



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SMALL GROWING COMPANY

HUBUNGAN ANTARA KECERDASAN EMOSIONAL DAN KETERLIBATAN KERJA DI ANTARA KARYAWAN DI PERUSAHAAN KECIL YANG SEDANG BERKEMBANG

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ABSTRACT

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Low work engagement in growing companies often leads to high turnover and decreased productivity. This study examines the role of personal resources in maintaining employee performance by investigating the correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and work engagement. Using a total sampling technique, the research involved 50 male employees at UD Jaya Kapuk, a small growing company. This homogenous and controlled sample was intentionally selected to minimize confounding variables such as gender and generational differences, ensuring high internal validity within the specific organizational context. Data analysis using Pearson's correlation revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.652, p < 0.001$) between EI and work engagement. This finding suggests that higher EI is significantly associated with higher work engagement, providing a baseline for targeted interventions in similar small-scale enterprises. Future research may extend these findings to broader demographics to complement the specific insights established in this study.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence; Work Engagement; Employee Engagement; Organizational Psychology; Workplace Well-being*

ABSTRAK

Keterlibatan kerja yang rendah pada perusahaan yang sedang berkembang sering kali memicu tingginya angka *turnover* dan penurunan produktivitas. Penelitian ini menguji peran sumber daya pribadi dalam menjaga performa karyawan melalui korelasi antara kecerdasan emosional (KE) dan keterlibatan kerja. Dengan menggunakan teknik sampling total, penelitian melibatkan 50 karyawan laki-laki di UD Jaya Kapuk. Sampel yang homogen dan terkontrol ini sengaja dipilih untuk meminimalkan variabel pengganggu (seperti perbedaan gender dan generasi), guna memastikan validitas internal yang tinggi dalam konteks organisasi yang spesifik. Analisis data menggunakan korelasi Pearson menunjukkan korelasi positif yang kuat ($r = 0,652, p < 0,001$), yang mengindikasikan bahwa KE yang tinggi secara signifikan terkait dengan keterlibatan kerja yang lebih tinggi. Temuan ini memberikan landasan bagi intervensi strategis pada perusahaan skala kecil serupa. Penelitian selanjutnya dapat memperluas temuan ini pada demografi yang lebih luas untuk melengkapi wawasan spesifik yang telah dihasilkan dalam penelitian ini.

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Kata kunci: Kecerdasan Emosional; Keterlibatan Kerja; Keterlibatan Karyawan; Psikologi Organisasi; Kesejahteraan di Tempat Kerja

INTRODUCTION

The modern business environment is marked by rapid changes and intense competition, requiring organizations to continuously adapt and innovate to maintain their competitive edge. A key factor influencing organizational success is the level of work engagement demonstrated by employees. Work engagement, defined as a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind, is increasingly recognized as a critical driver of individual performance and organizational effectiveness (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Engaged employees exhibit higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work, leading to increased productivity, creativity, and innovation (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). This engagement is not only beneficial for the company but also serves as a protective factor for employee mental health in high-pressure environments (Lesener et al., 2019). These outcomes translate into tangible organizational benefits, such as improved profitability, reduced employee turnover, and a stronger organizational culture (Suryani & Foeh, 2018). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence work engagement is essential for organizations aiming to optimize their human capital and achieve sustainable success.

The psychological mechanisms underlying work engagement are complex and multifaceted, involving an interplay of individual characteristics, job demands, and organizational resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Among various psychological mechanisms, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is prioritized in this study due to its fundamental role as a personal resource that enables employees to navigate the high emotional demands often found in growing workplaces. EI has been identified as a significant predictor of job satisfaction and long-term career commitment, especially in labor-intensive industries (Miao et al., 2017). While job resources are often limited in smaller companies, EI serves as a crucial internal anchor that allows individuals to remain resilient, motivated, and engaged despite organizational instability. EI refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize one's own emotions and those of others effectively (Goleman, 2016). EI encompasses several key dimensions, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies are believed to play a crucial role in shaping an individual's workplace experience and performance. Employees with high EI are typically better equipped to navigate workplace challenges, build strong interpersonal relationships, and maintain a positive outlook, all of which contribute to higher levels of work engagement (Wulandari, 2020; Extremera et al., 2020).

A central question in organizational psychology is how EI influences work engagement. While numerous studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between EI and work engagement (Thor, 2012; Prasetyani & Desiana, 2022), the precise nature and strength of this relationship remain areas of ongoing investigation. Recent meta-analyses suggest that the impact of EI on engagement is particularly strong when employees perceive a lack of formal organizational support (Wen et al., 2019). Understanding this relationship is vital for developing effective interventions aimed at enhancing employee engagement. By leveraging this understanding, organizations can design targeted training programs and implement supportive workplace practices that foster EI development, ultimately leading to improved work engagement.

Previous research has explored various aspects of the EI-work engagement relationship. For instance, studies have examined the mediating role of psychological capital (Prasetyani & Desiana, 2022) and the moderating influence of organizational culture (Naidoo & Martins, 2014). Furthermore, the role of emotional labor—how employees manage their feelings to fit organizational goals—has been shown to be more manageable for those with high EI scores (Lee & Ok, 2012). However, a significant gap remains in understanding this relationship within small and growing companies. Many studies have overlooked the fact that in SMEs, the owner's and employees' emotional intelligence can define the entire organizational climate (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). UD Jaya Kapuk presents a unique organizational context that differs significantly from the large corporations typically studied in existing literature. As a small growing company, UD Jaya Kapuk operates with a lean organizational structure where employees often handle multiple roles (multi-tasking) and face higher job insecurity compared to established firms. In such an environment, the boundaries between professional and personal interactions are often blurred, making emotional management skills even more critical for maintaining engagement. This study explicitly focuses on this setting to provide insights applicable to other small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) that face similar resource constraints and high-pressure growth phases.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the correlation between EI and work engagement among employees of UD Jaya Kapuk, a small and growing company. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a specific organizational context and a controlled demographic profile that has received limited attention in previous research. By examining this relationship in a unique and homogenous setting, the study aims to provide a more precise analysis of how emotional intelligence functions without the interference of gender-based or age-related emotional variance. While the study focuses on 50 male employees of UD Jaya Kapuk, this deliberate sampling strategy ensures high internal validity and provides targeted insights for organizations with similar workforce profiles.

The primary objective of this research is to determine the strength and significance of the correlation between emotional intelligence and work engagement among employees of UD Jaya Kapuk. We hypothesize that a positive correlation exists, suggesting that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with higher levels of work engagement. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the factors influencing work engagement in a specific organizational context and offer practical implications for improving employee engagement strategies in similar settings. The results will be discussed in relation to existing literature, highlighting the theoretical contributions and the specific boundary conditions of the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work engagement among employees of UD Jaya Kapuk. The correlational design was chosen to examine the association between the two variables without manipulating any of them (Sugiyono, 2016). The primary objective was to test the hypothesis that a positive correlation (one-tailed) exists between EI and work engagement within this specific organizational context. By adopting a one-tailed approach, this study focuses specifically on the direction of the relationship as suggested by previous theories.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of the entire population of employees at UD Jaya Kapuk, totaling 50 male employees aged between 20 and 30 years. A total sampling method was utilized, where all members of the defined population were included in the sample (Sugiyono, 2016). This approach was intentionally selected to ensure a high level of data precision and to eliminate sampling error by providing a complete representation of the organization. Furthermore, the homogeneity of the sample—comprising male employees in the early adulthood stage—was a deliberate design choice to minimize confounding variables related to gender and generational differences. By maintaining a specific demographic profile, this study effectively isolates the relationship between emotional intelligence and work engagement, thereby increasing the internal validity of the findings within the context of a small growing company.

Instruments

Data collection involved the administration of two self-report questionnaires: one measuring emotional intelligence (EI) and the other measuring work engagement. Both questionnaires utilized a four-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from *Sangat Sesuai* (Strongly Agree) to *Sangat Tidak Sesuai* (Strongly Disagree).

The EI questionnaire was developed based on Goleman's (2016) model, which includes five dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The initial instrument consisted of 45 items (23 favorable and 22 unfavorable). To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire underwent rigorous psychometric testing. Content validity was assessed using Aiken's V with four raters, and items were considered valid if the coefficient was ≥ 0.88 (Aiken, 1980). Reliability was assessed using item discrimination, with items retained if their discrimination index was ≥ 0.30 (Azwar, 2012). After this process, the final EI questionnaire comprised 18 items, demonstrating high internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.889.

The work engagement questionnaire was adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and based on the theoretical framework of Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). It initially included 36 items (18 favorable and 18 unfavorable) measuring three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Similar to the EI questionnaire, this instrument underwent psychometric testing for content validity and reliability. The final version consisted of 12 items, exhibiting acceptable internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.852 (Azwar, 2012).

Data Collection Procedure

Data Collection Procedure The questionnaires were distributed directly to all 50 employees of UD Jaya Kapuk through an offline (paper-and-pencil) administration. This manual approach was chosen to ensure a 100% response rate and to allow researchers to provide immediate clarification if participants encountered difficulties understanding certain items. Participants were provided with clear instructions and assured of the absolute confidentiality of their responses. The data collection process was conducted over a period of two weeks.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26 for Windows. The analysis process began with descriptive statistics to calculate the mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution of scores. Subsequently, a normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method was conducted to ensure the data were normally distributed. To visually

inspect the linearity assumption, a scatterplot was generated. Finally, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between EI and work engagement, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work engagement among 50 male employees of UD Jaya Kapuk. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlation..

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the participants' emotional intelligence (EI) and work engagement scores.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) Scores

The mean EI score was 53.12, with a standard deviation of 6.157. The frequency distribution revealed that 56% of the participants exhibited moderate levels of EI, while 44% displayed high levels of EI. Notably, no participants scored in the low EI range, indicating a generally positive level of EI within the sample population.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Emotional Intelligence Scores

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Moderate	28	56.0	56.0
	High	22	44.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows that more than half of the participants (56%) possess a moderate level of emotional intelligence, while the remaining 44% are in the high category. No participants scored in the low category, indicating a generally well-developed emotional capacity among the employees.

Work Engagement Scores

The mean work engagement score was 35.24, with a standard deviation of 4.662. The results indicated that 50% of the participants demonstrated moderate levels of work engagement, and 50% showed high levels of work engagement. Similar to the EI scores, no participants fell into the low work engagement category, suggesting a relatively high level of work engagement among the employees.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Work Engagement Scores

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Moderate	25	50.0	50.0
	High	25	50.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

Table 2 indicates that the participants are evenly split between moderate and high levels of work engagement (50% each). Similar to the EI results, the absence of low-category scores suggests that the employees at UD Jaya Kapuk are relatively engaged with their work.

Visualization of Data

A scatterplot was generated to visually represent the relationship between EI and work engagement scores. The scatterplot revealed a positive slope, suggesting a positive correlation between the two variables. This visual inspection supported the assumption of linearity required for Pearson's correlation analysis.

Figure 1: Scatterplot.

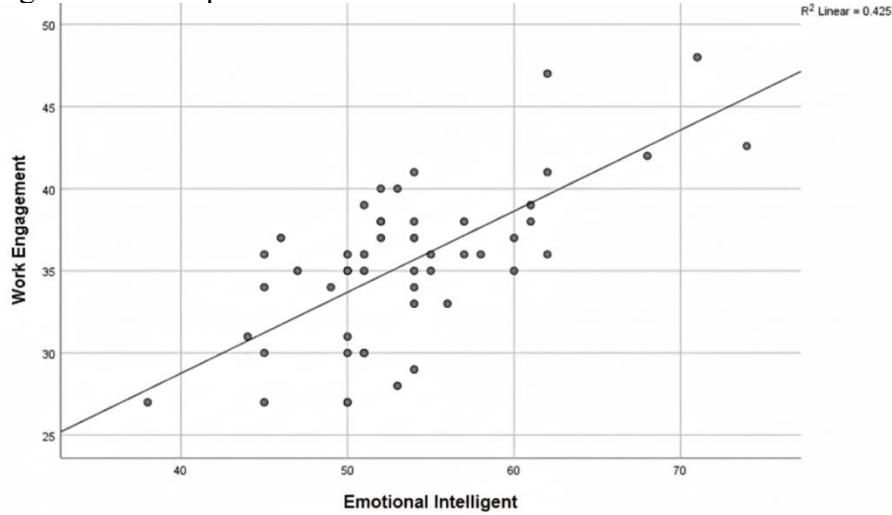


Figure 1: Scatterplot.

Normality Test

Before conducting the correlation analysis, the assumption of normality was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p = 0.200 > 0.05$)

Variable	Statistic	N	p-value
Unstandardized Residuals	.069	50	.200

Table 3 confirms that the significance value ($p = .200$) is greater than 0.05, which means the data distribution is normal and fulfills the requirements for parametric statistical analysis.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to assess the relationship between EI and work engagement. The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.652, p < 0.001, n = 50$). This indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that higher levels of EI are associated with higher levels of work engagement. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.425$) indicates that 42.5% of the variance in work engagement can be explained by EI.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Work Engagement

		EI	Work Engagement
EI	Pearson Correlation	1	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Work Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.652$) between emotional intelligence and work engagement. As the Sig. (1-tailed) value is 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), the hypothesis is accepted. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.425$) was calculated by squaring the correlation coefficient (0.652^2), indicating that EI contributes 42.5% to the variance of work engagement.

The findings of this study strongly support the hypothesis of a positive correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and work engagement among employees of UD Jaya Kapuk. The Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.652$ ($p < 0.001$) indicates a substantial and statistically significant positive relationship. This result aligns with previous research that has consistently demonstrated a positive association between EI and work engagement (Wulandari & Ratnaningsih, 2017; Thor, 2012; Prasetyani & Desiana, 2022).

The Psychological Dynamics of EI and Work Engagement the strong correlation between these two variables can be explained through several psychological mechanisms. Firstly, the self-regulation dimension of EI allows employees to manage workplace stressors effectively. Employees with high self-regulation can mitigate the negative effects of high job demands, preventing emotional exhaustion and maintaining a state of vigor (Prentice et al., 2020). In a small growing company like UD Jaya Kapuk, where job demands are often unpredictable, the ability to remain calm and maintain a positive emotional state prevents burnout and sustains vigor—a core component of work engagement.

Secondly, internal motivation (a key element of EI) drives individuals to find personal meaning in their work beyond financial rewards. Furthermore, the social skills and empathy dimensions of EI facilitate better interpersonal relationships. At UD Jaya Kapuk, where teamwork is essential due to a lean organizational structure, high EI enables employees to build supportive networks, which in turn increases their sense of belonging and *absorption* in their tasks. In essence, EI acts as an internal resource that transforms emotional challenges into opportunities for growth, thereby fueling a higher state of engagement.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.425$) indicates that approximately 42.5% of the variance in work engagement can be explained by EI. While this is a substantial proportion, it also highlights that other factors contribute to work engagement. This finding is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which posits that work engagement is influenced by both personal resources (such as EI) and job resources (such as supportive supervision and autonomy). In the context of a small company, personal resources like EI may carry more weight in sustaining engagement when formal organizational resources are still being developed. Recent studies have shown that personal resources like EI can actually trigger a "gain spiral," where engaged employees further develop their emotional skills, creating a continuous loop of productivity (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018)

The descriptive statistics revealed that a significant proportion of the employees at UD Jaya Kapuk exhibited moderate to high levels of both EI and work engagement. The absence of employees in the low categories for both variables is noteworthy and may reflect the unique characteristics of the sample or the organizational culture of UD Jaya Kapuk. However, this finding contrasts with preliminary interviews conducted before the study, which suggested lower levels of engagement. This discrepancy could be attributed to the limitations of qualitative data from a small number of interviews or a potential improvement in employee engagement levels since the interviews were conducted.

The strong positive correlation between EI and work engagement has significant practical implications for organizations. Interventions aimed at enhancing EI among employees could potentially lead to increased work engagement and, consequently, improved organizational outcomes. For example, training programs focused on developing EI skills—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy—could be implemented to foster a more engaged workforce. Additionally, creating a supportive and inclusive work environment that values and promotes emotional intelligence could further enhance employee engagement.

Despite its contributions, this study focuses on a specific demographic profile. The decision to include a homogenous sample of 50 male employees aged 20–30 was intentionally made to ensure high internal validity by controlling for gender-based emotional processing styles and generational work-value variances. By minimizing these potential confounding variables, the study provides a clearer and more precise analysis of the relationship between EI and work engagement within this particular organizational context. While this specific focus serves the study's objective to provide targeted insights for UD Jaya Kapuk, future research could build upon these findings by exploring more diverse populations to further test the external validity of this model across different genders and age groups.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence of a strong and significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and work engagement among employees at UD Jaya Kapuk. The findings suggest that higher emotional intelligence—specifically the ability to regulate emotions, maintain internal motivation, and exercise empathy—serves as a vital personal resource that fosters vigor, dedication, and task absorption. In the specific context of a small growing company, the controlled demographic profile of the participants allowed for an in-depth understanding of how EI functions among early-adult male employees navigating organizational change. These results offer practical insights for SMEs to prioritize emotional intelligence in their recruitment. Future studies are encouraged to extend this research framework to more diverse demographic settings to complement the specific baseline established in this study.

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