

THE EFFECT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP, INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION, AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT SMOKE.BALI RESTAURANT, BADUNG

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine and analyze the extent to which servant leadership, interpersonal communication, and knowledge sharing contribute to improving employee performance at Smoke.Bali Restaurant, located in Badung Regency, Bali. Using a quantitative approach, this study involved all 42 employees as respondents through a total census technique. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire that adopted a five-point Likert scale, then processed using multiple linear regression analysis through SPSS software. The main findings show that the three independent variables, both partially and simultaneously, have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. The Adjusted R Square value reached 0.679, indicating that approximately 67.9% of employee performance variability can be explained by the combination of servant leadership, interpersonal communication, and knowledge sharing, while the rest is influenced by other factors outside the model. The beta coefficients for each variable were 0.448 for servant leadership ($p < 0.001$), 0.513 for interpersonal communication ($p < 0.001$), and 0.546 for knowledge sharing ($p < 0.001$). These results are consistent with PathGoal Theory and a number of previous empirical studies, which confirm the important role of servant leadership, effective communicative interaction, and a culture of knowledge sharing in the context of the competitive hospitality industry. Practical implications for restaurant management include developing servant leadership training programs, optimizing internal communication channels, and initiatives to encourage knowledge exchange among employees to achieve more optimal operational performance.

Keywords: servant leadership, interpersonal communication, knowledge sharing, employee performance

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector, particularly the restaurant industry, is increasingly relying on its ability to provide superior service experiences as a key differentiator amid fierce competition (Rusavska & Neilenko, 2022). Service quality is not only determined by food and beverage products, but is also greatly influenced by direct interactions between employees and customers. High-performing employees tend to display a professional attitude, be responsive to customer needs, and be able to complete tasks efficiently, which ultimately contributes to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Afrialdi et al., 2024; Riyanto, 2023; Simanjuntak et al., 2023).

Smoke.Bali Restaurant, located at Jl. Pantai Batu Mejan No.69, Canggu, North Kuta, Badung, Bali, is one of the popular culinary destinations with an open-fire barbecue concept that combines authentic flavors with the tropical atmosphere of Bali. The restaurant targets the upper-middle-class market segment, both domestic and international tourists, through premium menus such as brisket, pork ribs, and fresh steak cooked low and slow. Despite its strategic location and attractive atmosphere, internal data for 2024 reveals a concerning sales trend. Average sales realization only reached IDR 1.36 billion per month, far below the target of IDR 2.05 billion, resulting in an average negative deviation of 37.1%. The most drastic decline occurred in December, where the achievement was only 26.7% of the target. This condition is thought to be closely related to a decline in operational effectiveness, one of which is reflected in suboptimal employee

performance, such as slow response to customer complaints, errors in order serving, and lack of coordination between departments (Smoke.Bali Restaurant Internal Data, 2025).

In the dynamic and high-intensity work environment of a restaurant, leadership factors are key determinants. Servant leadership, which emphasizes service to subordinates, empowerment, and moral development, has been shown to build a sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation among employees (Azimatun et al., 2020; Yani, 2024). However, initial observations at Smoke.Bali indicate a tendency for leaders to avoid confrontation, resulting in a lack of decisiveness in making quick operational decisions. In addition, ineffective interpersonal communication often leads to miscommunication between waiters and the kitchen, poorly socialized menu changes, and employee dissatisfaction due to feeling unheard (Saputra, 2023; Sundari, 2024). Knowledge sharing is also an issue, where the best cooking experiences and techniques are rarely shared systematically, thereby hindering innovation and collective skill improvement (Aritonang, 2023; Trinovela, 2021).

Based on this background, this study focuses on analyzing the influence of servant leadership, interpersonal communication, and knowledge sharing on employee performance at Smoke Restaurant in Badung, Bali. The results are expected to provide practical recommendations for management in improving business productivity and competitiveness.

2. LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS

Path Goal Theory, developed by House (1971), explains that effective leaders help subordinates achieve goals by providing direction, support, and removing obstacles. In this context, servant leadership emerges as a harmonious leadership style, where leaders prioritize the needs of employees to encourage personal and professional growth (Greenleaf, 1977; Saleem et al., 2020). Key characteristics include empathy, active listening, empowerment, and commitment to ethics (Tentama & Muhopilah, 2020).

Interpersonal communication is defined as the process of exchanging information, emotions, and feedback directly between individuals, which involves the ability to listen actively, express oneself clearly, and adapt communication styles (Saputra, 2023). In restaurant teams, good communication reduces misunderstandings and enhances synergy (Sundari, 2024; Sutrisno, 2023). Meanwhile, knowledge sharing is a voluntary mechanism in which employees share tacit and explicit knowledge, such as service tips or cooking techniques, which ultimately improves the overall capabilities of the organization (Aritonang, 2023; Yuniarti et al., 2023).

Employee performance is measured through indicators such as work quality, output quantity, timeliness, and initiative (Rustiawan et al., 2023). Various empirical studies support positive relationships: servant leadership improves performance through trust and commitment (Bakry, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2024; Supardi et al., 2023); interpersonal communication strengthens coordination and motivation (Vandela & Sugiarto, 2021; Tanuwijaya et al., 2025); and knowledge sharing encourages learning organizations and innovation (Sayouw et al., 2024; Setyowati & Sukarno, 2023). Although some studies have found insignificant effects, the majority of empirical evidence in the service sector supports a positive relationship. Research hypothesis:

H₁: Servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H₂: Interpersonal communication has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

H₃: Knowledge sharing has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is explanatory in nature with a quantitative design. The research location is Smoke.Bali Restaurant in Canggu, Badung. The population and sample consisted of 42 employees (census technique). The independent variables consisted of servant leadership (X_1 , 11 statements), interpersonal communication (X_2 , 12 statements), and knowledge sharing (X_3 , 12 statements); the dependent variable was employee performance (Y , 15 statements). The data collection instrument was a Likert scale questionnaire (15), which had been tested for validity (Pearson correlation > 0.30) and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.60). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the respondents and the perception of the variables, as well as inferential statistics in the form of multiple linear regression to test the hypothesis, with the classical assumption test fulfilled (Sugiyono, 2019).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent characteristics showed a predominance of male employees (64.3%), productive age of 20-30 years (54.8%), educational background of Diploma (69.0%), and relatively short employment period (the majority of 1 to less than 2 years, 40.5%), reflecting the young age of the restaurant (around 3.5 years). Instrument testing proved that all items were valid and the constructs were reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha ranging from 0.879 to 0.946.

Descriptive analysis indicated that respondents' perceptions of the four variables were in the "Good" category (mean score 3.41–4.20), with knowledge sharing receiving the highest score (average around 3.55), followed by servant leadership and interpersonal communication, while employee performance was slightly lower but still positive.

Table 1. R Square Values for Multiple Linear Regression Models

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of Estimate
1	0.838	0.703	0.679	4.468

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge sharing (X_3), Interpersonal Communication (X_2), Servant Leadership (X_1)

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Table 2. Simultaneous Significance Test Results (ANOVA)

Model	F	Sig	Description
Regression	29.949	0.000	Significant
Residual			
Total			

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Table 3. Regression Coefficients and Partial Tests

Variable	Unstandardized B	t	Sig	Description
(Constant)	17.057	2,373	0.023	Significant
Servant Leadership (X_1)	0.520	5.007	0.000	Significant
Interpersonal Communication (X_2)	0.510	5.742	0.000	Significant
Knowledge sharing (X_3)	0.578	6.176	0.000	Significant

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance (Y)

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

The regression analysis results show that the model as a whole is significant ($F = 29.949$; $p < 0.001$) and can explain 67.9% of the variation in employee performance. The three hypotheses are accepted, with knowledge sharing having the strongest influence ($Beta = 0.546$). These findings can be understood in the context of restaurant operations, which are highly dependent on daily practical knowledge, such as low and slow barbecue cooking techniques or how to handle special customer orders. When employees actively share tips and experiences—for example, through informal post-shift discussions or senior-junior mentoring—they can adapt more quickly, reduce errors, and collectively improve efficiency. This aligns with the argument by Yuniarti et al. (2023) that knowledge sharing not only enhances individual competence but also creates a learning organization that is responsive to market dynamics. Similarly, Sayouw et al. (2024) and Setyowati & Sukarno (2023) found that knowledge sharing is a key catalyst for performance in team-based work environments such as hospitality. Research conducted by Puspitawati, et al. (2022) shows that employee performance is not only influenced by servant leadership style but also heavily depends on the effectiveness of interpersonal communication. Furthermore, this study proves that knowledge sharing acts as a bridge (mediation) that strengthens the relationship between leadership and communication in improving employee performance in organizations.

Interpersonal communication ranks second with a Beta of 0.513, confirming its crucial role in overcoming coordination problems that often arise at Smoke.Bali, such as errors in order transmission from waiters to the kitchen or a lack of communication regarding menu changes. Effective communication through clarity, empathy, and constructive feedback helps reduce friction between departments, increases service speed, and ultimately improves the customer experience. These findings support Sutrisno (2023), who states that interpersonal communication works through intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as Vandela & Sugiarto (2021) and Tanuwijaya et al. (2025), who emphasize its impact on productivity in the service sector.

Servant leadership, with a Beta of 0.448, still makes a significant contribution, albeit slightly lower than the other two variables. Leaders who prioritize service, such as providing emotional support, empowerment in small decision-making, and ethical role modeling, are able to build long-term employee loyalty and commitment, especially amid the high pressures of the restaurant industry. Although initial observations indicate weaknesses such as a lack of assertiveness, these empirical results indicate that the servant leadership practices at Smoke.Bali are sufficiently effective in driving performance. The findings are in line with Saleem et al. (2020), who found mediation of affective and cognitive trust, as well as Yani (2024) and Supardi et al. (2023), who linked it to increased loyalty and performance in the Indonesian context.

Theoretically, these results reinforce PathGoal Theory by showing that a combination of leader support (servant leadership), removal of communication barriers, and provision of knowledge resources is an effective path to high performance goals. Compared to previous studies that sometimes found contradictory results (e.g., insignificant effects in the public sector), the context of private restaurants with high interaction intensity makes these three factors even more relevant. The novelty of the findings lies in their simultaneous application in medium-sized culinary businesses in Bali, where local cultural factors (hospitality and collaboration) may reinforce these positive effects.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis, servant leadership, interpersonal communication, and knowledge sharing, either together or separately, have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at Smoke.Bali Restaurant, explaining 67.9% of the variation in performance. Knowledge sharing

emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by interpersonal communication and servant leadership. These findings emphasize the importance of building a supportive organizational culture in the restaurant industry.

Practical recommendations for management include: (1) conducting regular servant leadership workshops for supervisors and managers; (2) implementing internal digital platforms (e.g., structured chat groups or daily briefing sessions) to improve communication; (3) establishing weekly mentoring and sharing sessions to encourage knowledge sharing. The limitations of this study are the relatively small sample size and focus on a single location, resulting in limited generalizability. Future research is recommended to add mediator variables such as job satisfaction or motivation, and expand the sample to include several similar restaurants in Bali.

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