

The Role of Self-Determination in Linking Humble Leadership to Employee Adaptive Performance

Khusnul Fikri¹, Ivalaina Astarina^{2*}, Rian Rahmat Ramadhan³, Rahayu Setianingsih⁴, Marnis⁵, Devi Alviani⁶, Febblina Daryanes⁷

^{1,5}Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

²Institut Teknologi Bisnis Indragiri, Rengat, Indonesia

^{3,4,6}Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

⁷Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

¹khusnulfikri@lecturer.unri.ac.id, ²ivalainaastarina@itbind.ac.id, ³rianrahmatramadhan@umri.ac.id,

⁴rahayusetianingsih@umri.ac.id, ⁵marnisatmojo@yahoo.com, ⁶devialviani8@gmail.com,

⁷febblina.daryanes@lecturer.unri.ac.id

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

Amid the evolving business environment, traditional performance management models have become less relevant, emphasizing the importance of adaptive performance. Adaptive performance is assumed to be influenced by humble leadership, though its impact may depend on employees' perceptions of the leader's motives. This study, using Self-Determination Theory, aims to examine the role of self-determination as a mediator in the relationship between humble leadership and adaptive performance. Data was collected through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire from 185 private sector employees in Riau, analyzed using SEM PLS. The results show that humble leadership has a positive impact on adaptive performance, both directly and through self-determination as a mediator.

Keywords: Humble Leadership, Self-Determination, Adaptive Performance

Peran Self-Determination dalam Menghubungkan Kepemimpinan Rendah Hati dengan Kinerja Adaptif Karyawan

Abstrak

Di tengah perubahan lingkungan bisnis, model manajemen kinerja tradisional menjadi kurang relevan, sehingga menekankan pentingnya kinerja adaptif. Kinerja adaptif diasumsikan dipengaruhi oleh kepemimpinan rendah hati, namun dampaknya bergantung pada persepsi karyawan terhadap motif pemimpin. Penelitian ini, dengan menggunakan Teori Determinasi Diri, bertujuan menguji peran determinasi diri sebagai mediator dalam hubungan antara kepemimpinan rendah hati dan kinerja adaptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner Likert 5 poin dari 185 karyawan swasta di Riau, dianalisis menggunakan SEM PLS. Hasil menunjukkan kepemimpinan rendah hati berdampak positif pada kinerja adaptif, baik langsung maupun melalui determinasi diri sebagai mediator.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan Rendah Hati, Determinasi Diri, Kinerja Adaptif

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INTRODUCTION

Amid the dynamics and uncertainty of an ever-increasing business environment, the traditional performance management model in which employees only complete tasks in alignment with organizational demands is becoming obsolete (Charbonnier-Voirin et al.,

2010). Therefore, adaptive performance has attracted extensive attention as an approach as a way to better understand and manage employee performance dynamics (Park and Park, 2019). Adaptive performance refers to an individual's ability to respond swiftly to the demands of a changing environment or situation, as well as the ability to adapt, overcome conflicts, and resolve arising problems (Baard et al., 2014; Carpini et al., 2017). Employee adaptive performance which is crucial for individual and organizational success (Jundt et al., 2015), makes this topic become the main focus for researchers and management practitioners who seek to improve employee adaptive performance (Qurrahtulain et al., 2022).

Employee adaptive performance is encouraged by several factors, and among organizational factors, leadership stands out as the crucial situational and interpersonal influence in driving employee adaptive performance (Fu et al., 2020). Employee adaptive performance can be established by shifting the focus from “top-down” leadership to “bottom-up” leadership, which emphasizes employee influence in the leadership process (Owens and Hekman, 2012). “Bottom-up” leadership has been researched previously with a focus on inclusive leadership (Qurrahtulain et al., 2022) and empowerment leadership (Rousseau and Aubé, 2020), which emphasize employee-centered leadership and have been proven to enhance adaptive performance (Tan et al., 2024). One type of “bottom-up” leadership that is receiving increased attention is a behavior-based leadership model in which leaders evaluate themselves and their subordinates objectively, respect their strengths and contributions, and demonstrate openness to learning (Owens et al., 2013). This is known as humble leadership.

Humble leadership places employees at the center of the leadership process by acknowledging personal limitations, seeking advice from followers, and appreciating employee's learning and growth, in turn increasing employees' intrinsic motivation to be more proactive and adaptive (Sok et al., 2021). However, humble leadership does not always bring positive impacts for all employees. Some research has shown that humble leadership is not the universal solution and can even lead to negative impacts in some situations (Chen et al., 2021; Qin et al., 2021). For example, Bharanitharan et al. (2021) and Kelemen et al. (2023) found that employees' response to humble leadership depends on their perception of the motives behind the behavior. When employees believe that humble leadership is aimed at improving their performance and their prosperity, their positive behaviors are likely will increase significantly. In contrast, if they perceived that the leader's humble behavior is more directed towards impression management or manipulative, it may lower their sense of psychological security and restrict their creativity (Liu et al., 2024). It showed that there is still a research gap regarding the result of humble leadership, and we still need to know more clearly how employees respond to this leadership. As a result, this research aims to understand the mechanisms that underlie the relationship between humble leadership and employee performance, especially in the context of the organization's dynamic changes that require rapid adaptation from workers.

Mechanisms that act as mediators in the effect of humble leadership on employee's performance, such as task performance and creative performance, have been identified in various researches. For example, employee's perspective-taking based on social information processing theory (Wang et al., 2017), feelings of trust from the perspective of social

exchange theory (Cho et al., 2021), and the humbleness of the team in the context of social learning theory (Ye et al., 2020). Although these results provide preliminary insights into the basic mechanisms between humble leadership and employee's adaptive performance, we still do not completely understand how humble leadership influences employee's adaptive performance, and an essential omission is the related research on employee's intrinsic motivation (Zhang et al., 2024).

Employees' intrinsic motivation is crucial due to the concept of employees' adaptive performance that emphasizes their tolerance, initiative, and responsiveness (Griffin et al., 2007). Humble leadership, with its supporting characteristics, can increase employees' intrinsic motivation, which in turn develops their adaptive performance (Luu, 2021). Therefore, a motivational perspective is a suitable approach to investigate the mediation mechanism between humble leadership and employees' adaptive performance. In this context, Self-Determination Theory becomes the relevant motivational framework, since it emphasizes the intrinsic desire for growth and development (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Self-determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes the importance of self-determination in motivating an individual's performance. Self-determination refers to “employees' feelings of choice and freedom in starting and changing their actions” (Deci et al., 1989). In this context, self-determination acts as the motivational mechanism that guides and motivates employees' performance, which allows them to work more effectively and efficiently (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This theory highlights how humble leadership can play an important role in fulfilling employees' psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and connectedness, ultimately boosting their self-determination. Previous research suggests that humble leaders can positively affect employees' self-determination positively through approaches such as accurate self-reflection, appreciation of team contributions, and learning from others (Chen et al., 2021). Humble leaders not only encourage employees to feel more appreciated but also provide space for them to develop and accomplish their full potential. Thus, we hypothesized that self-determination serves as the mediator that explains how humble leadership can increase employees' adaptive performance.

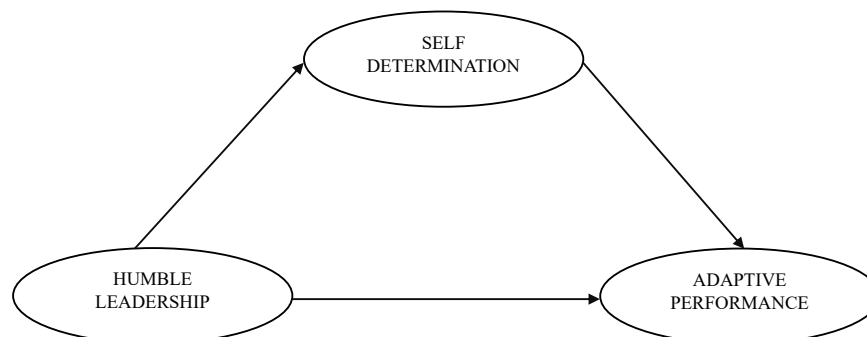


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach to investigate the effect of humble leadership on adaptive performance through self-determination. The research design used was cross-sectional and focused on micro-level (individual-level) analysis. The subjects of this study involved private employees in Riau where they were experimented with to test

the proposed model. Humble leadership plays an important role in building employee independence in private companies because of their more dynamic, competitive nature, reliance on innovation, and rapid response to market changes. Humble leaders tend to provide autonomy, support competence, and build warm relationships with employees, which are three key elements in Self-Determination theory. Freedom to make decisions in private companies makes employees feel more intrinsically motivated to adapt to changing job demands. In this case, it encourages adaptive performance, where employees are not only able to face change, but also proactively seek innovative solutions. This differs from public companies, which are more bureaucratic and have a work structure that tends to be stable. Therefore, humble leadership is predicted to be an effective strategy for creating a work culture that supports individual and organizational growth in a sustainable manner. Considering that there are three variables in this study, the minimum number of respondents required is 30, calculated based on the rule of 10 times the number of variables (10×3). However, the researcher chose to increase the sample size to 180 respondents (5×36), which is five times the amount of variable indicators, in order to improve population representation. After setting the sample size, questionnaires were prepared for data collection.

Variable measurements on the questionnaire were made using a 5-points Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Humble Leadership variable was measured using a nine-item scale from Owens et al. (2013). Employees were asked to evaluate their leader's humility. Example items include 'My leader is willing to learn from others'. Nine-item scale from Griffin et al. (2007) was used to measure adaptive performance. An example item is "he/she/they complete their core tasks well using standard procedures". Lastly, to measure the self-determination variable eighteen-item scale was adapted from Van den Broeck et al. (2010). Example item of this scale is "At the workplace, I can be myself in my job".

As many as 200 online questionnaires were distributed for private employees in Riau using the Simple Random Sampling method to anticipate bias, and 189 questionnaires were returned. Only 185 of these surveys were suitable for data analysis, though, as four of them were incomplete. This resulted in a response rate of 103%. The results of respondents' responses in the form of primary data that have been collected will be processed using SEM PLS.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The respondents in this study comprised 185 people, demonstrating diversity yet remaining in the group with similar characteristics. The majority of respondents are highly educated, with 86% of them holding bachelor's degrees and 14% holding master's degrees. Marital status is also dominant with 82% of respondents being married, indicating high levels of personal stability. The majority of respondents have substantial work experience spanning more than 5-10 years, suggesting that they have a deep understanding of the world of work. In addition, 78% of respondents were in the range of 30-45 years old, which is a productive adult age where individuals are likely to have great experience and emotional maturity. The combination of high educational background, stability of marital status, extensive work

experience, and mature age indicates that the respondents in this study are experienced individuals with mature attitude.

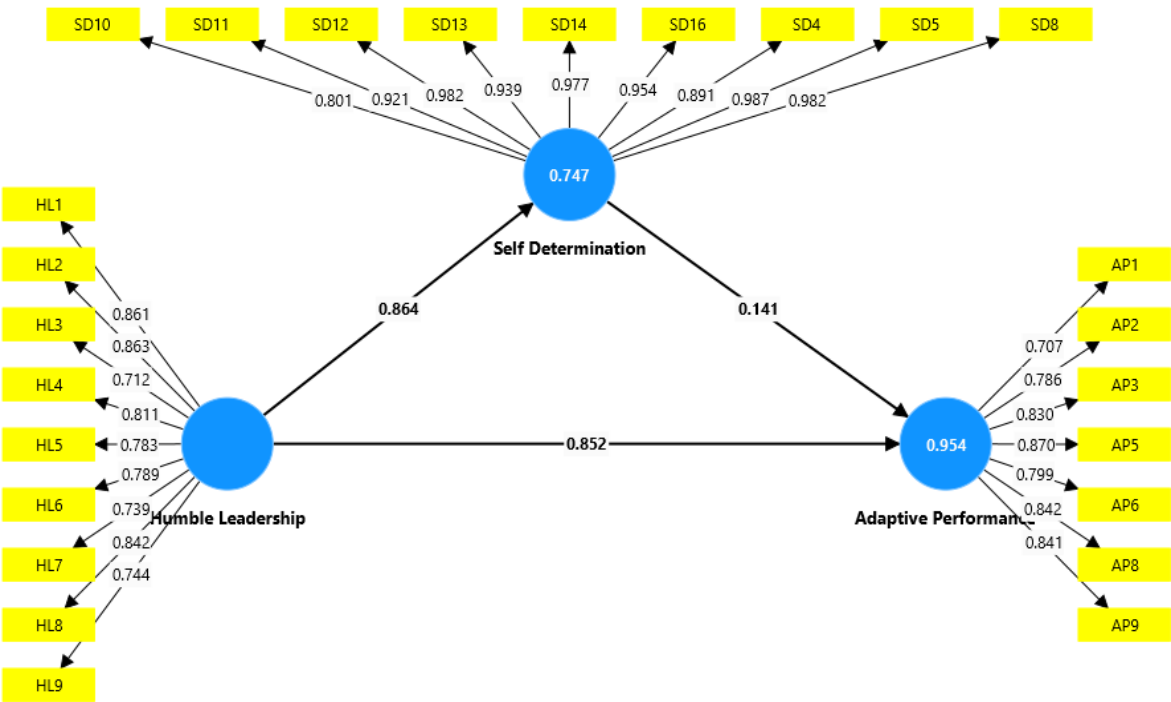


Figure 2. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

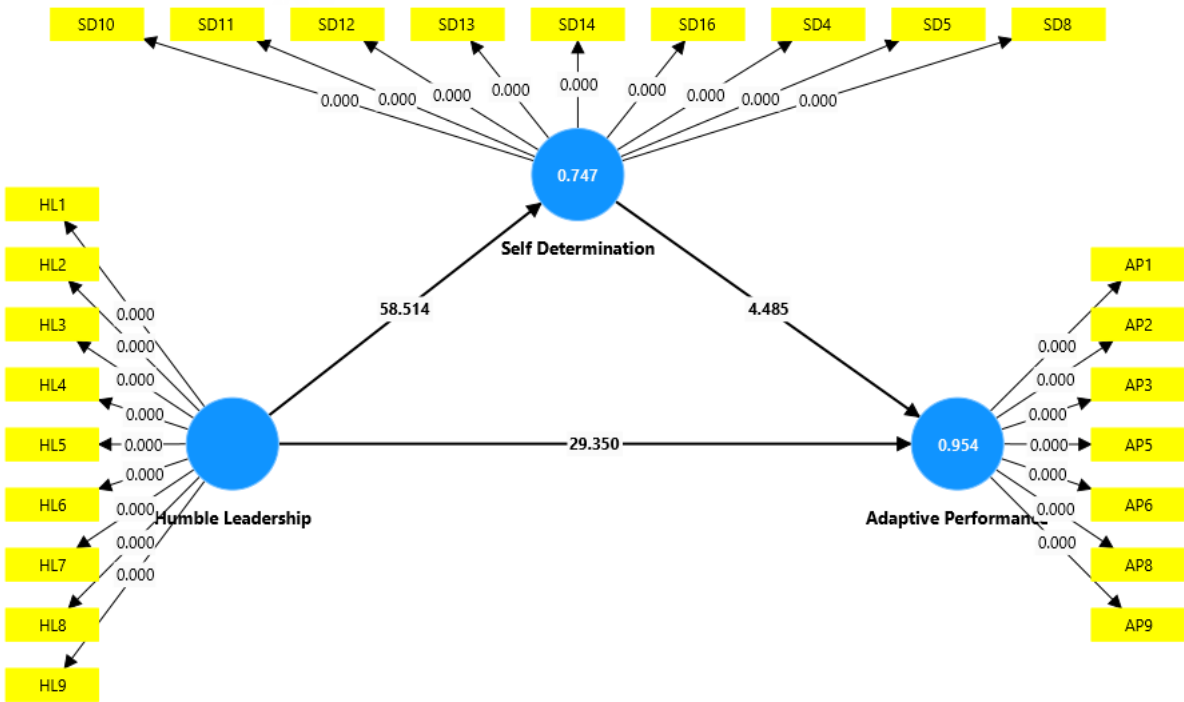


Figure 3. Evaluation of the Structural Model

Validity Test

Table 1. <i>Validity Test I – III</i>		
	Adaptive Performance	Humble Leadership
Self-determination		
Testing 1		
AP4	0.691	
SD1		0.629
SD15		0.636
SD2		0.598
SD6		0.622
SD7		0.653
SD9		0.619
Testing 2		
AP7	0.694	
SD18		0.700
SD3		0.676
Testing 3		
SD17		0.652

In the validity tests carried out, it was seen that several indicators that did not pass the convergent validity threshold of 0.7, thus they were eliminated from the analysis. In the first test, the AP4 indicator for the Adaptive Performance construct showed a validity value of 0.691, which is slightly below the set threshold. In addition, indicators in the Self-determination construct, such as SD1, SD15, SD2, SD6, SD7, and SD9, also show low validity values, ranging of 0.598 to 0.653. In the second test, indicator AP7 also did not reach the value of 0.7, although it was only slightly lower, at 0.694. However, other indicators, such as SD18 and SD3, showed better validity values, at 0.700 and 0.676 respectively. In the third test, indicator SD17 also did not pass the validity criteria with a value of 0.652. Based on these results, indicators with validity values less than 0.7 should be eliminated from the model to improve the accuracy and validity of the analysis results. After the third test and all invalid indicators were removed, we conducted the fourth test (See Table 2).

The Adaptive Performance variable, indicators AP1 to AP9 showed factor loadings ranging from 0.707 to 0.870, indicating that these indicators are valid in reflecting the adaptive performance of employees. Factor loadings that are higher than 0.7 indicate that each indicator contributes significantly to the Adaptive Performance construct.

The Humble Leadership variable, indicators HL1 to HL9, has factor loadings ranging from 0.712 to 0.863. All these indicators are also valid in measuring humble leadership, with HL1 and HL2 having the highest values (0.861 and 0.863), indicating that these indicators are highly representative of the humble leadership concept.

SD4 to SD16 contain very high factor loadings for the Self-determination variable, ranging from 0.801 to 0.987. This indicates that all indicators have very strong validity in reflecting employee self-determination, with SD5 having the highest value (0.987), indicating that this indicator is very strong in measuring the self-determination concept. Overall, the results of this validity test suggest that all indicators on the three variables have good validity and can be relied on to measure the intended construct.

Table 2. *Validity Test IV*

	Adaptive Performance	Humble Leadership	Self-determination
AP1	0.707		
AP2	0.786		
AP3	0.830		
AP5	0.870		
AP6	0.799		
AP8	0.842		
AP9	0.841		
HL1		0.861	
HL2		0.863	
HL3		0.712	
HL4		0.811	
HL5		0.783	
HL6		0.789	
HL7		0.739	
HL8		0.842	
HL9		0.744	
SD10			0.801
SD11			0.921
SD12			0.982
SD13			0.939
SD14			0.977
SD16			0.954
SD4			0.891
SD5			0.987
SD8			0.982

Reliability Test

Table 3. *Reliability Test and Construct Validity*

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Adaptive Performance	0.913	0.916	0.931	0.660
Humble Leadership	0.928	0.942	0.939	0.633
Self-Determination	0.983	0.984	0.985	0.881

The results of the reliability analysis and construct validity indicate that all of the research variables have a high level of reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the Adaptive Performance variable is 0.913, Composite Reliability is 0.931, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is 0.660. It demonstrates that the items measuring Adaptive Performance have good internal consistency and are able to explain more than half of the variability of that variable. Regarding the Humble Leadership variable, the Cronbach's Alpha value was recorded at 0.928 with Composite Reliability equal to 0.939 and AVE equal to 0.633. These results also demonstrate solid reliability and validity, with items that measure Humble Leadership fairly consistent and able to explain most of the variability of the construct.

The self-determination variable yielded the stronger results, with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.983, Composite Reliability equal to 0.985, and a very high AVE of 0.881. These values indicate that the items on this variable are highly reliable and valid, accounting for nearly all the variability of the construct explained by the items. These findings demonstrate that all of the study's constructs have good validity and reliability, which makes them suitable for use in further analyzes.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 4. *R Square*

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Adaptive Performance	0.954	0.953
Self-Determination	0.747	0.746

The R-square value for Adaptive Performance is 0.954, while the adjusted R-square is 0.953. It means that 95.4% of the variability in Adaptive Performance can be explained by Humble Leadership and Self-Determination, indicating that these factors are highly influential in determining the level of Adaptive Performance. The high adjusted R-square value also implies that the model is quite stable and the prediction of Adaptive Performance is very reliable.

The R-square value for Self-determination is 0.747 and the adjusted R-square is 0.746. This indicates that Humble Leadership explains 74.7% of the variability in Self-Determination, which is an important part of this model. The significant effect of Humble Leadership on Self-Determination demonstrated that Self-determination is potentially becoming the effective mediator in the relationship between Humble Leadership and Adaptive Performance.

Overall, these results indicate that Humble Leadership has a significant influence on Adaptive Performance, both directly and through the mediation of Self-Determination. This model provides empirical evidence that Self-Determination is a key in explaining how Humble Leadership can enhance one's adaptive ability in the work environment.

Hypothesis Test Analysis

Table 5. *Hypothesis Testing*

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P values
Humble Leadership -> Adaptive Performance	0.852	29.350	0.000
Humble Leadership -> Self-Determination	0.864	58.514	0.000
Self-Determination -> Adaptive Performance	0.141	4.485	0.000
Humble Leadership -> Self-Determination -> Adaptive Performance	0.122	4.257	0.000

The results of the hypothesis test using Smart PLS 4.0 provide critical information about the relationship between Humble Leadership, Self-Determination, and Adaptive Performance, as follows:

1. The direct relationship between Humble Leadership and Adaptive Performance indicates that the path coefficient is 0.852 with a t-value is 29.350 and a p-value is 0.000. This

indicates that Humble Leadership has a very strong and statistically significant influence on Adaptive Performance. The hypothesis that Humble Leadership positively promotes Adaptive Performance is accepted because the p-value is significantly less than 0.05.

2. The relationship between Humble Leadership and Self-Determination is also highly significant, with the path coefficient is 0.864, the T value is 58.514, and the p value is 0.000. These results indicate that Humble Leadership has a strong and significant influence on increasing Self-Determination.
3. The relationship between Self-Determination and Adaptive Performance has the path coefficient equal to 0.141, T value equal to 4.485, and p value equal to 0.000. Although the effect is not as great as the direct relationship between Humble Leadership and Adaptive Performance, these results indicate that self-determination also contributes significantly to the improvement of Adaptive Performance.
4. Mediation analysis indicates that Humble Leadership affects Adaptive Performance through self-determination with a path coefficient equal to 0.122, T-value equal to 4.257, and p-value equal to 0.000. It affirms that self-determination acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between Humble Leadership and Adaptive Performance.

The results of these hypothesis tests support all of the proposed hypotheses, indicating that Humble Leadership not only directly improves Adaptive Performance but also through increased Self-Determination, strengthens the overall effect on individual adaptive ability.

Humble Leadership Encourages Adaptive Performance

Humble leadership has an important role in encouraging adaptive performance in the work environment. A humble leader, as reflected by their actions in seeking feedback, acknowledging knowledge limitations, and appreciating the unique contributions of others (Owens et al., 2013) creates an environment that supports adaptability. When a leader opens up to ideas and suggestions from others, it not only enriches the team's collective knowledge but also encourages the members to be more adaptable when dealing with changes and new challenges. Leaders who appreciate and learn from the strengths of others help teams in developing new skills and find better ways of completing their main tasks, which eventually improves the adaptive performance of individuals in the organization (Griffin et al., 2007).

Humble Leadership Encourages Self-Determination

Humble leadership also plays an important role in increasing self-determination among team members. Humble leaders demonstrate appreciation for each individual's unique contribution and recognize their strengths (Owens et al., 2013). This attitude creates an inclusive work environment, where team members feel appreciated and connected to their colleagues. When a leader welcomes the ideas, suggestions, and strengths of others, it increases the individual's sense of competence and autonomy in performing their work. Individuals feel free to express themselves, use the approaches they find most effective, and feel supported in achieving their goals. This humble leader attitude strengthens the feeling of self-determination among team's members, as they feel that their contributions are appreciated and they have control of how they work (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

These behaviors create a supportive learning environment among employees.

Humble leadership plays an important role in influencing employees' adaptive performance, and self-determination may act as a significant mediator in this relationship. Humble leaders, as reflected by their behaviors of actively seeking feedback, acknowledging personal flaws, and appreciating team members' strengths and unique contributions (Owens et al., 2013), create a supportive and empowering work environment. In this kind of environment, employees feel more valued and respected, and they have the freedom to express themselves at work.

Self-determination, which comprises feelings of connectedness, competence, and autonomy (Van den Broeck et al., 2010), is critical for employees as they navigate workplace changes and challenges. When employees believe that they have control over how they work and are capable of completing their tasks, they are more likely to adapt towards changes and innovate in their ways of working. For example, employees who feel supported by their leaders to try new approaches or learn new skills will be better prepared to tackle changes in their basic tasks (Griffin et al., 2007).

Self-determination strengthens the relationship between humble leadership and adaptive performance by giving employees a higher sense of autonomy and competence. Thus, when employees feel more intrinsically motivated and have confidence in their ability to adapt, they demonstrate higher adaptive performance. It suggests that self-determination not only promotes employees to respond effectively towards change but also enhances the positive impact of humble leadership on adaptive performance.

Therefore, humble leadership not only affects adaptive performance directly but also through increasing employees' self-determination. By creating an environment where employees feel appreciated, competent, and have the autonomy, humble leaders can improve employees' adaptability in the face of changes, which eventually contributes to improving overall organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that humble leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' adaptive performance, both directly and through increased self-determination. Humble leaders create an environment that supports adaptation and innovation by appreciating team members' strengths and contributions. Self-determination acts as an important mediator in strengthening this relationship, indicating that employees' intrinsic motivation is a key to optimizing their adaptive capabilities. Thus, implementing humble leadership in the organization can be the effective strategy for improving the adaptive performance and competitiveness of the organization in facing the dynamic changes of the work environment.

This research recommends that organization should focus on developing humble leadership skills through training and development. In addition, it is important for the company to create an effective and transparent feedback system so that leaders can continually learn and develop. This study provides recommendations for MSMEs. Owners or leaders of MSMEs should foster an environment at work that encourages employee autonomy by, for example, fostering trust in decision-making and a drive to complete tasks.

Second, MSME leaders can provide direction and training so that employees feel competent and confident in facing change, especially in the digital era and tight market competition. Third, leaders need to build open and supportive relationships with employees, for example by listening to their ideas and providing constructive feedback. By implementing humble leadership and supporting self-determination, MSMEs can have more adaptive, innovative, and highly competitive work teams, which ultimately increase business resilience and growth amidst the ever-changing economic dynamics.

This research has several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, this research only involved private employees in Riau as the research subjects, therefore the results may not be generalizable to a wider population or different industry sectors. Secondly, this research uses a cross-sectional approach, which only describes the situation at one point in time, so it cannot capture the dynamics of the relationship between humble leadership, self-determination, and adaptive performance in the long term. Thirdly, this research depends on data collected through surveys, which may be susceptible to respondent biases, such as desirable social bias or a mismatch between self-perception and actual behavior. To overcome these limitations, further research is recommended to include more diverse samples from different industry sectors and geographical locations to increase the generalizability of the findings. In addition, longitudinal studies are needed to explore how the relationships between humble leadership, self-determination and adaptive performance develop over time. Further, future research may also consider using more diverse data collection methods, such as direct observation or in-depth interviews, to minimize bias and get a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under analysis. Finally, exploration of other variables that may act as moderators or mediators, such as organizational culture or psychological climate, may also enrich the understanding of the dynamics of humble leadership in a larger context.

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