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Authentic vs. Servant Leadership and Generation Z Employee Engagement in the Indonesian Hospitality Industry: A JD-R and SET Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of authentic leadership and servant leadership on employee engagement among Generation Z employees in the Indonesian hospitality sector, with job satisfaction serving as a mediating mechanism. Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model and Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study argues that authentic leadership functions as a psychological job resource, while servant leadership operates as a social and developmental resource that shapes employees' work attitudes. A purposive sample of 206 frontline Generation Z hospitality employees in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, was collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire. The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with bootstrapping techniques. The results indicate that authentic leadership positively affects employee engagement ($\beta = 0.399$, $t = 2.943$, $p = 0.003$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.433$, $t = 2.769$, $p = 0.006$). Servant leadership significantly affects job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.500$, $t = 3.172$, $p = 0.002$), but its direct effect on employee engagement is not significant ($\beta = 0.212$, $t = 1.507$, $p = 0.132$). Job satisfaction also positively influences employee engagement ($\beta = 0.335$, $t = 2.637$, $p = 0.008$) and mediates the relationships between both leadership styles and employee engagement. These findings suggest that authentic leadership directly strengthens employee engagement, whereas servant leadership enhances engagement primarily through increased job satisfaction. This study contributes to the leadership and hospitality literature by clarifying the distinct motivational pathways through which values-based leadership supports Generation Z employee engagement.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Servant Leadership, Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Generation Z.

JEL Code: M12, M54, J24, L83, O15

I. Introduction

Despite the growing importance of Generation Z (Gen Z) employees in the hospitality workforce, empirical evidence regarding how leadership styles shape employee engagement remains limited, particularly in emerging-market contexts such as Indonesia (Venice et al., 2025). Previous studies in the hospitality sector have examined leadership, job satisfaction, and employee engagement separately; however, only a limited number of studies have directly compared authentic leadership and servant



leadership within a single model involving Gen Z frontline employees, especially in Indonesia. This limitation is important because Gen Z employees are often characterized as placing strong emphasis on transparency, fairness, meaningful work, and developmental support, all of which may influence how they respond to different leadership behaviors (Seyfi et al., 2024; Sigaeva et al., 2022). Another unresolved issue concerns the mechanism through which leadership influences employee engagement. Authentic leadership may foster engagement by strengthening trust, psychological safety, and consistency between leaders' words and actions, whereas servant leadership may influence employees more indirectly by improving job satisfaction through support, empowerment, and concern for employee well-being (Liden et al., 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2008). However, empirical evidence explaining whether job satisfaction mediates the relationship between authentic leadership, servant leadership, and employee engagement remains limited, particularly in Indonesian hospitality settings. Therefore, the central research problem of this study is whether authentic leadership and servant leadership influence Gen Z employee engagement directly, indirectly through job satisfaction, or through different motivational and relational pathways. Employee engagement refers to a persistent and positive work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is widely regarded as a strategic asset for organizations because it influences employees' motivation and performance-oriented behaviors. In service-intensive environments, engagement is particularly significant, as engaged employees are more likely to sustain high-quality performance during frequent customer interactions, thereby enhancing service consistency and customer experience outcomes (Yee et al., 2010). Employees in hospitality roles are expected to consistently deliver high-quality service by engaging in frequent interpersonal interactions, regulating their emotions, and responding effectively to unpredictable customer demands (Li et al., 2018).

Hospitality work involves frequent guest-facing interactions that require employees to manage emotional labor, maintain service quality, and respond to unpredictable customer needs. These demands can increase emotional strain and reduce employees' ability to remain consistently engaged (C.-J. Wang, 2020). Such pressures have persisted in the post-pandemic period. COVID-19 exacerbated precarity in hospitality work by increasing uncertainty, disrupting income stability, and heightening vulnerability among service employees (Aguar-Quintana et al., 2021; Baum et al., 2020). As a result, maintaining employee engagement remains challenging, as employees must continuously mobilize emotional and cognitive resources to perform effectively in demanding service environments. An additional challenge arises from the evolving composition of the workforce. Gen Z is becoming increasingly represented among hospitality employees, particularly in guest-facing frontline roles, and is often described as having distinct career expectations while being less attracted to working conditions traditionally associated with hospitality work, such as long or irregular working hours and relatively low pay (Goh & Okumus, 2020; Seyfi et al., 2024). Unlike earlier generations, Gen Z employees are often perceived as valuing honesty, authenticity, and meaningful work. They also tend to be more sensitive to leadership inconsistencies, particularly in high-pressure environments (Popaitoon, 2022). Under such conditions, maintaining high levels of engagement among Gen Z employees becomes a critical managerial challenge rather than merely a motivational aspiration. In this context, leadership emerges as a central explanatory factor. Authentic leadership and servant leadership represent two values-based leadership approaches that may be relevant for Gen Z employees, although they may operate through different mechanisms. Authentic leadership emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalized moral perspective, all of which may help employees perceive their leaders as credible and consistent (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In contrast, servant leadership emphasizes follower growth, empowerment, humility, and concern for employee well-being, which may enhance employees' positive evaluations of their work experiences (Liden et al., 2008). Therefore, comparing these two leadership styles is important to determine whether Gen Z hospitality employees respond more strongly to leaders' authenticity and moral consistency or to leaders' support and service-oriented behavior.

Despite these considerations, empirical evidence remains limited in emerging-market contexts such as Indonesia. Indonesia is frequently characterized as a relatively hierarchical and high power-distance cultural context in which authority differentials are widely accepted in organizational life. In such environments,

leadership expectations may also reflect paternalistic tendencies in leader–employee relationships, particularly in organizational settings influenced by Javanese cultural values (Irawanto & Ramsey, 2011; Malik & Santoso, 2022). Against this backdrop, distinguishing between servant leadership and authentic leadership becomes particularly important, as employees may interpret people-centered leadership behaviors differently depending on culturally embedded expectations regarding authority and leader–follower relationships. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model and Social Exchange Theory (SET) provide the theoretical foundation for this study. From the JD-R perspective, leadership can function as a job resource that helps employees cope with job demands, supports goal achievement, and stimulates motivational processes that lead to employee engagement (Bakker, 2015). Authentic leadership may function as a psychological job resource by reducing ambiguity, strengthening trust, and creating a sense of psychological safety. Meanwhile, servant leadership may function as a social job resource by providing support, empowerment, and developmental assistance. Complementarily, SET explains why employees respond positively to fair, supportive, and trustworthy leaders. When employees perceive that their leaders provide socio-emotional support and fair treatment, they are more likely to reciprocate through higher job satisfaction and stronger engagement (Meira & Hancer, 2021). Job satisfaction, defined as a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job experiences, represents a plausible attitudinal pathway through which leadership resources may translate into sustained engagement (Locke, 1982). The JD-R model suggests that leadership increases perceived job resources and meaningfulness, which in turn foster satisfaction that energizes employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). From the SET perspective, job satisfaction can be viewed as an evaluative response to fair and supportive treatment that employees reciprocate through deeper involvement in their work (Birtch et al., 2016).

Empirical studies in Indonesia also suggest that leadership behaviors can enhance job satisfaction, which is associated with higher employee engagement and related performance outcomes (Virsal & Lada, 2025). This study offers three primary contributions. First, it extends the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model by conceptualizing authentic leadership as a structural resource that builds trust and servant leadership as a social resource that provides support in explaining employee engagement. In addition, it extends Social Exchange Theory (SET) by conceptualizing values-based leadership as both a job resource and a relational exchange signal to explain Gen Z employee engagement in hospitality settings (Zheng et al., 2023). Second, this study provides comparative evidence regarding the effectiveness of authentic leadership versus servant leadership within an emerging-market context, addressing the limited number of direct comparative studies in Indonesia’s hospitality workforce (Sutiyatno, 2024). Third, by examining job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism, this study clarifies how leadership influences employee engagement and offers practical recommendations for hospitality managers regarding leadership behaviors that can sustain engagement among Gen Z employees. Accordingly, this study evaluates the direct effects of authentic leadership and servant leadership on Gen Z employee engagement in Indonesia’s hospitality sector and assesses whether job satisfaction explains these effects through indirect pathways. To address these objectives, this study empirically examines how authentic leadership and servant leadership influence Gen Z employee engagement, with job satisfaction serving as a mediating variable. Using the JD-R model and SET, this study investigates both the direct and indirect effects of leadership. By viewing leadership as both a job resource and a relational signal, this study aims to clarify leadership effectiveness and its underlying mechanisms, while also informing hospitality managers about practices that support Gen Z employee engagement in demanding work environments. Based on these objectives, this study addresses the following research questions:

- a. How do authentic leadership and servant leadership influence employee engagement among Gen Z employees in the Indonesian hospitality sector?
- b. How do authentic leadership and servant leadership influence job satisfaction among Gen Z employees in the Indonesian hospitality sector?
- c. Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between authentic leadership, servant leadership, and employee engagement?

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theoretical Foundations: Job Demands–Resources and Social Exchange Theory

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model provides a relevant theoretical foundation for explaining employee engagement in hospitality work because it emphasizes the interaction between job demands and job resources. The JD-R model was originally introduced by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) and has since become a widely used framework in occupational psychology. In hospitality settings, job demands are reflected in frequent customer interactions, emotional labor, irregular working hours, service pressure, and the need to respond quickly to unpredictable customer expectations (Z. Wang & Xie, 2020). These conditions make hospitality employees vulnerable to fatigue, stress, and burnout, particularly when organizational support and leadership resources are insufficient (Kim et al., 2025). Within the JD-R framework, leadership can be understood as an important job resource that helps employees cope with demanding work conditions and sustain their motivation (Schaufeli, 2015). Supportive and values-based leadership may provide direction, feedback, emotional support, fairness, and psychological safety, all of which help employees interpret job demands more positively. In this study, authentic leadership is conceptualized as a psychological job resource because it strengthens trust, reduces ambiguity, and creates consistency between leaders' words and actions (Durrah et al., 2024). In contrast, servant leadership is conceptualized as a social and developmental job resource because it emphasizes empowerment, individualized support, and concern for employees' growth and well-being (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2022). Through these different resource pathways, both leadership styles may enhance job satisfaction and encourage higher employee engagement. Complementing the JD-R perspective, this study also draws on Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain the behavioral logic underlying employees' responses to leadership.

Social Exchange Theory, developed by Blau (1964), highlights the reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations. SET assumes that relationships between leaders and employees develop through reciprocal exchanges in which employees tend to respond to fair treatment, support, and trust with positive attitudes and behaviors. In the workplace, leadership behaviors such as transparency, care, empowerment, and moral consistency can be interpreted as socio-emotional resources provided by leaders. When employees perceive these behaviors as beneficial, they are more likely to reciprocate through stronger job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement (Madison et al., 2025). In the Indonesian hospitality context, SET is particularly relevant because leader–employee relationships may be influenced by cultural expectations regarding hierarchy, respect for authority, and paternalistic leadership (Purba & Hartijasti, 2021). Employees may interpret supportive leadership not only as managerial assistance but also as a sign of care, protection, and relational obligation. At the same time, Gen Z employees may place greater emphasis on authenticity, fairness, and meaningful communication, which can shape how they respond to different leadership styles (Seyfi et al., 2024). Therefore, integrating the JD-R model and SET enables this study to explain both how leadership functions as a work resource and why employees may reciprocate leadership support through job satisfaction and employee engagement.

2.2. Emotional Labor, Burnout, and Leadership Resources in Hospitality

Hospitality work is highly demanding because employees are required to maintain positive emotional expressions while interacting with customers, even when they experience stress, fatigue, or dissatisfaction. This process, commonly referred to as emotional labor, is particularly relevant in frontline hospitality roles where service quality depends not only on technical performance but also on employees' ability to regulate their emotions and respond professionally to customer needs (Larena, 2024). When emotional labor is performed continuously without adequate support, employees may experience emotional exhaustion, psychological strain, and reduced motivation to remain engaged in their work (Grobelna, 2021). Burnout is another important concern in the hospitality industry because employees often face long working

hours, unpredictable customer behavior, work overload, and pressure to deliver consistent service quality. These conditions can weaken employees' emotional and cognitive resources, making it difficult for them to sustain high levels of energy, dedication, and absorption (Ayachit & Chitta, 2022). From the JD-R perspective, burnout may occur when job demands exceed available resources. Therefore, leadership becomes particularly important because leaders can provide social, emotional, and psychological resources that help employees manage work pressure and maintain positive work attitudes (Amisshah et al., 2022). In this context, authentic leadership and servant leadership may help reduce the negative consequences of emotional labor and burnout through different mechanisms. Authentic leadership may support employees by fostering psychological safety, trust, and clarity, thereby allowing employees to express concerns and feel more secure in demanding service situations (Z. Wang & Xie, 2020). Meanwhile, servant leadership may support employees by providing individualized attention, empowerment, and concern for their well-being, which can improve employees' satisfaction with their work environment (Kahya & Kuloğlu, 2022). Thus, leadership may influence employee engagement not only directly but also indirectly by creating conditions in which job satisfaction can emerge and subsequently strengthen employee engagement.

2.3. Concept of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to a positive and fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor reflects employees' energy and resilience at work, dedication refers to their sense of enthusiasm, significance, and pride, while absorption describes deep concentration and involvement in work activities. In the hospitality industry, employee engagement is particularly important because service performance depends not only on employees' technical abilities but also on their emotional presence, responsiveness, and willingness to deliver consistent service quality during direct interactions with customers (Lambert et al., 2021). In frontline hospitality roles, employees are frequently required to respond to customer needs, manage emotional expressions, and maintain professionalism under demanding service conditions. These responsibilities make engagement a critical psychological resource because engaged employees are more likely to invest cognitive, emotional, and physical energy into their roles. When employees feel engaged, they tend to demonstrate stronger initiative, provide more attentive service, and contribute positively to the customer experience. Conversely, low levels of engagement may weaken service consistency, reduce motivation, and increase the risk of withdrawal behaviors, especially in work environments characterized by emotional labor, irregular working hours, and high customer expectations (Johnson & Park, 2020). Leadership plays an important role in sustaining employee engagement in hospitality settings. From the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) perspective, leadership can serve as a job resource that helps employees cope with demanding work conditions and remain motivated. Leaders who provide support, clarity, fairness, and psychological safety can help employees interpret work demands more positively and maintain their energy at work (Kwon & Kim, 2020). From the Social Exchange Theory (SET) perspective, employees who perceive their leaders as trustworthy, supportive, and fair may reciprocate through stronger involvement and dedication (Lambert et al., 2021). Therefore, authentic leadership and servant leadership are expected to influence employee engagement by shaping employees' perceptions of support, trust, and meaningfulness in their work.

2.4. Concept of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to employees' positive evaluations of their job experiences, including how they perceive supervision, recognition, work conditions, fairness, career opportunities, and the meaningfulness of their work (Cebotari, 2022). In hospitality settings, job satisfaction is particularly important because employees frequently operate under demanding service conditions, such as emotional labor, irregular working hours, customer pressure, and the need to maintain professional behavior during direct service encounters (Díaz-Carrión et al., 2020). When employees perceive their work environment as supportive and fair, they are more

likely to develop positive attitudes toward their jobs, even when facing high service demands. From the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) perspective, job satisfaction can be understood as an attitudinal outcome that emerges when employees receive sufficient resources to manage their job demands. Leadership plays an important role in this process because leaders can provide clarity, feedback, emotional support, empowerment, and psychological safety (Montenegro Méndez et al., 2025). Authentic leadership may increase job satisfaction by fostering trust, transparency, and consistency in leader–employee relationships. Servant leadership may also enhance job satisfaction by demonstrating concern for employees’ growth, well-being, and personal development. In this sense, leadership resources can improve how employees evaluate their job experiences and strengthen their willingness to remain involved in their work.

From the Social Exchange Theory (SET) perspective, job satisfaction also reflects employees’ responses to favorable treatment from leaders and organizations. When employees perceive that leaders treat them fairly, support their needs, and recognize their contributions, they may feel valued and develop a stronger sense of obligation to respond positively (Ampauleng et al., 2024). In hospitality organizations, this exchange process is especially relevant because employees’ emotional and service performance often depend on the quality of support they receive from supervisors. Therefore, job satisfaction is positioned in this study as a key attitudinal mechanism linking authentic leadership and servant leadership to employee engagement among Generation Z hospitality employees. For Gen Z employees, job satisfaction may be shaped not only by material rewards but also by meaningful work, transparent communication, developmental opportunities, and supportive leadership (Ramlan et al., 2025). Gen Z employees tend to value leaders who provide fairness, authenticity, feedback, and opportunities for growth. When these expectations are fulfilled, they are more likely to evaluate their work positively and invest greater emotional and cognitive energy into their roles. Accordingly, this study considers job satisfaction a mediating variable that explains how leadership behaviors are translated into stronger employee engagement.

2.5. Concept of Authentic Leadership and Servant Leadership

Authentic leadership refers to a values-based leadership style characterized by self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalized moral perspective (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leaders are expected to act consistently with their values, communicate openly, and make decisions based on ethical considerations rather than personal interests. In hospitality settings, these characteristics are particularly relevant because employees often work under emotional pressure, service uncertainty, and frequent customer interactions. Previous hospitality research has shown that authentic leadership can influence employees’ emotional labor by creating a more stable and supportive work environment, thereby helping employees manage emotional demands more effectively (Z. Wang & Xie, 2020). From the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) perspective, authentic leadership can be understood as a psychological job resource. By providing clarity, honesty, and moral consistency, authentic leaders may help employees interpret work demands more positively and maintain their motivation. Authentic leadership has also been associated with trust, psychological safety, and work engagement, suggesting that employees are more likely to invest energy and dedication in their work when they perceive their leaders as credible and transparent (Maximo et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008). This is especially important for Generation Z employees, who are often described as valuing fairness, meaningful communication, and consistency between leaders’ words and actions. In hospitality research focusing on Gen Z employees, authentic leadership has been identified as an important leadership approach for explaining workplace engagement and psychological resources among younger employees (Sigaeva et al., 2022).

In contrast, servant leadership emphasizes the leader’s responsibility to serve followers by prioritizing their growth, empowerment, well-being, and personal development. The servant leadership construct is commonly associated with behaviors such as emotional healing, creating value for the community, empowering followers, helping subordinates grow, and putting followers first (Liden et al., 2008). In hospitality organizations, servant leadership is highly relevant because frontline employees often require emotional

support, guidance, and empowerment to manage demanding customer-facing roles. Previous hotel industry research has also shown that servant leadership can influence employees' work engagement and job satisfaction, indicating that servant-oriented leaders may improve employees' work attitudes by providing support and developmental resources (Ozturk et al., 2021). From the Social Exchange Theory (SET) perspective, servant leadership can be understood as a relational and social resource. When employees perceive that their leaders genuinely care about their well-being and development, they may feel valued and develop a sense of obligation to respond positively. This response may take the form of stronger job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement. However, in the context of Gen Z hospitality employees, servant leadership may not always translate directly into engagement. Instead, its influence may operate more strongly through job satisfaction because supportive and empowering leadership behaviors may first improve employees' evaluations of their work experiences before encouraging deeper engagement. This argument is consistent with studies suggesting that servant leadership and authentic leadership may both function as job resources, although their effects can differ depending on the psychological and contextual mechanisms involved (Ozturk et al., 2021; Sigaeva et al., 2022).

2.6. Theoretical Limitation

Although the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model provides a strong framework for explaining how job demands and job resources influence employee engagement, it has limitations in fully capturing individual and generational differences (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli, 2015). The JD-R model explains how resources such as leadership support, feedback, and psychological safety can reduce the negative effects of job demands and stimulate motivation. However, employees may not respond to the same job resources in identical ways. In the context of this study, Generation Z employees may interpret leadership resources differently because they tend to place greater emphasis on transparency, fairness, meaningful communication, and developmental opportunities (Seyfi et al., 2024; Sigaeva et al., 2022). Therefore, the JD-R model needs to be contextualized with generational characteristics to better explain how authentic leadership and servant leadership influence engagement among Gen Z hospitality employees. Social Exchange Theory (SET) also has limitations when applied across different cultural contexts. SET explains that employees respond to fair, supportive, and trustworthy leadership through reciprocal attitudes and behaviors, such as job satisfaction and engagement (Meira & Hancer, 2021). However, reciprocity in the workplace may be shaped by cultural values, including hierarchy, respect for authority, collectivism, and paternalistic leadership (Purba & Hartijasti, 2021; Wicaksono et al., 2025). In the Indonesian hospitality context, employees may interpret leader support not only as a professional exchange but also as a form of care, protection, and moral obligation. As a result, the exchange process between leaders and employees may differ from that in contexts characterized by lower power distance or more individualistic work values.

By acknowledging these theoretical limitations, this study does not treat the JD-R model and SET as universal explanations independent of context. Instead, it integrates both theories with the specific characteristics of Generation Z employees and the Indonesian hospitality setting. This approach enables the study to explain not only how leadership functions as a job resource but also why employees may reciprocate authentic and servant leadership differently through job satisfaction and employee engagement. Based on the theoretical arguments discussed above, this study develops a conceptual framework that integrates the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model and Social Exchange Theory (SET). Authentic leadership and servant leadership are positioned as exogenous leadership variables, job satisfaction is positioned as a mediating attitudinal variable, and employee engagement is positioned as the primary outcome variable. The framework proposes that authentic leadership and servant leadership may directly influence employee engagement and job satisfaction. It also proposes that job satisfaction may directly influence employee engagement and mediate the relationships between each leadership style and employee engagement.

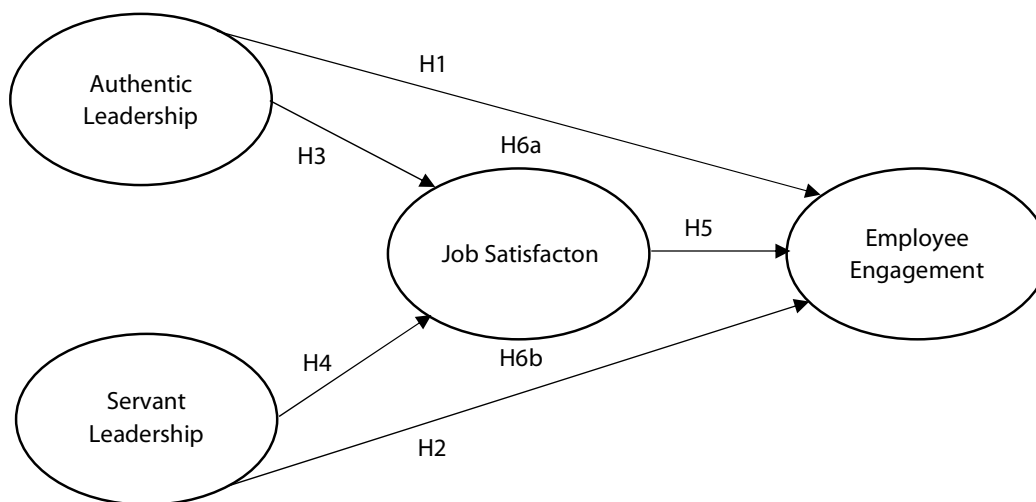


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Notes. H6a and H6b represent indirect (mediated) effects. Specifically, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement (H6a) and the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement (H6b).

This study integrates the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain how leadership functions as a job resource that shapes employees’ work attitudes and engagement (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020; Hawkes et al., 2021). Authentic leadership and servant leadership are conceptualized as leadership resources that foster a supportive and meaningful work environment, thereby strengthening employees’ motivational investment in their roles. As depicted in Figure 1, the model proposes that job satisfaction mediates the relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement. The framework also estimates the direct effects of authentic leadership and servant leadership on employee engagement to capture any satisfaction-independent influence of leadership on employees’ engagement.

2.7. Hypothesis Development

a. Effect of Authentic Leadership on Employee Engagement

From the JD-R perspective, authentic leadership can serve as a job resource by reducing role ambiguity and fostering psychological safety. For Gen Z employees, who value transparency, consistency between leaders’ words and actions serves as a powerful intrinsic motivator. When Gen Z employees trust their leaders’ authenticity, they are more willing to dedicate their emotional and cognitive energy to their work, viewing the workplace as a safe environment for self-expression and involvement. From the SET perspective, authentic leadership behaviors convey integrity and respect, encouraging employees to reciprocate by investing greater energy and dedication in their roles. Authentic leadership is considered an external factor that fosters positive attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Yamak & Eyupoglu, 2021). Empirically, authentic leadership has been associated with higher levels of work engagement, including in Indonesian and hospitality contexts, suggesting that authenticity-based leadership behaviors function as important work resources that energize employees (Wirawan et al., 2020). Therefore, employees who perceive higher levels of authentic leadership are expected to demonstrate stronger engagement. Based on these arguments, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Authentic leadership positively affects employee engagement.

b. Effect of Servant Leadership on Employee Engagement

Servant leadership can enhance employee engagement by strengthening supportive resources such as empowerment, coaching, and individualized consideration. In high-pressure hospitality environments, servant leadership can function as a buffer against employee burnout (Cai et al., 2023). From the JD-R perspective, these resources activate motivational processes and reduce the stress associated with job demands. From the SET perspective, employees who experience servant-oriented leadership are likely to perceive benevolent treatment and reciprocate through stronger engagement. Evidence from Indonesia's hospitality sector indicates that servant leadership enhances employee engagement, suggesting that servant-oriented leaders increase employees' involvement and energy at work (Agatha & Go, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Servant leadership positively affects employee engagement.

c. Effect of Authentic Leadership on Job Satisfaction

Authentic leadership is likely to increase job satisfaction by fostering a transparent and fair work environment (Baquero et al., 2019). This leadership style reduces ambiguity and improves employees' positive perceptions of their work environment. According to SET, authenticity strengthens trust and perceived relationship quality, leading to more favorable job attitudes. Previous studies have linked authentic leadership to higher job satisfaction, demonstrating that transparency and values-based behavior enhance employees' positive evaluations of their work experiences (Olaniyan & Hystad, 2016). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Authentic leadership positively affects job satisfaction.

d. Effect of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction

Servant leaders emphasize followers' well-being, growth, and empowerment, which are important antecedents of job satisfaction in demanding service environments. By actively removing work-related obstacles and prioritizing employees' needs, servant leaders directly improve the quality of employees' daily work experiences (Yusnita et al., 2025). Evidence from lagged dyadic research in hotel settings indicates that servant leadership positively predicts employees' job satisfaction, providing strong empirical support for the relationship between servant leadership and positive work attitudes (Kiker et al., 2019; Ozturk et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Servant leadership positively affects job satisfaction.

e. Effect of Job Satisfaction on Employee Engagement

Job satisfaction represents a positive attitudinal state that increases employees' willingness to invest cognitive, emotional, and physical resources into their work roles. From the JD-R perspective, job satisfaction reflects a favorable evaluation of job resources and work conditions that support the motivational pathway toward engagement. Meta-analytic evidence demonstrates a strong positive relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement, indicating that satisfied employees tend to invest greater energy and dedication in their roles (Mazzetti et al., 2023). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Job satisfaction positively affects employee engagement.

f. The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Leadership behaviors can influence employee engagement both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. Ideally, leadership resources first generate positive evaluations of the job experience, such as satisfaction, which may subsequently develop into higher levels of energy and engagement (Sono et al., 2024).

In particular, servant leadership may primarily fulfill employees' support and developmental needs, thereby creating satisfaction that serves as the foundation for sustained engagement. In this way, job satisfaction functions as a key attitudinal mechanism that captures the value of leadership resources and transforms them into employee engagement (Widyastuti, 2022). According to the JD-R framework, authentic leadership and servant leadership enhance perceived job resources, which increase job satisfaction and subsequently sustain employee engagement. From the SET perspective, supportive and ethical leadership fosters positive exchange relationships, thereby increasing job satisfaction and encouraging reciprocal engagement. Therefore, job satisfaction is expected to mediate the effects of both leadership styles on employee engagement. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6a: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement.

H6b: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement.

III. Research Method

3.1. Research Design and Analytical Approach

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design and analyzed the proposed model using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Following the recommended two-stage procedure, the study first assessed the measurement model, including indicator reliability and construct validity, and subsequently evaluated the structural model to test the hypothesized direct and mediated relationships. PLS-SEM was selected because of its suitability for prediction-oriented models involving multiple latent constructs and mediation paths. Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples and two-tailed significance testing at $\alpha = .05$, producing path coefficients (β), t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals (CIs) for robust statistical inference (Williams & MacKinnon, 2008). The analysis followed a two-stage procedure. First, the measurement model was assessed to evaluate indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was examined to test the direct and indirect relationships among the constructs.

3.2. Population, Sampling, and Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from November 2025 to January 2026 using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The target respondents were Generation Z frontline employees in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, who participated anonymously in the survey. A purposive sampling technique was applied because the study required respondents who met specific criteria relevant to the research model. Respondents were included if they were 28 years old or younger, worked as frontline employees, had a direct supervisor, and were willing to complete the questionnaire voluntarily. To reduce common method bias in the self-report data, respondent anonymity was ensured, and the predictor and outcome sections of the questionnaire were psychologically separated (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The questionnaire was distributed online through social media platforms and professional networks to reach eligible respondents. After the screening process, 206 valid responses were retained for analysis. Because the questionnaire was distributed through online networks, the exact number of invitations distributed was not formally recorded; therefore, the response rate could not be calculated precisely. Although this sampling approach enabled the study to reach the intended respondent group, the findings should be generalized with caution because the sample was limited to Generation Z frontline employees in Yogyakarta. An a priori power analysis was conducted to determine whether the sample size was sufficient for the proposed model. Using $\alpha = 0.05$, statistical power = 0.80, and the maximum number of predictors in the structural model, the minimum required sample size was found to be lower than the final sample of 206 respondents. Therefore, the sample size exceeded the minimum requirement and was considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis (Siddiqui, 2013).

3.3. Respondent Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents showed that all retained respondents belonged to the Generation Z age group and reported having a direct supervisor. The sample was predominantly female, with 145 respondents (70.4%), while 61 respondents (29.6%) were male. Regarding educational background, most respondents held a bachelor's degree ($n = 111$; 53.9%), followed by senior high school or vocational education ($n = 44$; 21.4%), diploma education ($n = 42$; 20.4%), and a master's degree ($n = 8$; 3.9%). One respondent did not report their educational background. In terms of employment status, 119 respondents (57.8%) were contract employees and 87 respondents (42.2%) were permanent employees. Most respondents worked 36–45 hours per week ($n = 85$; 41.3%), followed by those working fewer than 20 hours ($n = 41$; 19.9%), more than 45 hours ($n = 41$; 19.9%), and 20–35 hours per week ($n = 39$; 18.9%). Regarding work experience, 105 respondents (51.0%) had worked for more than one year, 68 respondents (33.0%) had worked for 6–12 months, and 33 respondents (16.0%) had worked for less than six months.

3.4. Questionnaire Development and Measurement

Table 1 summarizes the measurement instruments for authentic leadership, servant leadership, job satisfaction, and employee engagement, including the initial and retained indicators. All constructs were operationalized using established reflective measures, including the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ; Walumbwa et al., 2008), the servant leadership scale developed by Liden et al. (2008), a job satisfaction scale adapted from Spector (1997), and a 6-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016). Following scale-shortening guidelines, several items were selected a priori from the original Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) to reduce respondent burden while maintaining broad content coverage (DeVellis, 2021). Indicators were retained primarily based on evidence of indicator reliability and construct validity. One job satisfaction indicator was removed because collinearity diagnostics indicated redundancy concerns, while overall reliability and validity were preserved. Because one authentic leadership indicator (AL3) showed an elevated VIF value, a sensitivity analysis was conducted by estimating the model both with and without AL3. After removing AL3, all retained indicators showed acceptable VIF values below the recommended threshold of 5, indicating that potential redundancy had been reduced. Therefore, AL3 was removed from the final model to improve measurement quality while maintaining the conceptual coverage of authentic leadership. The questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and contextual suitability for Indonesian respondents. When necessary, wording adjustments were made to improve readability while preserving the conceptual meaning of the original indicators.

Table 1. Measurement Instruments

Construct	Measurement Instrument	Original Item Count	Final Item Count	Outer Loading Range	Collinearity Note (VIF)
Authentic Leadership	Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) – four dimensions (Walumbwa et al., 2008)	16 items	14 items	0.736–0.876	AL3 removed (VIF = 6.062); all retained indicators acceptable
Servant Leadership	Seven-item short form adapted from Liden et al.'s seven-dimension model (Liden et al., 2008)	7 items	7 items	0.707–0.912	All indicators acceptable
Job Satisfaction	Short-form adaptation of the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1997),	8 items	5 items	0.810–0.850	JS8 removed (VIF = 5.058); all remaining

	based on scale-efficiency principles (DeVellis, 2021)				indicators acceptable
Employee Engagement	Six-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), with two items from each core dimension: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016)	6 items	4 items	0.772–0.906	All indicators acceptable

Notes. A five-point Likert scale was used: (1 = Never; 5 = Often) for leadership constructs and (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree) for employee engagement and job satisfaction. Outer loading ranges represent standardized reflective indicator loadings; values around 0.70 indicate adequate indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2017).

All constructs were modeled as reflective constructs. The measurement model was assessed through indicator reliability (outer loadings), internal consistency reliability (ρ_A and composite reliability; Cronbach’s alpha was reported for comparison), and convergent validity (AVE). The structural model was evaluated using collinearity diagnostics (VIF), explanatory power (R^2 and adjusted R^2), and hypothesis testing for direct and indirect effects using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals. Discriminant validity was assessed using indicator cross-loadings. Each indicator was required to load more strongly on its intended construct than on other constructs, thereby supporting the item-level distinctiveness of the measures (Henseler et al., 2015).

3.5. Data Screening and Ethical Considerations

Before analysis, the dataset was screened to ensure that all respondents met the inclusion criteria. Responses from participants who did not belong to the target age group, did not work as frontline employees, did not have a direct supervisor, or submitted incomplete questionnaires were excluded. The final dataset consisted of 206 valid responses. Missing data were addressed during the screening process by retaining only complete and usable responses for analysis. Ethical considerations were addressed by informing respondents about the purpose of the study before they completed the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were allowed to withdraw at any stage before submitting their responses. The questionnaire was completed anonymously, and no personally identifiable information was collected. All responses were treated confidentially and used solely for academic research purposes.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

Indicator reliability was satisfactory, with outer loadings ranging from 0.706 to 0.923, as presented in Table 1. Overall, internal consistency reliability and convergent validity met acceptable standards based on Cronbach’s alpha, ρ_A , composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) values (Table 2), indicating that the constructs were measured with adequate precision for structural model testing (Hair et al., 2017; Hair & Alamer, 2022).

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Authentic Leadership	0.951	0.952	0.957	0.631
Servant Leadership	0.913	0.919	0.931	0.661
Job Satisfaction	0.886	0.888	0.916	0.686
Employee Engagement	0.894	0.905	0.921	0.700

The cross-loadings in this study provide strong evidence of discriminant validity at the item level. Each indicator loaded more strongly on its intended construct than on any other construct, indicating that the latent variables—Authentic Leadership, Servant Leadership, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Engagement—are empirically distinct. This result aligns with previous research using PLS-SEM in leadership contexts, which emphasizes that discriminant validity is achieved when item loadings on their corresponding constructs exceed their correlations with other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). This pattern is particularly important in leadership research, where conceptual overlap between constructs such as authentic leadership and servant leadership may create challenges for discriminant validity (Hoch et al., 2018). However, the present findings support the argument that these leadership styles, although related, can be measured distinctly when validated instruments are applied (Liden et al., 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Moreover, previous studies, including Breevaart et al. (2014) and Karatepe and Olugbade (2016), have demonstrated that maintaining item-level discriminant validity is critical in leadership–engagement frameworks. Similar to those studies, the current model preserves construct integrity across attitudinal variables (e.g., job satisfaction and engagement) and leadership variables, suggesting that the measurement model is both psychometrically sound and theoretically well grounded.

4.2. Structural Model Evaluation

The model demonstrated strong explanatory power, explaining a large proportion of the variance in employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.878$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.877$) and job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.850$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.848$). The f^2 results showed that servant leadership had a medium effect on job satisfaction ($f^2 = 0.156$), while job satisfaction had a small-to-moderate effect on employee engagement ($f^2 = 0.142$). Authentic leadership also demonstrated small-to-moderate effects on employee engagement ($f^2 = 0.119$) and job satisfaction ($f^2 = 0.087$), whereas servant leadership had only a small direct effect on employee engagement ($f^2 = 0.020$). Predictive relevance was also supported, as employee engagement ($Q^2 = 0.594$) and job satisfaction ($Q^2 = 0.576$) both produced Q^2 values greater than zero. The findings are broadly consistent with previous studies on leadership and employee engagement, although the magnitude and pattern of effects differ across contexts. The significant effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement supports prior evidence that transparent, credible, and value-consistent leadership can strengthen employees' psychological safety, trust, and work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2014; Sigaeva et al., 2022; Wirawan et al., 2020). The positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement is also consistent with previous hospitality and work engagement studies, which suggest that satisfied employees are more likely to invest energy, dedication, and attention in their roles (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016; Mazzetti et al., 2023). However, the non-significant direct effect of servant leadership on employee engagement differs from studies reporting a direct positive relationship. This difference may be explained by the Generation Z and Indonesian hospitality context, in which servant leadership may first improve employees' evaluations of their work experiences before translating into stronger engagement.

4.3. Direct Hypothesis Testing

Based on Table 3, the bootstrapping results supported most of the proposed direct relationships. Authentic leadership positively predicted employee engagement ($\beta = 0.399$, $t = 2.943$, $p = 0.003$) and job

satisfaction ($\beta = 0.433$, $t = 2.769$, $p = 0.006$). These findings indicate that higher perceptions of authentic leadership are associated with greater engagement and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction also demonstrated a significant positive effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.335$, $t = 2.637$, $p = 0.008$), confirming its role as an important attitudinal predictor of engagement. In contrast, the direct effect of servant leadership on employee engagement was not significant ($\beta = 0.212$, $t = 1.507$, $p = 0.132$); therefore, H2 was not supported. However, servant leadership significantly predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.500$, $t = 3.172$, $p = 0.002$). The non-significant direct effect of servant leadership on employee engagement does not necessarily indicate that servant leadership is irrelevant for Generation Z hospitality employees. Rather, it suggests that its influence may operate through an attitudinal mechanism, particularly job satisfaction. Servant leadership emphasizes support, empowerment, care, and employee development; however, these behaviors may first shape employees' positive evaluations of their job experiences before being translated into deeper engagement. This interpretation is consistent with Kaur (2018), who identified job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism between servant leadership and employee engagement. Similar indirect patterns were also reported by Srimulyani and Hermanto (2022), who found that servant leadership did not significantly affect work engagement directly but influenced engagement through organizational justice. In the present study, servant leadership significantly predicted job satisfaction, while job satisfaction significantly predicted employee engagement, indicating that servant leadership contributes to engagement primarily through satisfaction rather than through a direct pathway. In the Generation Z hospitality context, employees may respond more directly to authentic leadership because it reflects transparency, consistency, and credibility, whereas servant leadership may primarily strengthen satisfaction before encouraging deeper engagement (Sigaeva et al., 2022).

Table 3. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t	p	Decision
H1	Authentic Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.399	2.943	0.003	Supported
H2	Servant Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.212	1.507	0.132	Not Supported
H3	Authentic Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.433	2.769	0.006	Supported
H4	Servant Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.500	3.172	0.002	Supported
H5	Job Satisfaction → Employee Engagement	0.335	2.637	0.008	Supported

4.4. Mediation Results (Specific Indirect Effects)

The specific indirect effects through job satisfaction were significant for both leadership constructs, as shown in Table 4, because the 95% confidence intervals excluded zero. These results indicate that job satisfaction mediates the relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement. For authentic leadership, both the direct effect on employee engagement and the indirect effect through job satisfaction were significant, indicating partial mediation. In contrast, servant leadership demonstrated a significant indirect effect through job satisfaction, while its direct effect on employee engagement was not significant, indicating an indirect-only (full mediation) pattern. This finding suggests that servant leadership enhances employee engagement primarily by increasing job satisfaction (Hair et al., 2017). The non-significant direct effect of servant leadership on employee engagement does not necessarily contradict servant leadership theory. Servant leadership theory suggests that leaders who prioritize employee growth, empowerment, and well-being can encourage positive work outcomes. However, in this study, the effect of servant leadership appears to operate mainly through job satisfaction. This finding indicates that servant leadership may first shape employees' satisfaction by making them feel supported, valued, and empowered. Once employees develop a more positive evaluation of their job experiences, they may become more willing to engage deeply in their work. This indirect-only pattern is consistent with Social Exchange Theory (SET), as employees may reciprocate supportive leadership treatment through satisfaction before demonstrating stronger

engagement. It also supports the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) perspective, in which leadership resources may enhance engagement through intermediate motivational and attitudinal mechanisms.

Table 4. Specific Indirect Effects (Bootstrapping)

Mediation Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Indirect β	t-value	p-value	95% CI
H6a	AL \rightarrow JS \rightarrow EE	0.145	1.888	0.059	[0.004, 0.299]
H6b	SL \rightarrow JS \rightarrow EE	0.167	2.033	0.042	[0.012, 0.335]

Notes. Specific indirect effects were assessed using bootstrapping. Mediation is supported when the 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effect does not include zero. The reported CI corresponds to the 2.5% and 97.5% percentile bootstrap bounds. Decisions were based on the 95% bootstrap confidence interval using the percentile method.

4.5. Discussion

This study investigated how authentic leadership and servant leadership relate to employee engagement among Generation Z employees working in hospitality service roles and whether job satisfaction explains these relationships (Sigaeva et al., 2022). Overall, the findings indicate that authentic leadership is positively associated with employee engagement and job satisfaction, whereas servant leadership is positively associated with job satisfaction but does not demonstrate a significant direct relationship with employee engagement. In addition, job satisfaction emerged as a strong positive predictor of employee engagement (Sharma et al., 2021). Importantly, the bootstrapped mediation results further indicate that job satisfaction significantly transmits the effects of both leadership styles to employee engagement, as the specific indirect effects were positive and their 95% confidence intervals did not include zero. The significant positive association between authentic leadership and employee engagement suggests that leadership behaviors emphasizing transparency, consistency between values and actions, and balanced decision-making may encourage Generation Z employees to invest greater energy, dedication, and involvement in their work roles (Lorenzo & Aurora, 2022). These findings suggest that authentic leadership may fulfill Generation Z workplace expectations more effectively. In contrast, the smaller effect of servant leadership may indicate that although Generation Z employees appreciate support from leaders, they respond more strongly to leaders who demonstrate integrity and lead by example.

From a resource-based perspective, such as the JD-R framework, authentic leadership can be viewed as a supportive context that helps employees interpret work demands more clearly and experience greater psychological safety, thereby facilitating sustained engagement. From a relational perspective, such as Social Exchange Theory, authentic behavior signals integrity and respect, which may encourage reciprocal positive attitudes and behaviors, including stronger engagement (Maximo et al., 2019). These interpretations are consistent with the argument that Generation Z employees may respond particularly well to leaders who are perceived as credible and consistent in interpersonal interactions. Although servant leadership was positively associated with job satisfaction, it did not demonstrate a significant direct relationship with employee engagement in this study. This pattern suggests that servant leadership is reflected more strongly in how employees evaluate the quality of their work experiences, such as feeling supported, empowered, and provided with opportunities for growth, rather than in producing an immediate increase in engagement (Agusta & Azmy, 2023). In practice, servant leadership may first strengthen employees' job satisfaction, which subsequently contributes to engagement (Kaur, 2018). This interpretation is supported by the significant indirect effect of servant leadership on engagement through job satisfaction, indicating that attitudinal mechanisms play an important role in explaining how servant leadership relates to engagement outcomes in this context.

The significant relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement reinforces the argument that positive job evaluations are closely linked to employees' willingness to invest themselves in their work roles (Vorina et al., 2017). When employees feel satisfied with their work conditions, recognition,

and overall job experiences, they are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement (Liliana & Sandra, 2019). In the present model, job satisfaction functions as a key explanatory mechanism for both leadership styles. Specifically, authentic leadership demonstrates both a direct association with engagement and an indirect association through job satisfaction, whereas servant leadership contributes to engagement primarily through the indirect pathway. These findings highlight that conceptually positive leadership approaches may influence engagement through different mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of examining both direct relationships and attitudinal pathways (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). Theoretically, these findings extend the JD-R model and SET by demonstrating that authentic leadership and servant leadership may function through different mechanisms. Authentic leadership appears to operate as a psychological job resource that directly strengthens engagement by providing trust, clarity, and moral consistency. In contrast, servant leadership appears to function more strongly as a social and developmental resource that enhances job satisfaction before influencing engagement. These findings support the JD-R argument that job resources stimulate motivation and engagement, while also extending SET by showing that employees' reciprocal responses to leadership may first emerge in the form of job satisfaction before developing into engagement. Thus, the findings do not reject previous leadership–engagement theories but rather refine them by demonstrating that the leadership–engagement relationship may depend on the type of leadership behavior and the attitudinal mechanism involved.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that organizations seeking to strengthen engagement among Generation Z employees should prioritize leadership development that enhances both authenticity and service-oriented support. Encouraging supervisors to demonstrate authentic leadership behaviors, such as relational transparency, value congruence, and fair decision-making, may improve both engagement and job satisfaction. At the same time, strengthening servant leadership practices, such as coaching, empowerment, and individualized support, may be particularly effective in improving job satisfaction, which subsequently contributes to employee engagement. These implications should be interpreted in light of the study design. Because the data were cross-sectional and self-reported, the findings should be interpreted as associative rather than causal evidence. Future research using longitudinal or time-lagged designs would be valuable for strengthening causal inference and examining whether these relationships remain stable across different hospitality sub-sectors and employment conditions. In addition, the use of a single-source self-report design may introduce common method variance, which could potentially inflate the observed relationships despite the procedural remedies applied in this study.

V. Conclusion

This study provides evidence that authentic leadership and servant leadership are meaningfully associated with employee engagement among Generation Z employees in hospitality-related service settings, with job satisfaction serving as a central attitudinal pathway. Authentic leadership is positively associated with both employee engagement and job satisfaction, and job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement. Servant leadership is positively associated with job satisfaction, and its contribution to employee engagement occurs through a significant indirect effect via job satisfaction, whereas the direct relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement is not supported. The findings carry important practical implications for hospitality organizations seeking to sustain engagement among Generation Z employees. Leaders may enhance employee engagement by cultivating authentic behaviors that strengthen trust and credibility, as well as by adopting servant-oriented practices that improve employees' satisfaction with their work experiences. Organizations can institutionalize these leadership behaviors through supervisor training programs, coaching practices, and management systems that reinforce fairness, transparency, empowerment, and employee development. Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw strong causal conclusions; therefore, the findings should be interpreted as associative relationships among leadership, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. Future studies should employ longitudinal, panel, or time-lagged

research designs to examine causal direction and the stability of leadership effects over time. Second, the use of self-reported data may increase the risk of common method bias; therefore, future research could incorporate multi-source data, such as supervisor ratings, peer evaluations, or human resource records. Third, this study focused on Generation Z frontline employees in Yogyakarta, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions, generations, or organizational contexts. Future research may also examine psychological safety as an additional mediating variable and organizational culture, such as collectivism or power distance, as a moderating variable in the relationship between leadership and employee engagement.

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