

# **Examining the Relationship Model of Positive Antecedents of Employee Performance in MSMEs**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Various antecedents of employee performance (EP) have been studied, but the relationship model among these variables remains a topic of debate. Establishing such a model is crucial for business owners to identify and prioritize the most important variables in improving EP. Therefore, this research aimed to test the relationship model of organizational commitment (OC), specifically affective organizational commitment (AOC) and continuance organizational commitment (COC), work engagement (WE), as well as intrinsic motivation (IM), in improving EP. A total of 717 employees from micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia were selected as respondents. After testing the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument, the relationship model was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) in two steps. The results showed that the four psychological forces and employees' work attitudes influence each other and increase EP. WE and IM were two variables that could consistently increase EP directly. WE could increase motivation and commitment, as motivation has consistently been considered as a mediating variable in this relationship model. This research contributed to the evidence of social exchange theory, self-determination theory, and resource-based view in managing and improving EP. It also provided important discussions on the need to improve WE to achieve high performance.

**Keywords:** Affective organizational commitment, Continuance organizational commitment, Intrinsic motivation, Work engagement, Employee performance

## INTRODUCTION

Employee performance (EP) is a crucial element in achieving organizational performance (Bashir et al., 2020). Consistently, EP is influenced by motivation (Matsuo, 2019), which usually acts as a mediating or moderating variable (Kiazad et al., 2019; Yuen et al., 2018). A traditional motivation theory consistently emphasizes the role of motivation in enhancing performance. For instance, employees who are motivated, especially by intrinsic motivation (IM) will work hard and perform better than those who are not motivated (Jalagat, 2016). Several factors can motivate employees, including work engagement (WE), organizational commitment (OC), job satisfaction, and intention to leave (Lee & Raschke, 2016). Organizations must be able to motivate their employees by paying attention to these four factors.

Employee motivation can be increased by commitment to the organization (Alcover et al., 2020; Bojnec & Tomsic, 2020). Research has proven that IM and OC are positively related (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017; Yousaf et al., 2022). Among the three dimensions of OC, including affective organizational commitment (AOC), normative organizational commitment (NOC), and continuance organizational commitment (COC), AOC has the most substantial impact on organizational outcomes (Kundi et al., 2021). AOC directly influences EP while serving as a mediating variable in various organizational processes (Eliyana et al., 2019). Some research suggested a bidirectional relationship, where EP could also enhance OC (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2018). Regardless, the consensus remains that AOC is a powerful driver of improved performance, surpassing commitments based on moral obligations or pragmatic interests.

AOC and IM enhance the appeal of work and help reduce absenteeism (Klages et al., 2023). However, research by Kim et al. (2023) indicated that IM did not influence OC. The results contradicted the observation of Szabo et al. (2023), who demonstrated that IM could improve OC. Previous research has consistently proven that OC can improve EP (Karami et al., 2017; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022). Among the three dimensions of OC, AOC has the most positive influence on performance compared to the other two dimensions, such as NOC and COC (Aboramadan et al., 2021; Jain & Sullivan, 2020; Kundi et al., 2021). This emotional commitment will encourage employees to perform better. The power of AOC trumps commitments formed either because of moral obligations or the interests to be fulfilled.

According to self-determination theory, employees with IM perform tasks driven by their personal interests or enjoyment (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Beyond its impact on EP, IM also relates to WE (Yousaf et al., 2022). Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo (2017) described WE as the practical application of IM, characterized by enthusiasm and

enjoyment in work (Bakker, 2017; Putra et al., 2017). Furthermore, WE has been shown to positively influence EP (Coo et al., 2021; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022; Monje-Amor et al., 2021). Although distinct, WE and AOC complement each other as integral components of employee engagement (Teo et al., 2020). Based on social exchange theory, the psychological bond between employees and their organizations fosters a sense of WE (Buil et al., 2018).

This research highlighted a bidirectional relationship between WE and OC. Some investigations have indicated that WE enhances OC (Hanaysha, 2016; Rameshkumar, 2020), while others suggest that OC can boost WE (Cao et al., 2019). Although AOC is frequently linked to WE, fewer investigations explore the association between NOC and WE. Moreover, COC has a negative relationship with WE (Rameshkumar, 2020). Previous investigations also suggested that WE mediated the relationship between OC and EP (Buil et al., 2018; Teo et al., 2020).

This research aims to examine the relationship model involving WE, OC, IM, and EP among employees of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs represent a significant economic sector, as they substantially contribute to economic growth and play a crucial role in strengthening national economies (Manzoor et al., 2021). IM, WE, and AOC serve as psychological drivers and reflect employees' workplace attitudes (Gajenderan et al., 2023; Moreira-Fontan et al., 2019). The current research investigates two relationship models connecting WE, OC, IM, and EP, focusing on their relevance and applicability to MSME employees in Indonesia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

Organizational performance and productivity were closely linked to EP. A significant gap was the examination of how employees' well-being and happiness were antecedents of EP (Kundi et al., 2021; Salgado et al., 2019). Various employees' well-being factors, including psychological strengths and individual attitudes, particularly motivation, OC, job satisfaction, and WE, played an important role in this context (Moreira-Fontan et al., 2019). The resource-based view emphasized that human resources were unique and inimitable organizational assets capable of enhancing competitive advantage (Zeshan et al., 2022). Meanwhile, social exchange theory highlighted the principle of reciprocity, where one party's benefits to another were reciprocated (Ohana & Stinglhamber, 2019).

OC referred to employees' identification with their organizations (Perry et al., 2016). This identification strengthened an individual's willingness to remain with and contribute to the organization. OC reflected the close relationship between employees and the organization, the corroboration of their values, and the ability to dedicate

physical and mental resources to organizational activities. The variable was considered important in organizational research because of its link to performance and role in enhancing motivation with WE (Hanaysha, 2016). As Na-Nan et al. (2020) described, OC includes three main parts: AOC, NOC, and COC. AOC is about emotional attachment to the organization. NOC involves feeling morally obligated to stay, while COC focuses on the costs people consider when they want to leave the organization. Among these, AOC is seen as having the strongest effect on improving performance, according to Jain and Sullivan (2020).

AOC refers to the extent to which someone accepts and supports the organization's goals and values (Vila-Vázquez et al., 2018). Employees with strong AOCs usually have a positive attitude towards their work, are motivated to stay in the organization, and perform well (Perry et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2022). Numerous studies demonstrate that AOC directly enhances performance (Kundi et al., 2021; Rameshkumar, 2020). However, Goetz and Wald (2022) noted that while OC helps permanent employees perform better, it may harm the performance of non-permanent employees. Research also connects OC to motivation (Manzoor et al., 2021). Employees with higher OC usually have positive feelings toward their organization, work hard, make sacrifices, stay loyal, and want to remain with the organization (Eliyana et al., 2019).

OC represented a work attitude that reflected an individual's evaluation of their job (Na-Nan et al., 2020). It was an effective orientation toward organizational values and goals, shaping behavior when employees assess the costs and benefits provided by the organization (Szabo et al., 2023). The three dimensions of OC typically acted as independent, mediating, or moderating variables, significantly influencing performance (Almutairi, 2016; Kundi et al., 2021; Na-Nan et al., 2020). Moreover, AOC has been linked to improved performance, higher attendance rates, and increased job satisfaction while being inversely related to stress and work-family conflict (Alcover et al., 2020).

Motivation, a psychological force, energizes, directs, and encourages employees to perform their tasks (Alcover et al., 2020). It represented the reasons behind actions and the conditions that foster engagement (Martin et al., 2017). Motivation initiated effort and correlated with OC, improving performance and predicting employee productivity (Ayalew et al., 2021; Szabo et al., 2023). However, Kim et al. (2023) reported no significant relationship between motivation and OC. Motivation was influenced by factors such as engagement, satisfaction, commitment, and the intention to quit (Lee & Raschke, 2016). External factors, including teamwork, friendships, reward systems, organizational culture, job design, and resource allocation, also played a role in shaping motivation. Research reported that motivation enhanced performance (Manzoor et al., 2021; Szabo et al., 2023; Yousaf et al., 2022). Similar to OC, several

studies also found that motivation generally acts as a mediating or moderating variable (Ayalew et al., 2021; Bashir et al., 2020; Kiazzad et al., 2019; Yuen et al., 2018).

There are two dimensions of motivation, namely extrinsic motivation (EM) and IM (Engidaw, 2021). EM motivates individuals due to external factors such as salary, benefits, security, career, and others, while IM encourages individuals to be involved in the organization to gain intrinsic satisfaction and not expect rewards for their performance (Gajenderan et al., 2023). IM comes from the desire to grow, take responsibility, and succeed. Putra et al. (2017) stated that the connection between IM and WE is stronger than between EM and WE. On the other hand, Engidaw (2021) claimed that both IM and EM influence WE.

IM means an individual's drive to face challenges without expecting any rewards (Klages et al., 2023). It helps increase WE by bringing enthusiasm and enjoyment to work roles (Ali et al., 2021; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022; Moreira-Fontan et al., 2019; Zeng et al., 2022). IM is often tied to tasks that are meaningful and enjoyable, feelings of being valued, and participation in activities that are fulfilling. Some studies suggest that motivation, including IM, affects OC by improving AOC and NOC (Alcover et al., 2020; Bojne & Tomsic, 2020; Gajenderan et al., 2023). Engidaw (2021) even has a greater impact on WE than EM, demonstrating that IM impacts WE more. However, Kim et al. (2023) found no major link between IM and OC or EP.

WE was a positive psychological state at work, characterized by vigor, dedication, and a sense of absorption within organizational roles (Imran et al., 2020; Schaufeli et al., 2002). The variable was also regarded as a dimension of employees' well-being and a motivational construct, as it reflected employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement in the assigned tasks (Lai et al., 2020; Radic et al., 2020). Additionally, WE represented employees' commitment to their work, relationships with others, and total ability to perform effectively (Demerouti et al., 2015).

WE consistently enhanced both employees and organizational performance (Buil et al., 2018; Coo et al., 2021; Monje-Amor et al., 2021; Nabhan & Munajat, 2023). This was largely attributed to its capacity to foster creative ideas, enabling employees to excel in the assigned roles (Scharp et al., 2022). Emotional attachment through WE encouraged strong performance and reduced turnover intentions (Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022; Monje-Amor et al., 2021). Moreover, WE supported organizational goals by stimulating creativity and innovation (Celestine & Yeo, 2021; Donaldson et al., 2019). Several investigations highlighted the relationship between WE, OC, and EP. WE have been found to improve OC, with particular emphasis on its positive influence on AOC and NOC (Geisler et al., 2019; Hanaysha, 2016; Rameshkumar, 2020). However, some results suggested OC might act as antecedents of WE (Cao et al., 2019). Rameshkumar

(2020) reported that WE positively correlated with AOC and NOC but showed a negative relationship with COC. WE was specifically beneficial for AOC and could be further enhanced through IM (Yousaf et al., 2022). While WE have often been researched as antecedents of both OC and EP, its relationship with different dimensions of OC varied. For instance, Rameshkumar (2020) found WE positively impacted AOC and NOC but not COC.

Previous investigations have indicated that WE is influenced by IM and, in turn, affects AOC and EP (Ampofo, 2020; Cao et al., 2019; Yousaf et al., 2022). However, some findings suggested that WE was a consequence of IM, highlighting a reciprocal relationship (Bergstrom & Martinez, 2016; Engidaw, 2021). Additionally, WE often served as a mediator in achieving improved performance (Buil et al., 2018; Nabhan & Munajat, 2023). For example, Teo et al. (2020) identified WE as a mediator between OC and EP. Looking at AOC, COC, IM, WE, and EP, the hypotheses of the research were presented as follows:

**H1:** AOC and COC are positively related to IM.

**H2:** AOC and COC are positively related to WE.

**H3:** AOC and COC are positively related to EP.

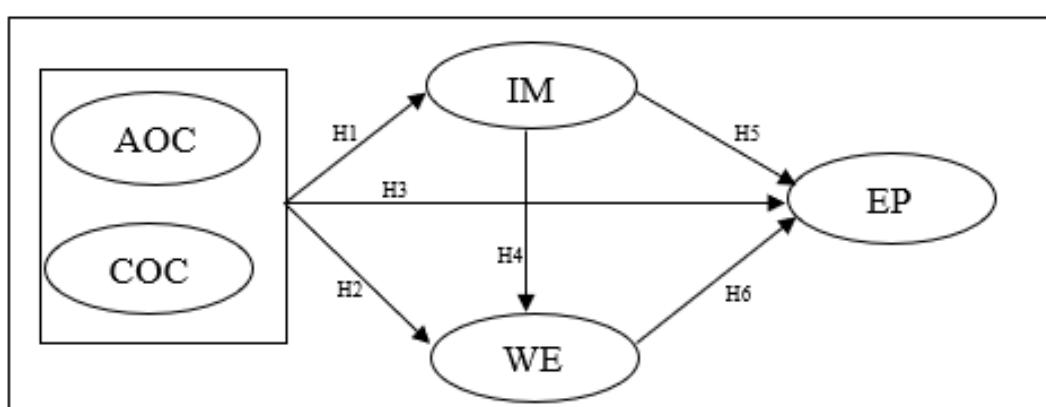
**H4:** IM is positively related to WE.

**H5:** IM is positively related to EP.

**H6:** WE is positively related to EP.

Figure 1 is the conceptual model tested in this research hypothesis.

**Figure 1** *Conceptual Model Used*



## RESEARCH METHODS

### Samples and Procedures

This research was conducted with employees from MSMEs, utilizing surveys and a questionnaire adapted from earlier studies. A total of 1,000 employees were involved, selected through convenience sampling during January to March 2024. From this, 717 responses were completed and used for the analysis, giving a 71.7% response rate. First, validity testing was done using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Items were retained when factor loadings exceeded 0.50 and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was greater than 0.50, as per Hair et al. (2019). Question items with factor loadings below 0.50 were excluded from further analysis. Then, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with an acceptable level being above 0.70, as recommended by Zikmund et al. (2013). After these checks, correlations between variables were analyzed. Lastly, structural equation modeling (SEM) was done with AMOS software, following a two-step method to test the model.

### Measurements

The measuring tool for this research was a questionnaire adapted from previous investigations. The EP questionnaire was adapted from Manzoor et al. (2021), such as "I am able to fulfill all the responsibilities required by my job". The five EP question items had factor loadings ranging from 0.787 to 0.876, a KMO value of 0.850, an  $\alpha$  value of 0.897, and a mean of 4.021. The IM questionnaire was adapted from Dysvik and Kuvaas (2011) such as "the tasks I do were enjoyable". The six IM question items had factor loadings ranging from 0.669 to 0.887, a KMO value of 0.872, an  $\alpha$  value of 0.901, and a mean of 3.695. The OC questionnaire was adapted from Bozeman and Perrewe (2001) and included two dimensions, particularly AOC and COC. The questionnaire for AOC included "my values are the same as the values of this organization" and that of COC was "there is little I can gain by staying in this organization". The nine AOC question items had factor loadings ranging from 0.523 to 0.877, with an  $\alpha$  of 0.931 and a mean of 3.593. Meanwhile, the five COC question items had factor loadings ranging from 0.525 to 0.807, an  $\alpha$  of 0.745, and a mean value of 2.782. The total KMO value for OC was 0.892. The WE questionnaire was adapted from the short version by Schaufeli et al. (2006), with items such as "at work I feel strong." The nine WE questionnaire items had a factor loading of 0.819 to 0.874, a KMO value of 0.859,  $\alpha = 0.899$ , and a mean of 3.704. Since all the question items were considered valid and reliable, this research proceeded to test the relationship model between the variables.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analysis

A preliminary analysis was conducted by examining the relationship between variables using the Pearson correlation test, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** Correlation Between Variables, Average, and Composite Reliability

Variable	Mean	CR	AOC	COC	WE	IM	EP
Aff. Org. Comm	3.593	0.967	1.000				
Cont. Org. Comm	2.782	0.872	0.308**	1.000			
Work Engage.	3.704	0.948	0.497**	0.230**	1.000		
Intr. Motivation	3.695	0.952	0.583**	0.240**	0.715**	1.000	
Emp. Perform.	4.021	0.946	0.357**	0.058	0.480**	0.523**	1.000

*Note.* \*\* sign at  $p \leq 0.01$  ; CR = Composite Reliability

*Source.* Processing data primary results

The correlation test results showed that all variables were positively correlated, except for the relationship between COC and EP, where no correlation was observed. Both AOC and COC were positively correlated with IM and WE, supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2. However, H3 was only partially supported, as AOC was positively correlated with EP. IM was positively correlated with both WE and EP, supporting H4 and H5. Additionally, WE was significantly correlated with EP, supporting H6. The mean scores for AOC and COC were categorized as moderate, ranging from 2.34 to 3.66. The mean scores for WE, IM, and EP were classified as high, ranging from 3.67 to 5.00. Furthermore, all composite reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.70, indicating that the measurements were reliable.

### Testing Results of the Relationship Model

The relationship model was tested using two-step SEM, as the method was particularly suitable for the model with mediating variables and allowed for simultaneous testing. According to Byrne (2010), the two-step SEM method consists of the measurement and structural models, thereby enhancing model fit and accuracy. Model 1 showed that IM and WE serially mediated the influence of AOC and COC on EP, while Model 2 indicated that AOC, COC, and IM parallel mediated the influence of WE on EP. The test results for Model 1 were presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, while the results for Model 2 were detailed in Table 3 and Figure 3.

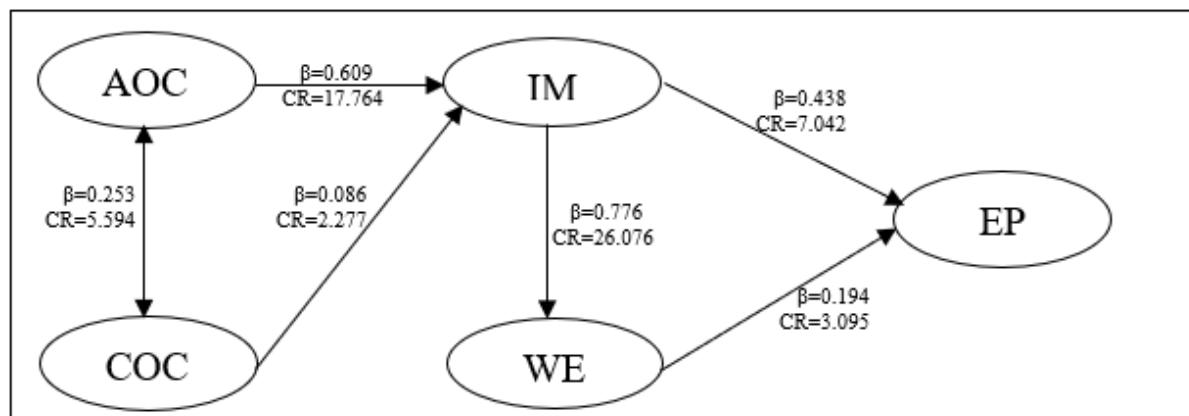
Table 2 and Figure 2 showed that AOC and COC significantly affected IM but had no effect on WE. WE was directly influenced by IM. Meanwhile, EP was directly influenced by IM and WE. The influence of OC, both AOC and COC, on EP was serially mediated by IM and WE. Model 1 also showed the existence of a reciprocal influence between AOC and COC.

**Table 2** IM and WE Parallelly Mediate the Effect of AOC and COC on EP

The Influence of Independent Variables on Dependent Variables	$\beta$	CR
Affective Organizational Commitment → Intrinsic Motivation	0.609**	17.764
Continuance Organizational Commitment → Intrinsic Motivation	0.086**	2.277
Intrinsic Motivation → Work Engagement	0.776**	26.076
Intrinsic Motivation → Employee Performance	0.438**	7.042
Work Engagement → Employee Performance	0.194**	3.095
Affective Organizational Commitment ↔ Continuance Organizational Commitment	0.253**	5.594
Chi-square = 11.228	df = 4	p = 0.024
GFI = 0.994	AGFI = 0.977	CFI = 0.993
NFI = 0.990	IFI = 0.993	TLI = 0.983

**Source:** Processing data primary results

**Figure 2** Test Results of Model 1



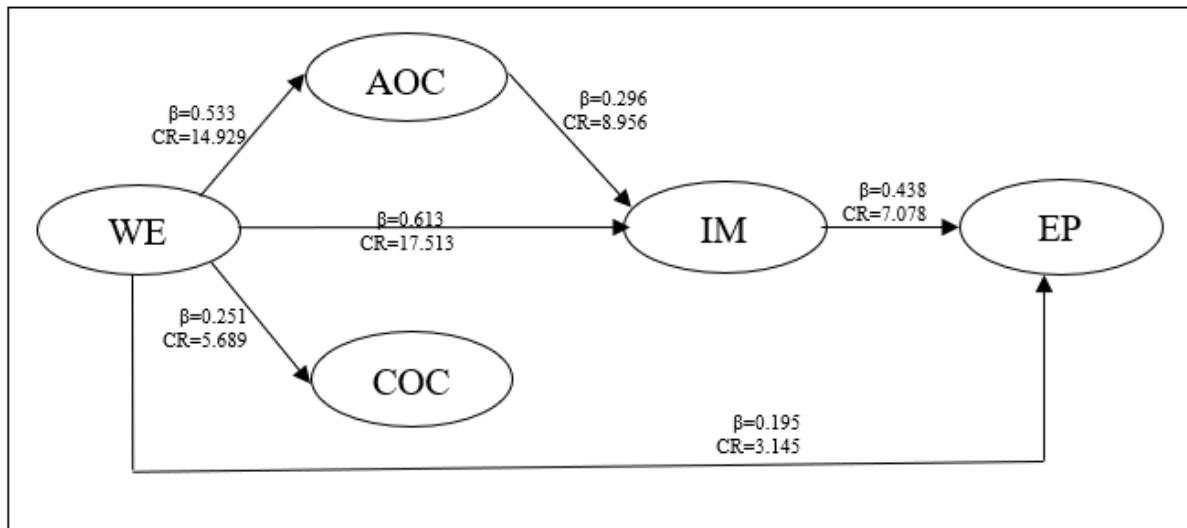
**Source:** Processing data primary results

Model 2 test results show that WE has a significant positive effect on AOC, COC, IM, and EP. AOC had a significant positive effect on IM, whereas COC had no effect. IM also had a significant positive effect on EP. Both models exhibited TLI and IFI values exceeding 0.95, indicating that they effectively fit the existing data.

**Table 3.** *AOC, COC, and IM Parallelly Mediate the Influence of WE on EP*

The Influence of Independent Variables on Dependent Variables	$\beta$	CR
Work Engagement → Affective Organizational Commitment	0.533**	14.929
Work Engagement → Intrinsic Motivation	0.613**	17.513
Work Engagement → Continuance Organizational Commitment	0.251**	5.689
Affective Organizational Commitment → Intrinsic Motivation	0.296**	8.956
Continuance Organizational Commitment → Intrinsic Motivation	0.006	0.180
Intrinsic Motivation → Employee Performance	0.438**	7.078
Work Engagement → Employee Performance	0.195**	3.145
Chi-square = 14.996	df = 3	p = 0.002
GFI = 0.992	AGFI = 0.959	CFI = 0.989
NFI = 0.986	IFI = 0.989	TLI = 0.963

**Source:** Processing data primary results

**Figure 3.** *Test Results of Model 2*

**Source:** Processing data primary results

## DISCUSSION

This research added support to previous studies, showing that psychological strength and individual attitudes in organizations are connected. WE had a direct positive effect on EP in both models. These results align with earlier studies, confirming that WE enhances EP (Buil et al., 2018; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; Eliyana et al., 2019; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022; Monje-Amor et al., 2021; Nabhan & Munajat, 2023). IM also directly influenced EP in both models, which aligned with earlier research findings (Karami et al., 2017; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022; Manzoor et al., 2021; Yousaf et al., 2022). Studies have also demonstrated the improvement of EP through IM (Alcover et al., 2020; Manzoor et al., 2021; Yousaf et al., 2022). Similarly, the positive role of WE

in EP agreed with earlier findings (Buil et al., 2018; Demerouti et al., 2015; Lai et al., 2020; Monje-Amor et al., 2021; Rameshkumar, 2020). The findings confirmed that WE and IM are crucial for better EP. As a result, focusing on these factors is crucial for enhancing employee and organizational performance.

There was a conflict between Models 1 and 2 regarding the connection between IM and WE. In Model 1, IM affected WE (Ali et al., 2021; Engidaw, 2021; Yousaf et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2022), but Model 2 suggested WE influenced IM (Rameshkumar, 2020). The research found that IM and WE have an impact on each other. IM involves intrinsic factors, such as enjoying work, aiming for goals, and achieving success, while WE refers to emotional engagement, enthusiasm, and dedication to work. Since they depend on each other, improving both is essential for enhancing EP.

Model 1 showed no connection between WE and AOC or COC. However, Model 2 indicated WE directly influenced AOC and COC, which matched earlier studies (Geisler et al., 2019; Hanaysha, 2016; Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017; Rameshkumar, 2020; Teo et al., 2020). This research also backed prior work, suggesting OC could either act as an independent variable or mediate effects. In Model 1, OC was an independent variable, while in Model 2, it served as a mediator (Eliyana et al., 2019; Kundi et al., 2021). Model 1 showed that AOC and COC influence each other and significantly impact IM, but do not affect WE. In contrast, Model 2 treated WE as an independent variable driving increases in AOC, COC, IM, and EP.

The findings of this research further affirmed that employees' well-being in the workplace directly enhanced performance. Well-being factors were interconnected and significantly influenced performance. Employees who feel engaged with their organization develop stronger commitments and are more motivated to perform effectively. Conversely, employees who lacked organizational engagement might find it challenging to deliver high performance. IM emerged as a critical driver of motivation, enabling employees to perform the assigned tasks effectively. Motivation served as a source of energy that fostered both commitment and engagement, driving efforts to achieve superior performance.

This research also reinforced the importance of WE in organizational settings, including MSMEs. Enhancing WE consistently improved employees' and organizational motivation, commitment, and performance. The results echoed the observations of Ali et al. (2021), Gajenderan et al. (2023), Liu et al. (2023), and Monje-Amor et al. (2021). Organizations could foster WE by implementing strategies such as providing attention and recognition, offering opportunities for growth, fulfilling employees' needs, and cultivating a supportive work culture and communication environment. These initiatives not only strengthened employees engagement but also contributed to improved organizational performance.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, psychological strength and individual attitudes in the workplace acted as essential drivers for achieving both employee and organizational performance. IM empowered employees to strive toward their goals, while a sense of connectedness enhanced productivity. Emotional commitment served as a critical motivator, unlike commitment driven solely by specific interests or objectives, which lacked the same motivational impact. The findings of this research indicated that feelings of engagement significantly enhance employee commitment; however, such commitment does not necessarily foster engagement.

One key contribution of this research was its examination of the relationship model between psychological variables that shaped the conditions and influenced the performance of MSMEs employees. By focusing on MSMEs employees as respondents, the analysis highlighted the crucial role of WE in improving organizational performance. Moreover, it reinforced established theories such as social exchange theory and self-determination theory, demonstrating the clear impact of WE and IM on EP. The research also supported the resource-based view, emphasizing the prioritization of employees to enhance both individual and organizational performance.

This research had certain limitations, including the fact that the mediation model was tested using cross-sectional data, and all variables were measured through self-reported questionnaires. The methods might lead to common method variance, which would inflate beta coefficient values. Future investigations should consider using longitudinal data to validate the mediation model and adopt independent raters to mitigate common method variance. Additionally, future investigations could focus on employees in larger organizations to enable broader generalizations of the results. Incorporating a qualitative research method could also provide deeper insights into the relationships among the variables examined in this research.

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