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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

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1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector, particularly the restaurant industry, increasingly depends on its ability to create superior service experiences as a source of competitive advantage. In restaurants, service quality is not determined only by food taste, menu variety, or physical atmosphere, but also by the quality of interaction between employees and customers. Employees who perform well are able to respond quickly, communicate politely, solve customer problems, and complete operational tasks efficiently. These behaviors contribute to customer satisfaction, repeat visits, and positive word of mouth, which are important for sustaining business growth in a highly competitive culinary market (Rusavska & Neilenko, 2022; 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 a culinary destination that offers an open-fire barbecue concept by combining authentic flavors with Bali's tropical atmosphere. The restaurant serves the upper-middle market segment, including domestic and international tourists, through premium menus such as brisket, pork ribs, and fresh steak prepared using low-and-slow cooking techniques. Although it has a strategic location, distinctive concept, and attractive ambience, internal data in 2024 indicate an unfavorable sales performance. Average monthly sales realization reached only IDR 1.36 billion, while the target was IDR 2.05 billion. This condition produced an

average negative deviation of 37.1%, with the sharpest decline occurring in December, when sales achievement reached only 26.7% of the target (Smoke.Bali Restaurant Internal Data, 2025).

This decline indicates that the restaurant faces operational challenges that may be related to employee performance. Suboptimal performance can appear in the form of slow responses to customer complaints, order-serving errors, inconsistent service standards, and weak coordination between departments. In a restaurant environment, these problems can directly affect customer experience because operational activities are highly interdependent. The front service team, kitchen staff, cashier, and management must coordinate accurately and quickly so that service runs smoothly.

Leadership is one important factor in supporting employee performance. Servant leadership emphasizes serving employees, empowering them, developing their potential, and building ethical relationships. This leadership style can strengthen employees' sense of belonging, motivation, and willingness to provide quality service (Azimatun et al., 2020; Yani, 2024). However, preliminary observations at Smoke.Bali show that leaders sometimes avoid confrontation, causing slow and less decisive operational decisions. In addition, interpersonal communication remains a challenge. Miscommunication between waiters and the kitchen, poorly communicated menu changes, and employees' perception that their opinions are not heard can reduce coordination and work motivation (Saputra, 2023; Sundari, 2024). Knowledge sharing is also not yet optimal because valuable experiences, service strategies, and cooking techniques are rarely documented or shared systematically. This condition may limit innovation, learning, and collective skill development (Aritonang, 2023; Trinovela, 2021). Thus, improving human resource practices is crucial to ensure that the restaurant can maintain consistent service excellence amid market pressure and competition.

Based on these phenomena, this study aims to analyze the influence of servant leadership, interpersonal communication, and knowledge sharing on employee performance at Smoke.Bali Restaurant in Badung, Bali. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to human resource management studies in the hospitality sector and practical recommendations for restaurant management to improve employee performance, service quality, sales achievement, and long-term competitiveness.

2. LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS

Path Goal Theory, developed by House (1971), explains that effective leadership guides employees toward goal achievement by clarifying tasks, providing support, and reducing obstacles. In this perspective, servant leadership is relevant because leaders place employee needs as a priority and create conditions that encourage personal and professional growth (Greenleaf, 1977; Saleem et al., 2020). Servant leaders are characterized by empathy, active listening, empowerment, ethical behavior, and employee development (Tentama & Muhopilah, 2020). These characteristics can increase trust, motivation, and commitment, thereby supporting employee performance.

Interpersonal communication refers to the direct exchange of information, emotions, and feedback between individuals. It involves active listening, clear expression, openness, and the ability to adapt communication styles to different situations (Saputra, 2023). In restaurant operations, effective interpersonal communication is essential because employees must coordinate quickly, understand customer needs, and prevent errors. Good communication reduces misunderstanding, strengthens teamwork, and improves synergy (Sundari, 2024; Sutrisno, 2023).

Knowledge sharing is a voluntary process in which employees exchange tacit and explicit knowledge, including service procedures, customer handling strategies, cooking techniques, and problem-solving experiences. This practice improves capability and strengthens organizational learning (Aritonang, 2023; Yuniarti et al., 2023). Employee performance is reflected in work quality, output quantity, timeliness, responsibility, and initiative (Rustiawan et al., 2023). Previous studies show that servant leadership improves performance through trust and commitment (Bakry, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2024; Supardi et al.,

2023), interpersonal communication enhances coordination and motivation (Vandela & Sugiarto, 2021; Tanuwijaya et al., 2025), and knowledge sharing supports innovation and learning behavior (Sayouw et al., 2024; Setyowati & Sukarno, 2023). Therefore, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:
H_1: Servant leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.
H_2: Interpersonal communication has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.
H_3: 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 indicate that employees at Smoke.Bali Restaurant are dominated by men (64.3%), mostly aged 20–30 years (54.8%), and largely have a Diploma educational background (69.0%). In terms of tenure, most respondents have worked for one to less than two years (40.5%), reflecting the relatively young age of the restaurant, which has operated for approximately 3.5 years. These characteristics suggest that the workforce is generally young, educated, and still in the early stage of organizational adaptation.

The instrument test results show that all questionnaire items were valid, while reliability testing produced Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.879 to 0.946, indicating strong internal consistency. Descriptive analysis shows that respondents' perceptions of servant leadership, interpersonal communication, knowledge sharing, and employee performance fall into the "Good" category, with mean scores between 3.41 and 4.20. Knowledge sharing obtained the highest average score, followed by servant leadership and interpersonal communication.

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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