

Authentic Leadership and Fun Workplace Influence on Tourism Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

*The Influence of
Authentic Leadership*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Authentic Leadership and Fun Workplace on the Performance of Tourism Industry Workers, by considering the role of Employee Engagement as a mediator. The location of the study was conducted in a certain area. The sample used in this study was 60 respondents. The data will be analyzed using statistical techniques such as path analysis to test the influence of independent variables on dependent variables through mediators. The results of the study indicate that based on direct testing, Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on Employee Engagement. Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on Tourism Industry Worker Performance. Employee Engagement has a significant positive effect on Tourism Industry Worker Performance. Fun Workplace has a significant positive effect on Employee Engagement. Fun Workplace has a significant positive effect on Tourism Industry Worker Performance. Based on the results of the mediation test, Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on Tourism Industry Worker Performance through Employee Engagement. Fun Workplace has a significant positive effect on Tourism Industry Worker Performance through Employee Engagement.

Keywords: *Authentic Leadership, Fun Workplace, Workforce Performance, Employee Engagement*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh Kepemimpinan Otentik dan Tempat Kerja Yang Menyenangkan terhadap Kinerja Tenaga Kerja Industri Pariwisata, dengan mempertimbangkan peran Keterlibatan Karyawan sebagai mediator. Lokasi penelitian dilakukan di sebuah daerah tertentu. Sampel yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini sebanyak 60 responden. Data akan dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik seperti analisis jalur untuk menguji pengaruh variabel independen terhadap variabel dependen melalui mediator. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berdasarkan pengujian langsung, Kepemimpinan Otentik berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap Keterlibatan Karyawan. Kepemimpinan Otentik berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap Kinerja Tenaga Kerja Industri Pariwisata. Keterlibatan Karyawan berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap Kinerja Tenaga Kerja Industri Pariwisata. Tempat Kerja Yang Menyenangkan berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap Keterlibatan Karyawan. Tempat Kerja Yang Menyenangkan berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap Kinerja Tenaga Kerja Industri Pariwisata. Berdasarkan hasil uji mediasi, Kepemimpinan Otentik berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap Kinerja Tenaga Kerja Industri Pariwisata melalui Keterlibatan Karyawan. Tempat Kerja Yang Menyenangkan berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap Kinerja Tenaga Kerja Industri Pariwisata melalui Keterlibatan Karyawan.

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Kata kunci: *Kepemimpinan Otentik, Kerja Menyenangkan, Kinerja Pekerja, Keterlibatan Karyawan.*

INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the cornerstone of organizational success, driving the effective utilization of resources to achieve competitive advantages in sectors like tourism. In Lau Gumba Village, Berastagi District, a skilled workforce is vital for advancing the tourism industry, which significantly contributes to local economic growth. High-quality human resources enhance service delivery, ensuring visitor satisfaction and regional development (Colquitt et al., 2015; Engeset et al., 2016). Effective management of these resources is critical in today's competitive landscape, where organizations, including those in rural tourism, face increasing pressure to perform (Amsari & Husna, 2022; Paramesta et al., 2023). By fostering a competent and motivated workforce, organizations can align their operations with their vision and mission, strengthening their role in community development.

The tourism sector is a key driver of labor absorption, supporting sustainable economic development in developing regions like Lau Gumba Village. According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 13 of 2003, labor includes individuals aged 15–64 years capable of producing goods or services when opportunities arise. Tourism creates jobs, promotes economic equity, and enhances community welfare, but it demands a workforce that is both skilled and engaged (Stacey, 2015; Arsyad, 2019). Leaders and employees must work collaboratively to deliver exceptional tourism experiences, aligning individual efforts with broader organizational and community goals (Hurriyati et al., 2020; Ernanda et al., 2022; Ritonga et al., 2024). This synergy is essential for sustaining tourism's economic and social contributions, particularly in rural settings where resources may be limited.

Organizational performance depends on individual and collective efforts, influenced by leadership styles and workplace environments (Silaen et al., 2021; Agustim & Ratna, 2024). Authentic leadership (AL), defined by self-awareness and ethical behavior, fosters trust and motivates employees to contribute to organizational goals. Similarly, a fun workplace, characterized by joy and comfort, enhances productivity and reduces workplace stress, creating a positive organizational climate (Eller, 2014; Abbas et al., 2025). Employee engagement, reflecting workers' emotional and cognitive commitment, is critical for high performance in tourism, where service quality directly impacts visitor experiences. Engaged employees channel their energy into achieving organizational objectives, driving success and stability (Sims, 2016; Jain & Ansari, 2018). However, the interplay of these factors in rural tourism contexts remains underexplored, necessitating further research (Lusiana & Andamari, 2020).

The research gap lies in the limited exploration of how authentic leadership and fun workplace, mediated by employee engagement, enhance tourism workforce performance in rural settings like Lau Gumba Village. Han et al. (2016) and Takrim et al. (2025) stated that a fun workplace reduces stress and improves health, thereby boosting performance, but her research focused on urban corporate environments, not rural tourism. Walumbwa et al. (2008) highlighted authentic leadership's role in promoting positive behaviors, yet their studies did not examine its mediating effects through employee engagement in tourism contexts. Kamalan and Sutha (2017) noted that fun workplace activities increase productivity, but their work overlooked how these activities foster engagement in community-based tourism. Similarly, Nurwulandari and Djaya (2022) emphasized

employee engagement's role in organizational goal achievement, but their findings were not applied to rural tourism workforce dynamics. This study addresses these gaps by investigating the direct and mediated effects of authentic leadership and fun workplace on workforce performance in Lau Gumba Village.

This study aims to analyze the influence of authentic leadership and fun workplace on the performance of the tourism industry workforce in Lau Gumba Village, with employee engagement as a mediator. By focusing on a rural tourism context, it seeks to provide practical insights for local leaders and organizations to enhance workforce performance. The findings are expected to contribute to sustainable tourism development by highlighting strategies to foster engagement and performance. This research also enriches the discourse on human resource management in tourism, emphasizing the critical roles of leadership and workplace environment in achieving organizational success.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Authentic Leadership on Employee Engagement and Workforce Performance

True authority, according to Walumbwa et al. (2008), is the possession of an individual's personal experience, including thoughts, emotions, needs, preferences, and beliefs—captured through the process of knowing oneself and acting in accordance with that self-awareness. Dewi et al. (2023) define authentic leaders as those who embody positive psychological processes within the context of advancing organizations. Developing self-awareness and positive behaviors among leaders and their teams fosters positive self-growth. An authentic leader can thus be interpreted as someone whose positive mindset and behavior encourage the development of both themselves and their colleagues. Authentic leadership is characterized by behaviors that promote self-awareness, internalized ethical perspectives, balanced processing, and relational transparency in leadership. From these interpretations, true professionalism can be understood as a positive state of judgment and behavioral competence possessed by a leader who understands how they think and act based on personal values and emotions.

Authentic leadership positively influences both employee engagement and workforce performance. Leaders who demonstrate authenticity—transparency, self-awareness, and ethical behavior—foster trust and psychological safety, motivating employees to be more engaged in their roles (Walumbwa et al., 2008). High engagement levels are closely linked to increased motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately, better performance outcomes (Abbas et al., 2025). Additionally, when employees perceive their leaders as genuine, they are more committed and aligned with organizational goals, leading to improved productivity and efficiency (Nendi et al., 2024). Thus, authentic leadership acts as a catalyst for enhancing both engagement and performance.

H1: Authentic Leadership has a significant effect on Employee Engagement.

H2: Authentic Leadership has a significant effect on Workforce Performance.

Fun Workplace on Employee Engagement and Workforce Performance

Creating a pleasant workplace plays an essential role in improving efficiency, loyalty, and employee commitment. A Fun Workplace (FW) refers to an environment designed to foster enjoyment and comfort in performing tasks, ultimately enhancing employee performance. It is characterized by feelings of comfort and participation in enjoyable activities (Fisher, 2010; Abbas et al., 2025). FW involves social, interpersonal, recreational, and enjoyable task-related activities that provide entertainment and pleasure for individuals (Takrim et al., 2025).

This aligns with Kamalan and Sutha's (2017) view that workplace fun does not necessarily involve humorous tasks, but includes any activities that contribute to a positive atmosphere. Such activities encourage, support, and promote enjoyment in the workplace, positively influencing employee attitudes and productivity at both individual and group levels.

A fun workplace enhances employee engagement and performance by creating a positive emotional climate and encouraging active involvement. Enjoyable work activities boost motivation, lower stress, and build social bonds, increasing task engagement (Fisher, 2010; Jain & Ansari, 2018). Fun environments also foster creativity and team cohesion, improving performance outcomes (Han et al., 2016; Kamalan & Sutha, 2017). As noted by Abbas et al. (2025), emotional enjoyment at work supports organizational success by enhancing performance. When employees feel emotionally fulfilled and enjoy their work setting, they show greater commitment and productivity, leading to improved engagement and overall performance.

H3: Fun Workplace has a significant effect on Employee Engagement.

H4: Fun Workplace has a significant effect on Workforce Performance.

Employee Engagement on Workforce Performance

Employee engagement (EE) is a crucial factor in achieving the goals of a company or organization. This aligns with Nendi et al. (2024), who state that employee engagement refers to an individual's willingness to channel all their energy into persistent effort and hard work to achieve the company's predetermined goals. Similarly, Ospina (2019) and Faadhilah et al. (2025) define employee engagement as the extent to which an individual contributes cognitive resources (such as expectations toward the company, supervisor, or workplace conditions), emotional resources (feelings toward their supervisor and company), and physical effort (energy expended in performing their job) to their work. According to Amah and Ahiauzu (2013), workers who feel engaged in their tasks are more enthusiastic and committed to achieving the organization's goals.

Employee engagement significantly influences workforce performance by fostering a deeper emotional and psychological connection between employees and their work. Engaged employees tend to be more motivated, focused, and committed, resulting in improved job performance and organizational outcomes (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013; Jain & Ansari, 2018). Engagement also strengthens communication, teamwork, and innovation, further enhancing productivity (Faadhilah et al., 2025). According to Abbas et al. (2025), emotional involvement and enthusiasm at work are key to achieving high employee performance and organizational success. Moreover, Nendi et al. (2024) emphasize that engagement programs can increase employee morale and drive, positively impacting performance and aligning individual efforts with organizational goals.

H5: Employee Engagement has a significant effect on Workforce Performance.

Workforce Performance as a Mediator

Workforce performance, refers to the quality and quantity of individual and team outputs in achieving tourism-related organizational goals (Hamdi et al., 2024). In Lau Gumba Village, where tourism drives the local economy, strong workforce performance is crucial for sustaining visitor satisfaction and promoting regional development. According to Jain and Ansari (2018), high performance is closely tied to employee engagement, as engaged employees are more aligned with organizational goals and contribute to improved productivity and service quality. Key influencing factors include leadership style and workplace environment. Authentic leadership, characterized by transparency and integrity, fosters trust and motivation, thereby enhancing workforce contributions to tourism objectives (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Additionally, Nurwulandari and Djaya (2022) emphasize that engaged employees are more committed to tasks that improve visitor experiences. In this context, engagement mediates the influence of leadership and workplace conditions on performance. For instance, a fun workplace not only reduces stress but also enhances enthusiasm and creativity, leading to improved service outcomes (Purnomo & Solihin, 2023). Han et al. (2016) and Abbas et al. (2025) also note that a positive emotional climate in the workplace fosters employee satisfaction and productivity. Therefore, integrating authentic leadership

and a fun work environment is essential to elevate workforce performance, ensuring that tourism activities contribute meaningfully to local cultural enrichment and economic sustainability (Nendi et al., 2024).

H6: Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect of Workforce Performance through Employee Engagement.

H7: Fun Workplace has a significant positive effect of Workforce Performance through Employee Engagement.

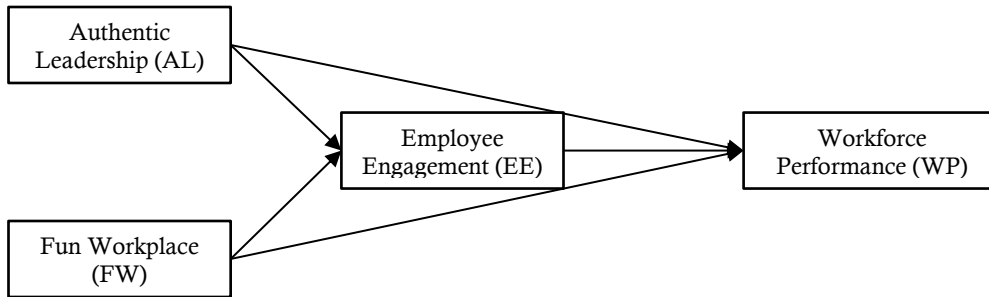


Figure 1. Research Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationships between authentic leadership (AL), fun workplace (FW), employee engagement (EE), and workforce performance (WP) in the tourism industry of Lau Gumba Village. Figure 1 depicts AL and FW as independent variables influencing WP directly and indirectly through EE as a mediator. Arrows indicate direct paths from AL and FW to EE and WP, as well as indirect paths through EE to WP, reflecting the mediating role of engagement. This framework is grounded in the theoretical foundations of leadership, workplace environment, and engagement, aiming to explain how these factors enhance tourism workforce performance. To guide the investigation, the study proposes hypotheses based on the relationships depicted in the framework. These hypotheses test the direct and mediated effects of AL and FW on WP through EE, drawing from the theoretical and empirical insights discussed.

RESEARCH METHOD

Quantitative research, according to Sugiyono (2019), is a research method based on positivist reasoning and meets scientific standards in a concrete, objective, measurable, rational, and systematic manner. This method aims to test predetermined hypotheses applied to specific populations and samples, using research instruments for data collection and statistical or quantitative data analysis. Sugiyono (2018) further explains that explanatory research seeks to clarify the position and influence among variables, aiming to test hypotheses and understand the relationships and effects between independent and dependent variables. This study employs a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, which aims to test hypotheses, construct facts, demonstrate relationships between variables, provide statistical descriptions, and formulate conclusions about the influence among variables.

The population in this study was the tourism industry workforce in Lau Gumba Village, Berastagi, totaling 60 people. Based on Arikunto (2013), if the population is less than 100 people, the entire population can be used as a sample. Therefore, this study uses 100% of the population, which is 60 respondents. Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with SmartPLS 4 software. PLS, a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique, offers flexibility in connecting theory to data, allows path analysis involving latent variables, and is well suited for social science research (Ghozali, 2013). Unlike covariance-based SEM, PLS does not require large samples or multivariate normal distributions and accommodates a variety of measurement scales such as ordinal and interval. This method is powerful for analyzing

relationships between latent variables, confirming hypotheses, and predicting outcomes (Shermukhamedov, 2019).

In this study, four latent variables were modeled using a second-order reflective factor approach, where the construct affects its indicators. The repeated indicator approach, also known as the hierarchical component model, was applied to estimate the model using the standard PLS algorithm, despite the repetition of indicators. PLS was chosen because of its ability to handle complex models with reflective constructs and its predictive power in testing the direct and mediated effects of authentic leadership and fun workplace on workforce performance through employee engagement (Nelfiyonna, 2023).

RESULTS

A total of 60 respondents participated in this study, all of whom were workers in the tourism industry located in Lau Gumba Village, Berastagi District. The following presents the results of a descriptive analysis of the respondents' characteristics based on gender and age.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Respondents

Characteristic		Sum	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	45.0
	Female	33	55.0
Age	21-30 years old	11	18.3
	31-40 years old	27	45.0
	41-50 years old	17	28.3
	>50 years old	5	8.3

Based on Table 1, there were 27 male respondents (45.0%) and 33 female respondents (55.0%). Regarding age, 11 respondents (18.3%) were between 20-30 years old, 27 respondents (45.0%) were between 31-40 years old, 17 respondents (28.3%) were between 41-50 years old, and 5 respondents (8.3%) were older than 50 years.

The estimated model test was conducted by evaluating the loading factor value of each indicator against its construct. For confirmatory research, the loading factor threshold used is 0.7, whereas for exploratory research, the threshold is 0.6, and for development research, it is 0.5. Since this study is development research, the loading factor threshold applied is 0.5. The following are the results of the PLS model estimation.

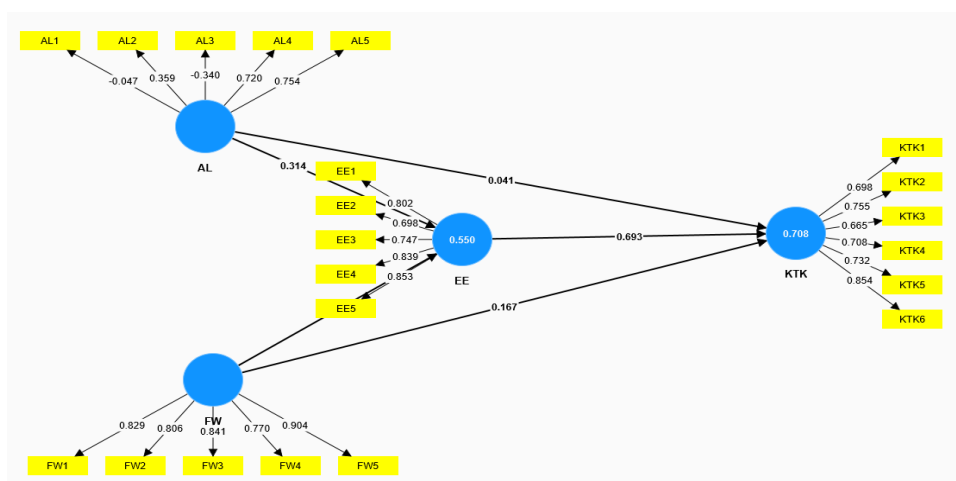


Figure 1. Estimated PLS Model Phase 1

Based on Figure 2, all indicators with a loading factor below 0.5 must be eliminated. The eliminated indicators are AL1, AL2, and AL3. The revised model is shown in Figure 3: Estimated PLS Model (Phase 2).

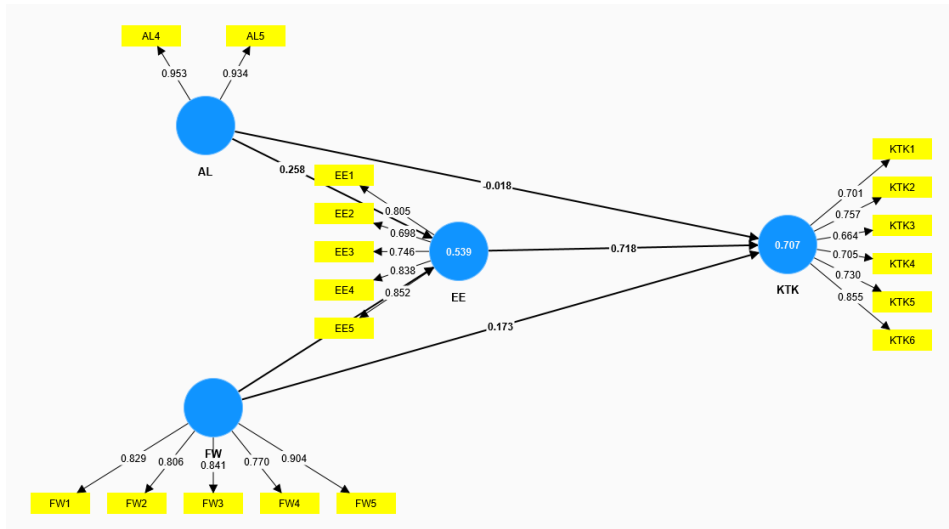


Figure 2. Estimated PLS Model Phase 2

Based on Figure 3, after undergoing several processes, the investigation demonstrates that the model has met the necessary prerequisites. In addition to evaluating the loading factor value of each indicator, convergent validity is also assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of each construct. The PLS model is deemed to have met convergent validity if the AVE value of each construct is greater than 0.5. The AVE values for each construct are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Value

Variable	Value
Authentic Leadership	0.890
Employee Engagement	0.624
Fun Workplace	0.691
Workforce Performance	0.544

Based on the results of the PLS analysis in Table 2, the AVE value of all constructs, both in terms of indicators and variables, exceeds 0.5. This indicates that all indicators in each construct have met the required convergent validity criteria. Discriminant validity is assessed to ensure that each construct of the latent variables is distinct from the others. The model demonstrates good discriminant validity if the square root of the AVE for each exogenous construct is greater than the correlation between that construct and any other constructs. The results of the discriminant validity test are presented as follows.

Table 3. Discriminatory Validity

Variable	Authentic Leadership	Employee Engagement	Fun Workplace	Workforce Performance
Authentic Leadership				
Employee Engagement	0.451			
Fun Workplace	0.252	0.791		
Workforce Performance	0.358	0.978	0.776	

The results in Table 3 show that all constructs have a square root value of AVE that is higher than the correlation values with other latent constructs. This indicates that the model has met the criteria for discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is assessed to ensure that each construct of a latent variable is distinct from the others. A model demonstrates good discriminant validity when the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds the correlations between that construct and other constructs. The results of the discriminant validity test are presented as follows.

Table 4. Composite Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Authentic Leadership	0.878	0.942
Employee Engagement	0.847	0.892
Fun Workplace	0.887	0.918
Workforce Performance	0.831	0.877

The results of the reliability test in Table 4 show that all constructs have a composite reliability value greater than 0.7 and a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7, indicating that all constructs meet the required reliability threshold. The inner model test includes the evaluation of the significance of both direct and indirect effects of each exogenous variable on the endogenous variable. These tests are used to examine the research hypotheses. In Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis, an independent variable is considered to have no significant influence on the dependent variable if the p-value is greater than 0.05. Conversely, an independent variable is deemed to have a significant influence if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 (Hair et al., 2019).

The direct effect of significance test is employed to assess the impact of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. From the significance test results, the direction of the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables can also be determined. If the original value of the path coefficient is positive, it indicates a positive or unidirectional effect. On the other hand, if the original value is negative, it indicates a negative or inverse effect of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable. The results of the model estimation, which serve as the basis for hypothesis testing in this study, are presented in the following figure.

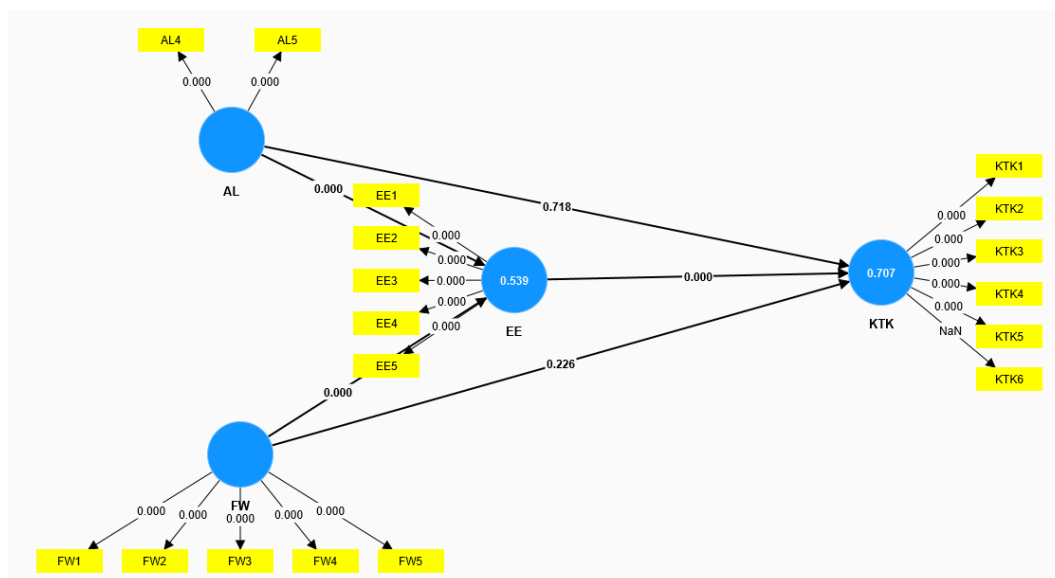


Figure 3. Estimation of PLS Model Inner Testing

Based on the results of the PLS model estimation with the bootstrapping technique in Figure 4, the direct path that shows the influence of the Authentic Leadership and Fun Workplace variables on the Tourism Industry Workforce Performance is significant as well as the indirect path that connects the Authentic Leadership and Fun Workplace variables to the Tourism Industry Workforce Performance by mediated by Employee Engagement. The results of this significance test can be seen in Table 5. Based on Table 5, the results show that authentic leadership significantly influences employee engagement, with a p-value of 0.000, T-value of 4.742, and a positive path coefficient of 0.258. Authentic leadership also has a significant positive impact on workforce performance in the tourism industry of Lau Gumba Village, with a p-value of 0.005, T-

value of 2.836, and a path coefficient of 0.168. Additionally, employee engagement significantly affects workforce performance, evidenced by a p-value of 0.000, T-value of 6.479, and a high path coefficient of 0.718. Lastly, a fun workplace also significantly impacts employee engagement, with a p-value of 0.000, T-value of 7.066, and a path coefficient of 0.633. These findings confirm that authentic leadership and a fun workplace positively contribute to workforce performance through increased employee engagement in Lau Gumba Village, Berastagi.

Table 5. Direct Effect

Test	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
AL -> EE	0.258	4.742	0.000
AL -> WP	0.168	2.836	0.005
EE -> WP	0.718	6.479	0.000
FW -> EE	0.633	7.066	0.000
FW -> WP	0.628	5.547	0.000

Table 6. Indirect Effect

Test	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
AL -> EE -> WP	0.185	3.833	0.000
FW -> EE -> WP	0.455	4.201	0.000

Based on Table 6, the results show that the p-value for the indirect effect of True Leadership on the Performance of the Tourism Industry Workforce through Employee Engagement is 0.000, with a T-statistic of 3.833 and a positive path coefficient of 0.185. Since the T-statistic exceeds the critical value of 1.96 and the path coefficient is positive, it can be concluded that True Leadership has a significant positive effect on the Performance of the Tourism Industry Workforce through Employee Engagement in Lau Gumba Town, Berastagi District. Similarly, the p-value for the indirect effect of Fun Work Environment on Tourism Industry Workforce Performance through Employee Engagement is 0.000, with a T-statistic of 4.201 and a positive path coefficient of 0.455. Given the T-statistic is greater than 1.96 and the positive path coefficient, it can be concluded that Fun Work Environment has a significant positive effect on the Performance of Tourism Industry Employees through Employee Engagement in Lau Gumba Town, Berastagi District.

DISCUSSION

This study confirms that authentic leadership significantly enhances employee engagement among tourism industry workers in Lau Gumba Village, Berastagi District. Authentic leaders, characterized by self-awareness and ethical behavior, foster a sense of trust and motivation, encouraging workers to invest emotionally and cognitively in their roles (Walumbwa et al., 2008). This finding aligns with Abror (2020), who noted that leadership-driven motivation boosts employee commitment. In the tourism context, where interpersonal interactions are critical, authentic leadership cultivates a workforce that is more dedicated to delivering exceptional visitor experiences, thereby strengthening organizational outcomes. Authentic leadership also directly improves workforce performance in Lau Gumba Village's tourism sector. By promoting transparency and aligning actions with organizational values, authentic leaders inspire workers to achieve higher productivity and service quality. This result supports Jain and Ansari (2018), who argue that leadership influences individual performance by fostering organizational citizenship behaviors. In rural tourism settings, where resources may be limited, such leadership ensures workers are motivated to overcome challenges, contributing to the region's economic and cultural vitality.

Employee engagement significantly drives workforce performance, as engaged workers exhibit greater commitment to organizational goals. This finding is consistent with Nurwulandari and Djaya (2022), who emphasize that engagement leads to superior task performance. In Lau Gumba Village, engaged employees deliver memorable visitor

experiences, enhancing the tourism industry's reputation. Engagement acts as a critical link, amplifying the impact of leadership and workplace conditions on performance outcomes. A fun workplace significantly boosts employee engagement by creating a positive and enjoyable work environment. As Nurdiniati et al. (2024) suggest, fun workplaces reduce stress and increase motivation, fostering a sense of belonging among workers. In tourism, where emotional labor is prevalent, a fun workplace encourages employees to engage more deeply with their roles, aligning with Kamalan and Sutha (2017), who highlight the role of pleasant environments in enhancing commitment. Similarly, a fun workplace directly enhances workforce performance in Lau Gumba Village. By fostering enthusiasm and reducing workplace stress, fun environments enable workers to perform tasks more effectively, as supported by Fitriyah et al. (2024). This is particularly relevant in tourism, where a positive demeanor among workers translates into better service quality, attracting more visitors and supporting local economic growth.

The mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between authentic leadership and workforce performance is a key finding. Engaged employees channel the motivation inspired by authentic leaders into improved performance, aligning with Noorfallah et al., (2024), who notes that engagement translates leadership efforts into tangible outcomes. This mediation underscores the importance of fostering engagement to maximize leadership's impact in rural tourism contexts. Likewise, employee engagement mediates the relationship between a fun workplace and workforce performance. A fun workplace enhances engagement, which in turn drives higher performance, as workers feel more connected to their roles (Jain & Ansari, 2018). This finding highlights the synergy between a positive work environment and engagement in achieving superior tourism outcomes in Lau Gumba Village. The findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they enrich human resource management literature by showing employee engagement mediates the relationship between authentic leadership, fun workplace, and workforce performance in rural tourism, extending Walumbwa et al. (2008). Practically, tourism organizations in Lau Gumba Village should develop authentic leadership through training and implement fun workplace initiatives to boost engagement and performance. These efforts can enhance service quality, visitor satisfaction, and support sustainable tourism, contributing to regional economic and social development.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the influence of authentic leadership and fun workplace on the performance of the tourism industry workforce in Lau Gumba Village, with employee engagement as a mediator. The findings confirm that authentic leadership significantly enhances employee engagement and directly improves workforce performance by fostering trust and motivation. Similarly, a fun workplace significantly boosts engagement and performance by creating a positive and enjoyable environment. Employee engagement plays a critical mediating role, amplifying the effects of both authentic leadership and fun workplace on workforce performance, as engaged workers deliver superior service quality and visitor experiences. These results demonstrate that leadership and workplace conditions are pivotal in driving tourism workforce performance in rural settings, achieving the study's objective of understanding these dynamics in Lau Gumba Village.

The findings offer theoretical and practical implications while acknowledging limitations and opportunities for future research. Theoretically, this study enriches human resource management literature by validating the mediating role of employee engagement in rural tourism contexts, extending prior work. Practically, tourism organizations should implement leadership training to cultivate authentic leadership and design fun workplace initiatives to enhance engagement and performance, supporting sustainable tourism development. However, the study's limitation lies in its small sample size, which may limit generalizability. Future research should involve larger, diverse samples across multiple rural tourism destinations and explore additional mediators, such as job

satisfaction or organizational culture, to deepen understanding of workforce performance dynamics.

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