect relationship with Employee Engagement than Trust. Nevertheless, the significant mediation through Trust demonstrates that the relational pathway remains an important mechanism through which supervisor support contributes to employee engagement.

Overall, the findings show that Perceived Supervisor Support does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Engagement, but it has significant indirect effects through Trust and Intrinsic Motivation. This indicates that the relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement is primarily explained through psychological mechanisms. The findings therefore support the importance of combining relational factors, represented by Trust, and motivational factors, represented by Intrinsic Motivation, in understanding employee engagement within PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Perceived Supervisor Support does not have a significant direct effect on Employee Engagement among employees of PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat. However, Perceived Supervisor Support has a positive and significant effect on Trust and Intrinsic Motivation. Furthermore, both Trust and Intrinsic Motivation have positive and significant effects on Employee Engagement. The results also demonstrate that Trust and Intrinsic Motivation significantly mediate the relationship

between Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Engagement, with Intrinsic Motivation showing the stronger indirect effect.

These findings indicate that improving employee engagement should not rely solely on providing supervisory support. PT PLN (Persero) Unit Induk Distribusi Sumatera Barat is recommended to strengthen supervisory practices that build employee trust and intrinsic motivation, particularly through open communication, consistent leadership, constructive feedback, recognition, opportunities for development, and appropriate autonomy in carrying out work.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the research population to other PLN units or organizations and consider additional variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, leadership style, or organizational justice. Future studies may also use longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms influencing Employee Engagement.

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