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The Impact of Leadership Style, HR Practices, and Motivation Skills on Employees' Performance: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Amna Arsalan¹

MS Scholar, Department of Business Administration,
University of Sialkot (USKT), Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

Inam Ullah Khan²

Assistant Professor, Department of Business
Administration, University of Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
Correspondence: malikinamullahkhan@gmail.com

Bisma Tanveer³

MS Scholar, Department of Business Administration,
University of Sialkot (USKT), Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

Ayesha Maham⁴

MS Scholar, Department of Business Administration,
University of Sialkot (USKT), Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

The study focuses on testing the impact of leaders' styles, HR practices, and motivation skills on employees' performance, of which job satisfaction acts as a mediator. The study has a quantitative research approach, using which a structured questionnaire gathers all the required information. The sample of employees studied through the purposive sampling technique comprises 500 employees. The independent variables are leaders' styles (authoritarian, democratic, and laissez- faire), HR practices, and motivation skills, while job satisfaction acts as a mediator, and finally, employees' performance. Furthermore, results indicate that leaders' styles, HR practices, and motivation skills positively impact job satisfaction and employees' performance. The mediation analysis reveals that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship of leadership styles and HR practices with employee performance but at the same time it fully mediates the relationship of motivation skills with employee performance. The R² values show a strong explanatory model for employees' performance and moderate predictive power for job satisfaction. Generally, the findings recommend that influential leadership, unbiased HR practices, and strong motivational skills enhance employee performance mainly by boosting job satisfaction. This study provides meaningful results for managers and HR professionals aiming to empower employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Human Resource Practices, Motivation Skills, Job Satisfaction, Employee Performance.



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Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, every firm strives to work more effectively and remain successful. Every firm wants to boost its performance. The progress of every firm or organization depends on how well employees perform their duties; it does not depend on money, technology, or machines. Employees are the main part of an organization, and their satisfaction level, motivation, and performance determine whether the company will grow or not. (Jiang et al., 2022; Torlak & Kuzey, 2023; Hassan et al., 2024).

In an organization, leadership performs a crucial role in shaping the accomplishment and motivation of employees in any organization. The leadership style is the method by which they support and satisfy their employees. The prolonged success depends on the leader's attitude. Multiple leadership styles affect employees' behavior. Some of them are shown below: Autocratic leadership - leaders make decisions with less interruption from employees.

Laissez-faire leadership - leaders give freedom of choice to employees in making decisions. Democratic leadership - leaders involve employees in the process of decision-making. (Shahzadi et al., 2023; Sindhu et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2023; Hussain & Khoso, 2021). Just as Human Resources (HR) practices such as hiring the right person for a job, giving training, fair performance assessment, and rewards also help employees to improve their overall progress. Employees feel motivated and passionate about their work when they receive fair treatment, proper training, and achieve rewards for their efforts (Keltu, 2024). In addition, motivation skills how leadership motivates and supports employees, are very important. Sometimes people have the right skills and capability to do a job well, but they do not put in their best effort because they are not motivated. When they are motivated, for example, by assistance, giving incentives to them, or a positive workplace, they work harder and give their best (Tambunan, 2025). While the majority of studies have separately investigated leadership styles, HR practices, motivation, and employees' performance, fewer studies bring all of these together in one model. For an organization, it is not important to choose one area alone; they want to know how leadership, HR practices, and motivation skills collectively contribute to performance. In addition, job satisfaction shows up in various studies as a crucial factor (for example, democratic leadership increases job satisfaction, which then enhances performance) (Arshad et al., 2025; Ramahan Suhendar et al., 2024; Islam et al., 2025). The role of motivation skills combined with HR practices and leadership styles is less clear. Thus, there is a need for a study that investigates how leadership style, HR practices, and motivation skills work mutually, and how job satisfaction mediates (acts as the middle link) between those factors and employee performance.

A few key gaps in the literature can be determined:

1. Many studies emphasize only one leadership style (or compare two) and link it to job satisfaction or performance. Few cover all three leadership styles (authoritarian, democratic, laissez-faire) along with HR practices and motivation skills (Northouse, 2021).
2. Though job satisfaction often serves as a mediator between leadership and performance, there are limited empirical studies that cover motivation skills and HR practices together in the same mediation model (Siraj et al. (2022).
3. Many studies have been done in particular sectors (e.g., education, healthcare) or specific regions; thus, more evidence is needed across different industries and contexts. For example, a study identified that laissez-faire leadership style had a positive effect on job satisfaction in

certain bank employees, but this result contradicted many earlier studies. (Iqbal et al., 2023; Saeed, Ali & Rashid, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by proposing a model that includes leadership style (with three types), HR practices, motivation skills as independent variables; job satisfaction as a mediator; and employee performance as the outcome.

Many companies invest money in leadership training, HR systems, and motivation programs, but they still identify that employees do not work as well as expected and are not fully satisfied with their jobs. This means that just having leaders and HR policies is not adequate. Employees need to experience being truly satisfied, motivated, and supported to give their best performance. The central question is: How do leadership style, HR practices, and motivational skills affect employee performance? Does job satisfaction play a mediating role between these factors and employee performance? The aim of this study is, therefore, to identify a specific answer to these questions. It demonstrates how leadership, beneficial HR practices, and strong motivation can translate into a real improvement in employee performance by enhancing their level of job satisfaction. In fact, the research clearly highlights how different aspects of leadership style, HR practices, motivational skills, and employee performance are interrelated (Northouse, 2021; Saeed et al., 2023; Iqbal et al., 2023).

Second, in practical terms, the research is productive for managerial staff, HR staff, and leaders. It shows in what ways these three aspects of leadership, HR Practices, and motivation skills work together. With this information, the organization can increase leadership development, sharpen HR practices, motivate employees to perform tasks properly, and enhance job satisfaction. Which will turn into refined employees' performance. (Armstrong, 2020; Boxall & Purcell, 2016)

Literature Review

The three main factors, called leadership styles, HR practices, and motivation skills, guide employees on how to perform tasks properly. Many researchers have tested that job satisfaction acts as a mediator between these factors and employees' performance. When leaders handle employees well, when the HR system is unbiased, and when employees feel comfortable, they become satisfied with their jobs. This satisfaction supports them in performing tasks properly. Saeed, Ali, and Rashid (2023) demonstrated that leadership style has a direct effect on job satisfaction and an indirect effect on employee performance through satisfaction. Their research presented that democratic leadership tends to higher job satisfaction, while authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership have limited or mixed effects. In the same manner, Albrishni (2023) recognized that in a university setting, authoritarian leaders decrease job satisfaction, while participative leaders increase it, which results in greater employee performance.

Authoritarian leadership, often referred to as autocratic leadership, emphasizes strict control and close supervision. In this strategy, leaders select everything on their own and assume that others will follow their instructions. In the studies of Zhang et al. (2022), Saeed et al. (2023), and Iqbal et al. (2023) described that authoritarian leaders generally control employee participation and communication, from which employees feel ignored and demotivated. This strategy helps in a strict organizational environment. Although this leadership style may be effective in highly structured or strict organizational environments, Sahito (2023) observed that it generally reduces participation and teamwork, as employees feel less motivated and are not comfortable sharing ideas. This environment might bring short-term performance, but it normally decreases

organizational performance in the long run because job satisfaction and motivation decrease, so job satisfaction performs as a mediator between the leadership style and employee performance.

In contrast, democratic leadership involves employees in decision-making processes. Higher motivation and satisfaction are connected with democratic leadership. The Hakim and Wirajaya (2021) and Pedro et al. (2022) indicate that democratic leaders build faith and effective communication, encouraging employees to show their views openly. When employees participate in every decision of their organization, they feel satisfied and have passion for their job. Democratic leadership is responsible for guiding all HR activities related to promotion, training, development, and employee performance appraisal, and they treat all their employees equally. The Riyanto (2021) stated that if the employees are given an opportunity to share their ideas and solve their problems, they feel positive and confident. Laissez-faire leadership is both positive and negative, depending on organizational background and employee qualities. The Rafique and Daad (2021) studied that if their bank's employees are very qualified and educated, and if their employees like freedom, then this leadership style works well in their organization. It boosts job performance and job effectiveness. The employees lacking in experience or lacking proper coaching, laissez-faire leadership tends to create a situation of less determination and less satisfaction. Without adequate supervision, employees are not able to perform at their best and are unable to remain focused. Laissez-faire leadership works well in an organization when employees are loyal, dedicated, and passionate, and HR systems are providing proper support to employees.

HR practices are another important element that affects the degree to which employees are comfortable with their work and able to perform the tasks effectively. HR practices include fair hiring practices, proper training, fair pay, measurement of productivity, and provision of incentives to the employees. The Keltu (2024) found that employees possessing relevant experience and a favorable HR practice feel valued and secure with the related job. As the management provides a fair practice, the employees will naturally generate interest in the related tasks, resulting in increased positivity plus confidence, thus motivating them. A lowered level of productivity results when the HR practices are biased, resulting in poor performance at the related job. HR practice is most efficient when it supports the leadership style. Democratic leadership, where considerable participation of the employees is included, and they are allowed to share their views, makes the HR practices perform better than autocratic leadership. The innovated employees feel more comfortable with the related tasks in the working place (Riyanto, 2021). The Motivation is essential to raise the levels of satisfaction and performance. The root of the word "motivation" originated from the Latin word "movere," where the meanings revolve around movement towards a direction. There are two elements of this concept, intrinsic, where the individuals' personal interest and desire to perform lead to intrinsic motivation, and external, sourced from materialistic objects, like prizes, incentives, rewards, and cash. The research by Tambunan (2025) and Sattar (2025) proved that the ambitious workers are always content with the related tasks and perform the tasks effectively. Motivation can be increased by leaders, HR practices, growth, or related performances. The performance of employees is eventually influenced by various factors. These factors are leadership and human resource practices. Additionally, motivation influences performance. The Saeed, Ali, and Rashid (2023) agreed and found that each factor individually influences performance. However, their combination influences job satisfaction. When leadership in companies is democratic and human resource practices are just and fair. Consequently, motivated employees perform better. They perform well

as individuals and also as a team. By contrast, performance and job satisfaction in an autocratic working environment with unbiased human resource practices are poor. The employees may possess the required skills.

In general, studies have shown that leadership style, HR practices, and motivation are factors related to job satisfaction, which in turn builds on the performances of the workers. The Democratic leadership presents the best results, while authoritarian leadership does not contribute much towards motivation and performance. The Laissez-faire leadership works better only when the workers are loyal and committed, accompanied by powerful HR practices. The HR practices and motivation factors make leadership more effective by allowing workers to feel supported and valued. According to Keltu (2024), the performance of workers does not rely on a single parameter but on the whole process involving effective leadership, unbiased HR practices, and proper motivation. All factors working together result in boosted job satisfaction, causing workers to deliver their tasks to the best of their capacity.

In closing, for an organization to register excellent performance, democratic leadership, fair human resource practices, and strong motivation must be in place at the same time. Job satisfaction is the bridge

Hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction.

H2: HR practices play an important role in influencing job satisfaction.

H3: Motivation skills are directly related to job satisfaction.

H4: There is an important effect of leadership style on employee performance. **H5:** HR practices positively correlate with the employees' performance.

H6: Motivation skills are significantly and positively related to employees' performance. **H7:** Job satisfaction has a significant impact on employee performance.

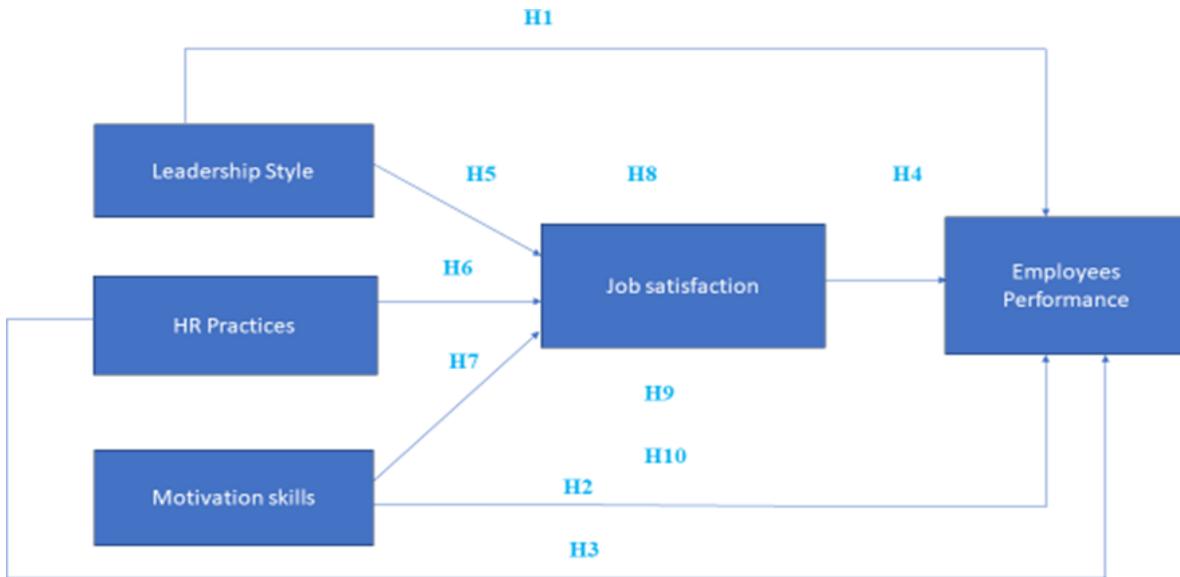
H8: Job satisfaction serves as a mediator between leadership style and employee performance.

H9: Job satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between HR practices and employee performance.

H10: Job satisfaction mediates the link between motivation skills and employee performance.

Framework

Figure 1: Research Model



Research Methodology

This study used a quantitative research design to examine the impact of leadership styles, HR Practices, and motivation skills on employees' performance through job satisfaction. The data were based on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that means selecting people who can give the most useful and relevant data for your research, not just anyone by chance. Purposive sampling was used to ensure data were collected from employees with enough organizational experience. The demographic of the questionnaire includes age, firm, marital status, and gender.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of five scales. There are three independent variables: leadership style, HR practices, and motivation skills. The leadership style has 18 items, in which the authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire are discussed. The questionnaire is taken from this Source: Pace University (Pace University, 2021)

The Human Resources Teamwork Planning (HR Planning) contains 16 questions regarding HR planning, incentives, performance appraisals, training programs, decision-making processes, and overall satisfaction with the firm's HR practices (Jain, 2012). Motivation skills questionnaire guides on assessing motivation skills through a 20-question self-assessment test (Laeq, 2016). Job satisfaction takes data from respondents to provide basic demographic information and then rates their level of agreement on various statements related to general working conditions, pay and promotion, work relationships, use of skills and abilities, work activities, and overall opinion of the company using a 5-point Likert scale and has 20 questions (Maajana, 2010). The Employees' performance is a dependent variable and contains 17 questionnaires (Varsha, 2015) Respondents are asked to rate their level of satisfaction with statements in each section on a scale of "strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree".

Data Analysis

For data analysis, we used Cronbach's Alpha, correlation, and mediation and moderation. The value of the Cronbach's alpha of leadership style is 0.729. The value of Cronbach's alpha of human resource practices is 0.903, and the value of Cronbach's alpha of motivation skills is 0.954. The value of job satisfaction is 0.871, and the value of employees' performance is 0.904. All AVE values are greater than the suggested cutoff of 0.50; this validates the level of convergent validity in the data. HRP = 0.654; MS = 0.720; JS = 0.856; EP = 0.701; LSS=0.843.

Correlation analysis is done to investigate the relationships between variables and the nature of these associations in binary form. HR practices (HRP), Motivation Skills (MS), and Job Satisfaction (JS) as mediator have a positive relationship with the DV, which is employees' performance (EP), the value of the correlation coefficient is $r = 0.254^{**}, 0.157^{**}, 0.266^{**}$, and 0.139^{**} $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the details of the correlation analysis are shown in the table below

Table 1: Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5
HRP	-	0.530**	0.734**	0.804**	0.254**
MS	-	-	0.489**	0.527**	0.157**
JS	-	-	-	0.839**	0.266**
EP	-	-	-	-	0.139**
LSS	-	-	-	-	-

Table 2: Inference of mediation

Hypothesis	Direct Beta without Mediator	Direct Beta with Mediator	Indirect Beta	Mediator type observed
LSS-JS-EP	Beta=0.1385 P=0.0019	B=0.0917 P=0.0003	B= 0.4649	Partial mediation
HRP-JS-EP	Beta=0.8040 P=0.0000	B=0.4130 P=0.0000	B=0.3495	Partial mediation
MS-JS-EP	Beta=0.5271 P=0.0000	B=0.1558 P=0.0000	B=0.5950	Full Mediation

In Table 2, Job Satisfaction (JS) is used as a mediator between Leadership Style (LSS), Human Resource Practices (HRP), Motivation Skills (MS), and Employee Performance (EP), with EP as the dependent variable. Direct effects without considering the mediator were $\beta = 0.1385$ (LSS \rightarrow EP), 0.8040 (HRP \rightarrow EP), and 0.5271 (MS \rightarrow EP), which are all significant at $p < 0.001$.

After the incorporation of JS as a mediator, the direct effects of the variables on EP were observed to be $\beta = 0.0917$ (LSS \rightarrow EP), 0.4130 (HRP \rightarrow EP), and 0.1558 (MS \rightarrow EP), all of which were still significant. The indirect effects through JS were $\beta = 0.4649$, 0.3495 , and 0.5950 .

The type of mediator is Partial for LSS \rightarrow JS \rightarrow EP and HRP \rightarrow JS \rightarrow EP, while it is full for MS \rightarrow JS \rightarrow EP, which demonstrates that Job Satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between Motivation Skills and Employee Performance.

Figure 2: LSS-JS-EP

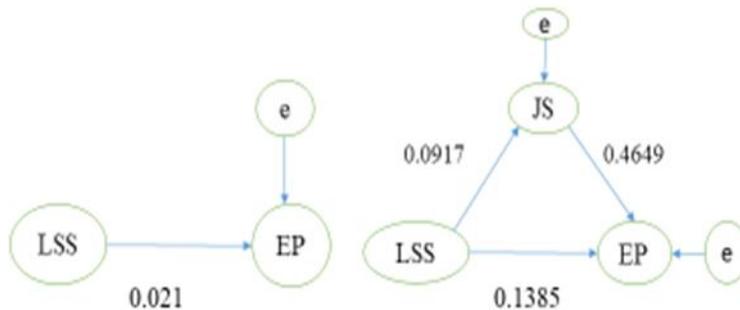


Figure 2. Path LSS-JS-EP

Figure 3: HRP-JS-EP

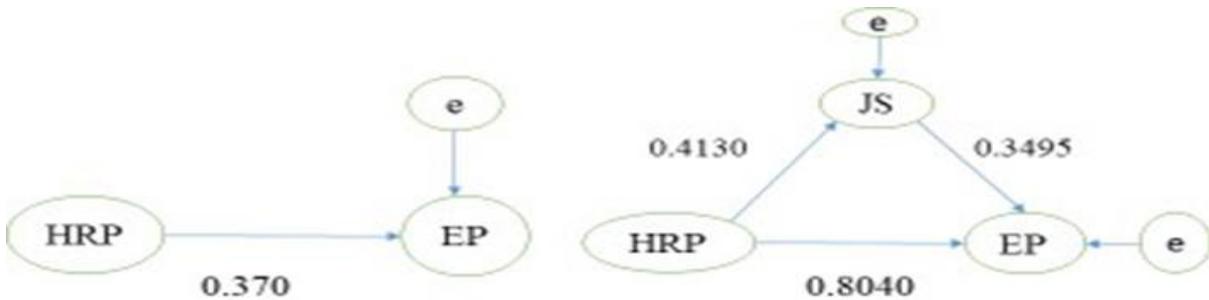


Figure 3. Path HRP-JS-EP

Figure 4: MS-JS-EP

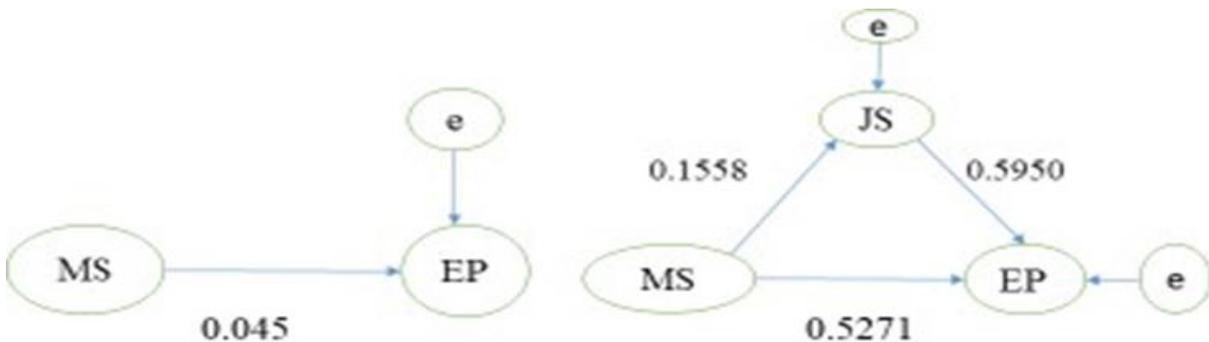


Figure 4. Path MS-JS-EP

The above figures 1, 2, and 3 show the conclusion of mediation of all values that were checked with the mediator, and without the mediator's effect of direct and indirect impact. Job satisfaction partially mediates between leadership style and employee performance and between human resource practices and employee performance. It fully mediates between motivation skills and employee performance.

Table 3: SRMR Model Fit and R Square (R2)

	Value	Results
Saturated Model	0.047	Accepted
Estimated Model	0.047	Accepted

Model Fit and Validity: The SRMR value of 0.047 for both saturated and estimated models indicate a good model fit, well below the 0.08 threshold. This confirms that the proposed model accurately represents the observed data and meets essential validity standards for PLS-SEM studies.

R-squared (R ²)		
	R Square (R ²)	Interpretation
EP	0.768	Strong Explanatory power
JS	0.681	Moderate predictive power

The above table shows the R2 value for employees' performance is 0.768, which means that 76.8% of employees' performance is explained by HRP, MS, and LSS, which strongly influence how well employees perform their work. In the same way, the R2 value for Job Performance is 0.681, which shows that 68.1% of job performance is described by HRP, MS, and LSS. This shows that these factors also accomplish an important task in enhancing job performance.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	β (Path Coefficient)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
LSS->JS	0.453	12.654	<0.001	Supported
HRP->JS	0.735	22.784	<0.001	Supported
MS->JS	0.089	4.768	<0.001	Supported
LSS->EP	0.359	11.654	<0.001	Supported
MS->EP	0.045	2.346	<0.001	Supported
JS->EP	0.046	2.335	<0.001	Supported

Results present that all relationships are statistically confirmed, presenting a strong connection among Leadership Style, Human Resource Practices (HRP), Job Satisfaction (JS), Employee Performance (EP), and Motivation Support (MS). LSS has a significant positive effect on JS ($\beta=0.453$, $t=12.654$, $p<0.001$). HRP has a significant positive effect on JS ($\beta=0.735$, $t=22.784$, p

<0.001), and even MS has a supported relationship with JS ($\beta = 0.089$, $t = 4.768$, $p = 0.001$). LSS significantly enhances EP ($\beta = 0.359$, $t = 11.654$, $p < 0.001$), while HRP has a significant effect on EP ($\beta = 0.370$, $t = 14.796$, $p < 0.001$). MS has a weak but significant effect on EP ($\beta = 0.045$, $t = 2.346$, $p < 0.001$). JS has also a weak but significant positive impact on EP ($\beta = 0.046$, $t = 2.335$, $p < 0.001$). All hypothesized relationship supports each other. In general, these outcomes illustrate a supportive system in which Leadership style, HR practices, Job satisfaction, Motivation skills, and Employees' performance jointly support one another.

Discussion and Conclusion

The paper reviewed the effect of leadership style, human resource (HR) practices, and motivation skills on employees' performance, where job satisfaction plays the role of mediator among these variables. The findings from Smart PLS and SPSS provide basic knowledge regarding these relationships. In line with past research, results indicate that Leadership style, HR practices, and motivation skills are significantly related to job satisfaction and employees' performance, which bring into focus the significance of a productive HR system and workers' determination for enhancement in workplace outcomes. (Zhang et al., 2024; Alharbi et al., 2022).

On the other side, leadership style shows a significant direct influence on job satisfaction and employees' performance in the Smart PLS path coefficient outcomes. While leadership style is a crucial factor as a direct indicator, mediation evaluation done through SPSS presents that job satisfaction partially mediates the association between leadership style and employees' performance. These outcomes support the mediation hypothesis proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and related to previous knowledge, showing that leadership influences performance directly by boosting employees' comfort level (Abdul Jabbar, Haider, & Qureshi, 2023). In simple language, leadership style not only clearly enhances performance, but when it boosts employees' job determination, performance automatically boosts. The R-square findings further upgrade the results of the study. The R-square value for employees' performance is 0.768, indicating that 76.8 percent difference in employees' performance is explained by HR practices, motivation skills, and leadership style together. This presents that strong explanatory strength of the structural model, as proposed by PLS-SEM guidelines (Hair et al., 2019). Similarly, the value of R² for job satisfaction is 0.681, which means that a 68.1% difference in job satisfaction is represented by the same independent variable, assuring that their importance in assessing employees' behavior and mentality (Hatidja et al., 2024). The Fitness of the model was evaluated using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the value of SRMR is 0.047 is below the advised threshold of 0.08, showing a good model fit. This identifies that the recommended research model fits the data well, and the significant connection is shown in the study variables.

In summary, the findings show that Leadership style, HR practices and Motivation skills are the most powerful factors influencing both job satisfaction and employees' performance. Leadership style does instantly influence employees' performance but assists directly through job satisfaction. The middle part of job satisfaction highlights the use of previous studies in converting organizational practices into better employee performance. (Fitria et al., 2024; Soetirto, Muldjono & Hidayatulloh, 2025). Thus, the organizations should focus on supporting HR practices and motivation strategies while applying leadership methods that increase job satisfaction to get better employee performance. Through this study, HRP has more influence on employees' performance than MS (motivation skills) and leadership style.

Limitation and Future Direction

Though this research gives useful knowledge, it has some limitations. First results become less useful when using purposive sampling and a self-evaluation questionnaire. Second, a cross-sectional study was conducted, so it cannot verify cause-and-effect relationships. Third, it did not focus deeply on different leadership styles individually. Future studies could focus on studies over time (longitudinal studies) and collect data using random sampling to attain accurate results. Researchers could also discover other aspects, like employees' participation, company performance, and professional-personal life balance. And emphasizes a particular field or evaluates the public and private sectors to improve knowledge of how leadership, HR practices, and motivation influence employee performance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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