

TRAIT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, WORK ENGAGEMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate and assess how work engagement and trait emotional intelligence influence job satisfaction among healthcare workers at RSUD Kota Kendari, with psychological empowerment acting as a mediating variable. The study was conducted on 186 healthcare workers at RSUD Kota Kendari, including nurses and midwives. Data collection was carried out through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents. The data analysis technique used was the structural equation model - partial least square (SEM-PLS). The results of the data analysis show that work engagement has a significant positive impact on both psychological empowerment and job satisfaction of healthcare workers. Meanwhile, trait emotional intelligence positively influences psychological empowerment but does not affect job satisfaction. Furthermore, psychological empowerment was found to have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction. Psychological empowerment only plays a mediating role in the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction of healthcare workers, not in the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Work Engagement; Trait Emotional Intelligence; Psychological Empowerment; Job Satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Creating a conducive work environment has become a priority for organizations to improve employee health and well-being (Di Fabio, 2017). Mérida-López et al. (2019) stated that job satisfaction is often considered a key indicator of personal well-being. Weiss (2002) defines job satisfaction as a positive and pleasant state of mind that a person has about their job, consisting of affective and cognitive components. Affective job satisfaction and cognitive job satisfaction are considered positive experiences at work, related to work-related well-being.

Khany & Tazik (2015) suggested that existing dispositional factors (e.g., personality traits) and external situational factors (e.g., job characteristics) predict job satisfaction. This study draws on the Affective Events Theory (AET) by Weiss & Cropanzano (1996) to examine the effect of trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) on job satisfaction. AET proposes that an individual's emotions are shaped by events in their environment. In the work context, employees' job satisfaction is influenced by positive and negative experiences at work. Trait EI, a personality trait, refers to an individual's ability to interpret, understand, and manage their own and others' emotions. Research has shown a positive correlation between trait EI and job satisfaction. This is likely because individuals with high trait EI are better able to cope with work challenges and maintain a positive outlook, even in difficult situations.

In addition to Trait EI, another factor that influences job satisfaction is employee work engagement. In recent years, work engagement has been increasingly viewed as an important concept in human resource management research (Bakker & Demerouti,

2016). Work engagement reflects a positive and satisfying work attitude characterized by passion, dedication, and full involvement.

Research consistently shows that engaged employees demonstrate superior work engagement and performance, making them critical to organizational competitiveness (Albrecht et al., 2015). Furthermore, such employees report higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and general well-being, both physically and psychologically (García-Sierra et al., 2015). Therefore, work engagement is widely recognized as an important predictor of work environment quality.

This study aims to explore the underlying mechanisms between trait EI and work engagement and job satisfaction by examining the mediating role of psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment refers to the belief in control over work and the ability to make an impact. Based on this background, this study aims to determine the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the influence of Trait EI and work engagement on job satisfaction of health workers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Trait Emotional Intelligence

In recent years, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has become a highly regarded aspect. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to process emotional information accurately and use that information not only to shape their own thinking but also to regulate emotions, both their own and those of others (Mayer & Salovey, 1995).

According to Gong et al. (2020), there are two types of EI known, namely trait EI and ability EI. Ability EI focuses on core skills in recognizing, processing, and using emotion-related information, measured through a maximum performance test. Meanwhile, trait EI reflects an individual's perception of their emotions, measured using a self-report questionnaire (Petrides & Furnham, 2001), and reflects self-responses regarding emotions (Petrides et al., 2007). Schutte et al. (2009) support the view that ability EI and trait EI complement each other in adaptive emotional functioning.

People with high levels of trait EI tend to have more satisfying interpersonal relationships and exhibit more positive social behaviors (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2007). A large number of studies have shown that trait EI plays an important and significant role in work well-being as found by Clarke & Mahadi (2017) in the insurance industry in Malaysia and Sun et al., (2017) in elementary school teachers in China. In addition, Miao et al. (2016) have conducted a meta-analysis study and found a positive correlation between EI and job satisfaction.

B. Work Engagement

The concept of job engagement has become increasingly important for both academics and human resource managers in an organization. According to Bakker & Demerouti (2016), some consequences of job engagement are increased productivity, profitability, employee retention in the company can be highlighted. Job engagement also encourages increased well-being and health of workers (W. Schaufeli, 2017). In addition, taking the “extra step” is one of the key behaviors exhibited by engaged employees.

Job engagement has been studied primarily from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (W. Schaufeli, 2017), which further proposes that job resources and job demands initiate two independent psychological processes, namely the health damage process related to burnout and job demands; and the motivation or engagement process related to job and personal resources. The presence of high personal and job resources results in workplace engagement, which in turn is related to important consequences for employees (e.g., job satisfaction, psychological well-being) and for the organization (e.g., job involvement, organizational commitment, intention to remain in the organization) (García-Sierra et al., 2015). According to the JD-R model, job engagement plays a mediating role between personal and job resources and positive outcomes at work.

Several studies have shown that job engagement is related to positive outcomes (Caesens et al., 2014). Job engagement influences positive work attitudes such as job satisfaction (Moura et al., 2014; Orgambidez & Extremera, 2020). Studies have also noted that job engagement serves as a mediator between character and organizational outcomes, including job performance, career satisfaction, and employment (Jawahar & Liu, 2016; Ngo & Li, 2017).

C. Psychological Empowerment

The concept of psychological empowerment has evolved over the years and is defined as a process by which individuals become empowered (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). It involves interpersonal perceptions of empowerment as well as the individual's interaction with the surrounding environment (Zimmerman, 1995).

Furthermore, psychological empowerment represents an individual's cognitive process that gives rise to feelings of interpersonal empowerment. Psychological empowerment is a representation of intrinsic task motivational constructs, encompassing four constructs that describe personal awareness: competence, meaning, self-determination, and impact while also indicating cognitive focus in an individual's work role (Spreitzer, 1995). This reflects the importance of motivational resources that encourage employees' active participation in their tasks (Ugwu et al., 2014).

Previous research results show a positive impact of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction levels (Nikpour, 2018; Khalil & Yozgat, 2021). In the context of meta-analysis, empowerment emerged as a major driver of work success (such as job satisfaction and innovation) (Seibert et al., 2011). For followers who feel psychologically empowered, they will find fulfillment of core needs through their work, and achieve greater satisfaction. It is noted from research that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between the work environment and the results achieved (Schermuly et al., 2013; Fong & Snape, 2015).

Previous studies have shown that individual character plays a key role in aspects of psychological empowerment, such as core self-assessment (Seibert et al., 2011) and self-esteem (Wang et al., 2013). According to Gong et al. (2020), trait EI is one of the determining factors for psychological empowerment. In addition to trait EI, work engagement may also be another factor in triggering psychological empowerment.

Although previous studies have shown that the positive influence of trait EI and work engagement on job satisfaction has been proven, the more detailed mechanism of this relationship is still unclear. Therefore, our study focuses on exploring the impact of

psychological empowerment on this mechanism in one study, with an emotional perspective based on Affective Events Theory (H. Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

AET helps explain how high trait EI in employees can affect job satisfaction levels. AET suggests that individual experiences of their jobs can help or hurt their positive or negative experiences, so our research focuses on motivation and positive experiences (psychological empowerment) as factors that can explain the influence of trait EI on their employees' job satisfaction. Therefore, the aspects of motivation and positive experiences are important in AET because they affect work attitudes, where positive experiences, such as psychological empowerment, mediate between trait EI and work outcomes (such as job satisfaction). Employees who have high trait EI are expected to increase their perceptions of psychological empowerment which then helps to positively influence job satisfaction.

This study is a development of the research conducted by Gong et al. (2020) which examined the effect of trait EI on job satisfaction with work engagement and psychological empowerment as mediating variables. Gong et al. (2020) found that high trait EI can improve well-being in the workplace through the chain mediating effect of "psychological empowerment–work engagement". We developed the research of Gong et al. (2020) by making work engagement an exogenous variable that influences the psychological empowerment variable.

D. Hypothesis

The constructs or models in this study are divided into two, namely the formative variable model (changes in one or more indicators/dimensions will cause changes in the construct) and the reflective model (changes in the construct cause changes in the indicators/dimensions). It is known that the variables included in the formative model are job satisfaction variables, organizational commitment and performance, while those included in the reflective variables are the Psychological Empowerment variables and leadership style. As illustrated in the following model:

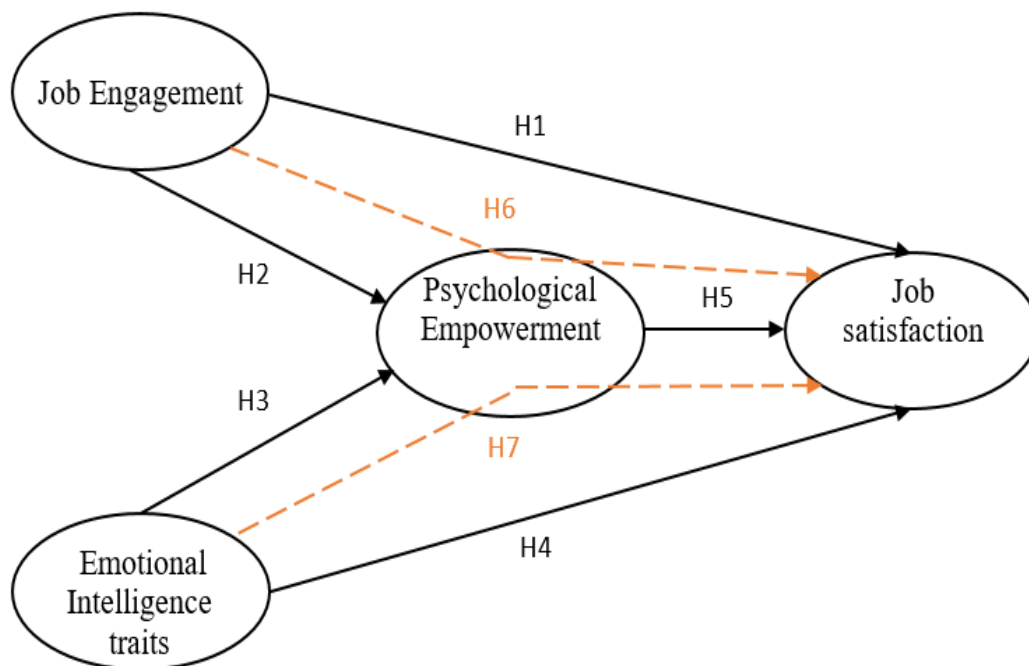


Figure 1: Research Concept Framework

- H1: Job Involvement has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.
- H2: Work Involvement has a positive effect on Psychological Empowerment.
- H3: Emotional Intelligence traits have a positive influence on Job Satisfaction.
- H4: Emotional Intelligence traits have a positive influence on Psychological Empowerment.
- H5: Psychological Empowerment has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.
- H6: Psychological Empowerment acts as a mediating variable in the influence of Work Involvement on Job Satisfaction.
- H7: Psychological Empowerment acts as a mediating variable in the influence of Emotional Intelligence Traits on Job Satisfaction.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is an explanatory research, which is a research that aims to obtain an explanation of the influence (causality) between variables through hypothesis testing. This research was conducted at the Kendari City Regional General Hospital (RSUD). The population in this study were all nurses and midwives working at the Kendari City Hospital, totaling 347 employees. The number of samples was determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 5%, resulting in 186 research samples. Sampling was done using a probability sampling technique, namely proportional random sampling.

IV. RESULTS

The next process is to test the research hypothesis consisting of the influence of trait EI on job satisfaction and psychological empowerment, the influence of work engagement on job satisfaction and psychological empowerment, the influence of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction, and the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between trait EI and work engagement on job satisfaction. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in table 1 for direct influence and table 2 for indirect influence (mediation) and in figure 2.

Table 1: Direct Effect Test

	Hypothesis	Koefisien	t-stat	p-value	Information
H1	Trait EI → Job Satisfaction	-0,001	0,012	0,991	Rejected
H2	Trait EI → Psychological Empowerment	0,251	3,013	0,003	Accepted
H3	Work Engagement → Job Satisfaction	0,407	3,327	0,011	Accepted
H4	Work Engagement → Psychological Empowerment	0,661	8,889	0,000	Accepted
H5	Psychological Empowerment → Job Satisfaction	0,330	2,186	0,029	Accepted

Based on table 5, it can be seen that the path coefficient for the influence of trait EI on job satisfaction is -0.001 with a p-value of 0.991 > 0.05. This means that trait EI does not have a direct influence on job satisfaction. This finding indicates that hypothesis 1 which states that trait EI has a significant effect on job satisfaction is rejected. The results of this study illustrate that high trait EI cannot increase job satisfaction of employees at Kendari City Hospital. Increasing trait EI can significantly increase psychological empowerment felt by employees. The coefficient for the influence of trait EI on psychological empowerment has a value of 0.251 with a p-value of 0.003. This

shows that trait EI has a significant positive effect on psychological empowerment. This finding indicates that hypothesis 2 which states that trait EI has a significant effect on psychological empowerment of employees at Kendari City Hospital can be accepted.

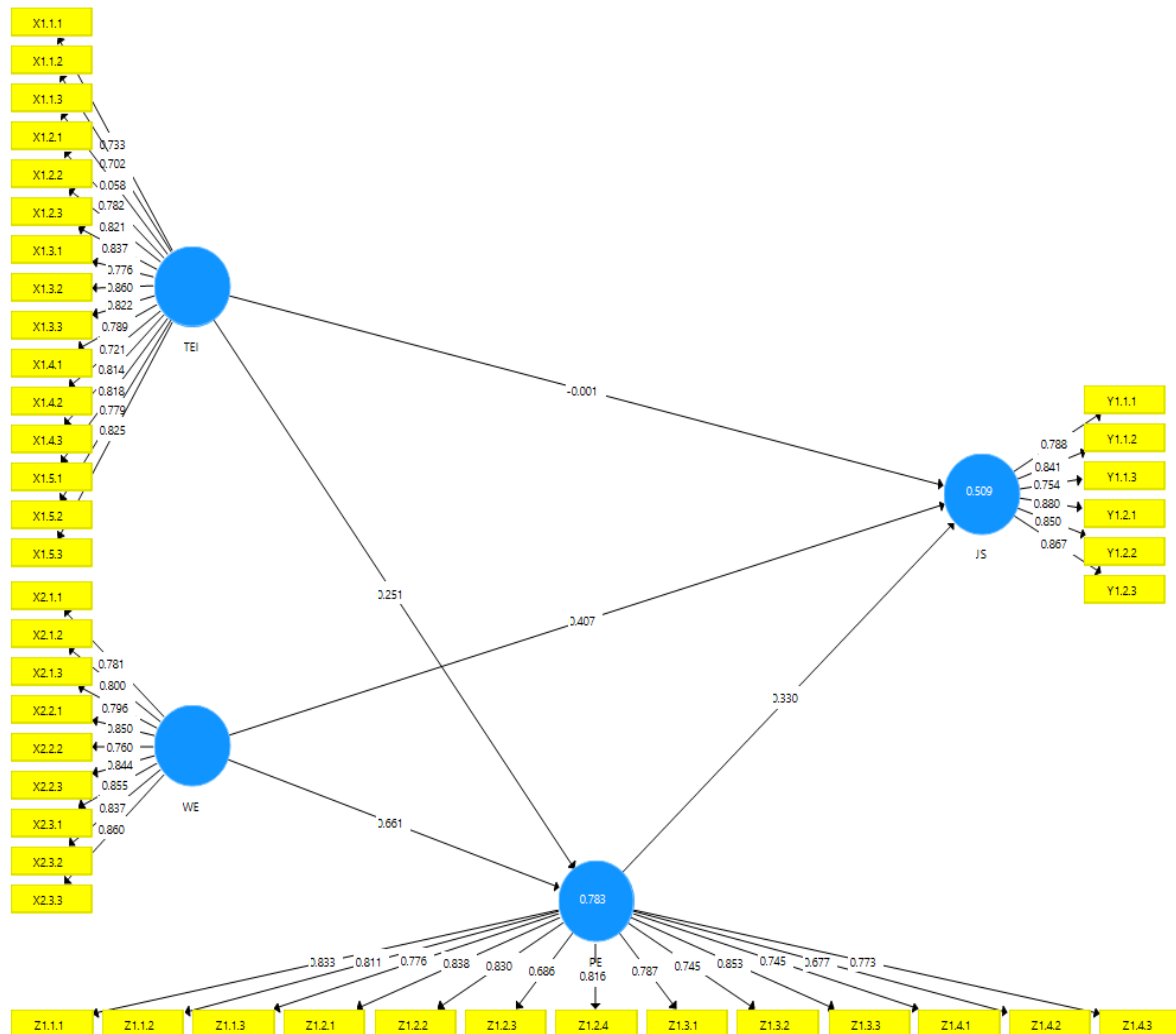


Figure 2: Hypothesis Testing Results

The effect of work engagement on job satisfaction is indicated by a coefficient value of 0.407 with a p-value of 0.011. This means that work engagement has a significant positive effect on employee job satisfaction. This finding indicates that hypothesis 3 which states that work engagement has a significant effect on employee job satisfaction at Kendari City Hospital can be accepted. The path coefficient value between work engagement and psychological empowerment is 0.661 with a p-value of 0.000. This shows that work engagement has a significant positive effect on psychological empowerment. This finding indicates that hypothesis 4 which states that work engagement has a significant effect on psychological empowerment can be accepted. The effect of psychological empowerment on employee job satisfaction is indicated by a coefficient value of 0.330 with a p-value of 0.029. The results of this study indicate that psychological empowerment has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction, so hypothesis 5 which states that psychological empowerment has an effect on job satisfaction can be accepted.

Table 2: Indirect Effect Test (Mediation)

Hypotheses		Koefisien	t-stat	p-value	information
H6	Trait EI → Psychological Empowerment → Job Satisfaction	0,083	1,885	0,060	Rejected
H7	Work Engagement → Psychological Empowerment → Job Satisfaction	0,218	1,996	0,046	Accepted

The results of testing the role of psychological empowerment as a mediator are shown in Table 2. Testing the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between trait EI and job satisfaction is shown by a coefficient value of 0.083 and a p-value of 0.060. This indicates that psychological empowerment has a role as a very weak mediator in the relationship between trait EI and job satisfaction. Because the direct relationship that occurs in trait EI to psychological empowerment and job satisfaction is not significant, and the direct relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction is significant, so psychological empowerment plays a role as a full mediator even though with a very weak effect. Statistically, there is a clear increase in the path value from -0.001 from the direct effect of trait EI on job satisfaction to 0.083 (indirect effect of trait EI on job satisfaction through psychological empowerment). This indicates that psychological empowerment can improve the relationship between trait EI and job satisfaction to be better.

Furthermore, testing the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction is indicated by a coefficient value of 0.218 and a p-value of 0.046. This finding can be interpreted that psychological empowerment also acts as a mediator in the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. The direct effect of work engagement on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction is significant and the direct relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction is also significant, so psychological empowerment acts as a partial mediation. Statistically, there is a decrease in the path value from 0.407 from the direct effect of work engagement on job satisfaction to 0.218 (the indirect effect of work engagement on job satisfaction through psychological empowerment). This indicates that the role of psychological empowerment can actually reduce the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. This means that the direct effect of work engagement on job satisfaction is better than through psychological empowerment mediation.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the hypothesized model and specifically reveal the mediating role of psychological empowerment in relation to trait EI, work engagement, and job satisfaction. This study found that trait EI was unable to influence job satisfaction of employees at Kendari City Hospital. Although trait EI is often associated with increased job satisfaction, the finding that trait EI does not have a significant effect on job satisfaction indicates the complexity of the relationship between these two factors. Theoretically, this could be caused by other factors that also influence job satisfaction, such as the work environment, organizational factors, economic conditions, and individual preferences. In addition, it is possible that the effect of trait EI on job satisfaction can be moderated by other variables, such as type of work, stress level, or organizational culture. In this context, trait EI may not directly result in a significant increase in job satisfaction without considering additional factors that may

influence the interaction between trait EI and job satisfaction. This finding differs from previous research findings. For example, research by Gong et al. (2020) showed that individuals with high trait EI tend to have better performance at work, including higher levels of job satisfaction. Carrillo et al. (2020) also found a positive relationship between trait EI and job satisfaction, with individuals with better trait EI tending to feel more satisfied with their jobs.

Hypothesis testing also found a significant positive effect of trait EI on psychological empowerment. A person's ability to understand, manage, and express emotions in a healthy way can affect the level of psychological empowerment felt by individuals. Individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to be better able to cope with stress, manage conflict, and interact positively with others. This can help increase an individual's sense of self-control, competence, choice, and impact on their work environment. By having good emotional intelligence skills, individuals can feel stronger, more empowered, and have high internal motivation, all of which are important factors in increasing levels of psychological empowerment. The results of this study support the findings of previous studies. Research by Gong et al. (2020) found that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to experience higher levels of psychological empowerment, which is reflected in a sense of autonomy, competence, and a strong connection to their work. Another study by Alotaibi et al. (2020) also supports these findings by showing that trait EI is positively related to an individual's level of psychological empowerment in the workplace. These findings confirm that an individual's ability to manage emotions effectively can contribute significantly to their level of psychological empowerment, which in turn can increase engagement, motivation, and overall work performance.

This study found that work engagement has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction of employees at Kendari City Hospital. When someone is emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally engaged with their work, it often has a positive impact on job satisfaction. The theory underlying this relationship reflects the belief that when someone feels involved and excited about their work, they tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction. Work engagement can strengthen intrinsic motivation, a sense of accomplishment, and deep involvement with work tasks, all of which are important factors in shaping positive perceptions of work and the overall work environment. Previous studies provide strong empirical support for the positive relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. For example, a study by Orgambidez & Extremera (2020) found that high levels of work engagement were significantly associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among employees. Another study by Chan et al. (2020) also supports these findings by showing that high levels of work engagement contribute positively to job satisfaction, and that employees who feel actively involved in their work tend to experience greater job satisfaction. These findings provide consistent empirical evidence that work engagement plays an important role as a predictor in shaping an individual's level of job satisfaction, demonstrating the importance of deep involvement in creating a positive and satisfying work experience.

This study found that work engagement has a significant positive effect on the psychological empowerment of employees at Kendari City Hospital. Work engagement can act as an important predictor in increasing the level of individual psychological empowerment in the workplace. When someone feels a high level of involvement in their work, this can affect their perception of autonomy, competence,

and a strong connection to work. Work engagement tends to strengthen the sense of self-control, intrinsic motivation, and sense of ability in facing challenges and making decisions, which are key elements in the concept of psychological empowerment. Thus, a high level of work engagement can positively contribute to increasing the level of individual psychological empowerment in the work environment. Research conducted by Gong et al. (2020) found that high levels of work engagement were significantly associated with higher levels of psychological empowerment among employees. Another study by Blaique et al. (2022) also supports this finding by showing that employees who feel a high level of involvement in their work tend to have greater levels of psychological empowerment.

Another finding of this study is that psychological empowerment has a positive effect on job satisfaction. This means that when individuals feel a high level of psychological empowerment, they tend to feel greater job satisfaction. This is because psychological empowerment gives individuals a strong sense of autonomy, ability, and involvement in the work environment, which then contributes to increased job satisfaction. By feeling in control of their work, feeling competent in carrying out tasks, and feeling the meaning and impact of their contributions, individuals tend to feel higher satisfaction with their work overall. This finding is consistent with several previous studies. Gong et al. (2020) found that high levels of psychological empowerment were significantly associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among the employees they studied. Another study by Cruz et al. (2021) also supports this finding by showing that high levels of psychological empowerment contribute positively to job satisfaction, and that employees who feel they have control, competence, and meaning in their work tend to feel greater job satisfaction.

The results of the structural equation test found that psychological empowerment failed to act as a mediating variable in the influence of trait EI on job satisfaction of employees at Kendari City Hospital. This finding indicates that psychological empowerment is unable to explain or significantly connect the relationship between trait EI and job satisfaction. This indicates that there are other factors that may influence or moderate the relationship between trait EI, psychological empowerment, and job satisfaction that have not been identified in the context of the study. Therefore, the mediating role of psychological empowerment in connecting trait EI with job satisfaction is not verified, indicating the complexity in the dynamics of the relationship between these psychological factors.

The final finding in this study is that psychological empowerment acts as a mediating variable in the influence of work engagement on job satisfaction of employees of Kendari City Hospital. This finding provides a deep understanding of the complexity of the relationship between work engagement, psychological empowerment, and job satisfaction in the context of the work environment. With psychological empowerment acting as an effective mediator, the individual's internal mechanisms in terms of feeling in control, competent, and involved in their work have been shown to strengthen the positive relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. In addition, the significant direct effect of work engagement on job satisfaction confirms the importance of high levels of engagement in enhancing a satisfying work experience. This finding provides strong empirical evidence of the importance of psychological empowerment as a bridge connecting high levels of work engagement and better job satisfaction, underlining its crucial mediating role in shaping positive and satisfying work experiences for individuals in the workplace.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the hypothesis test as described, it can be concluded that Trait EI has no effect on job satisfaction. Meanwhile, work engagement and psychological empowerment have a positive effect on job satisfaction. Although trait EI does not directly have a significant effect on Job Satisfaction, it has a positive impact on psychological empowerment. This shows that an individual's ability to understand and manage emotions effectively can increase their level of psychological empowerment, which in turn can affect job satisfaction.

In addition, the finding that work engagement has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction and psychological empowerment underscores the importance of an individual's level of involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment to their work in creating a satisfying and empowering work experience. Furthermore, the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction highlights the importance of psychological factors in shaping positive perceptions of work and the overall work environment. In conclusion, these findings underscore the complexity of the relationships between these variables in the workplace and emphasize the importance of developing holistic strategies to enhance employee job satisfaction and engagement through a deeper understanding of the psychological factors involved.

This study still has several limitations that require further in-depth research, especially since the scope of the study is still limited to the variables of trait emotional intelligence, work engagement and psychological empowerment, in relation to job satisfaction. Theoretically and empirically, an employee's job satisfaction is influenced by very complex factors. Therefore, further research is expected to expand this study by adding other relevant variables. To strengthen the findings of this study, this research model can be applied to other research objects or locations. Thus, the results of research on the factors that influence job satisfaction become more complete and varied.

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