The Resource-Based View of Tourism Management in Investigating the Critical Moderation Role of Leadership Inside SMEs and VUCA Markets

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Abstract

Research on tourism management has been the focus of many human resource management studies. However, fewer studies have been done with an emphasis on Asian small and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, especially the research on employee morale and performance. Based on this issue, this study accordingly proposes research objectives, which are: to explore the relationship between the morale and performance of employees in SMEs; and in order to offer a research novelty, it is important to explore the mediation role of leadership on the relationship between the employee's morale and performance through the underpinning of a resource-based view of tourism management inside the rigid and dynamic of the tourism market atmospheres, which are: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). This study then applies a quantitative research methodology and comes up with the essential results and implications, which are: for theoretical contribution novelty, on the basis of a resource-based view of tourism management, the outcomes of this study eventually offer a clear systematic view of the potential moderation influence of leaderships on employee morale and employee performance. The details of both the practical and managerial unique contributions of this study are also explained in a specific section of this paper.

Keywords: employee performance; leadership; VUCA; human resource management; RBV

Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) has been considered as one of the business units that, in order to survive in a competitive market environment, must continually develop its unique dynamic characteristics. As such, SME is strongly required to make some considerable efforts, e.g., to carefully focus on its human resource development, particularly on its employee morale (EM) and employee performance (EP) (Pattnaik & Jena, 2020; Wright & Snell, 2009). This is due to the fact that SME tends to be associated with limited firm resources, and consequently, EM and EP become vital components for SME in order to survive within competitive markets as well as to continually improve and advance its competitive and strategic advantage (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019; Eviana et al., 2022; Ford et al., 2018; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020). Furthermore, the study of Pattnaik and Jena (2020) also explains that EM is perceived as the firm's energy, which, on the one hand, directs the firm and its employees to move forward. On the other hand, such energy, however, leads the employee to feel dissatisfied and/or unhappy. Other scholars (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019) suggest that EP is considered to be the degree to which the level of productivity of an individual employee meets the firm's performance standards. With a low morale level, the employee may potentially have particular negative effects on the firm. For example, the declination of employee productivity as well as performance later affects the firm's performance at all (Bello et al., 2021; Ford et

al., 2018; Obeng et al., 2021). Moreover, every organisation principally needs proper leadership management, which accordingly allows every manager within the organisation to influence, stimulate, and encourage employee behaviour (Guhr et al., 2019). Thus, motivated employees are one of the most important results of effective leadership (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Likewise, the recent study of Nemr and Liu (2021) denotes that successful managers are also seen as respected leaders who successfully play their role in affecting as well as helping the employees achieve the objectives or goals of the firm.

Based on the prior discussion above, this study denotes that although the research on employee morale and employee performance has been widely discussed and established within the literature with an emphasis on large firms, nevertheless, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by exploring the role of employee morale on employee performance in the context of small firms, especially SMEs, which are from developing countries. The main reason is that there is a lack of a leadership mediation-based view of SMEs' research in developing countries, especially in the East Asia region, with a focus on the resource-based view of tourism management. Therefore, in delivering the research novelty for this study, this study consequently aims to fulfil the gap in the literature above through the incorporation of employee morale and employee performance into the holistic resource-based view of tourism management, with the additional exploration of the mediation effect of leadership.

Review of related literature

Employee morale (EM)

Some scholars (Obeng et al., 2021; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020) imply that the term EM is always associated with the employees' overall outlook, manner, and attitude toward their work. Within the context of management discipline, EM also relates to particular aspects, such as job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. Additionally, a high level of EM, on the one hand, is considered one of the vital factors for the organisation based on several reasons. For example, high morale may increase and improve the organisation's productivity, quality, and job income, eventually generating a more prolific, constructive, and positive work environment. On the other hand, literature indicates that if employee morale is not effectively organised, then it can result in a potential threat or negative effect on the organisation's productivity and its overall performance. Moreover, there are three important factors that play a critical role in EM, namely: (1) the work environment, or WE; (2) compensation, or C; and (3) work-life balance, or WLB.

Employee performance (EP)

Since a few decades ago, the study of EP has been a principal topic of interest among scholars, and it has been viewed as a massive and complex research field, particularly to define its terminology (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). Scholars such as Baehr and Renck (1958) try to define EP, and eventually they come up with their research finding, which denotes that EP is associated with the extent to which a member of organisation contributes to achieving the organisation's objective. Voorhees et al. (2020) also define EP as the quality and quantity of outcomes produced on the job relative to the costs incurred in achieving those outcomes. Furthermore, EP's indicators, which can be applied as measurement tools, particularly in assessing the success level of employees in completing their job's task and responsibility, are namely: (1) work quantity and quality, or WQQ; this indicator covers several factors, e.g., work accuracy, work completion records, work attendance, and lateness for work rate (Appiah Fening et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2018; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020; Verma & Kesari, 2020).

Leadership (L)

According to literature, research on leadership has been conducted for many years, and it has attracted scholars' attention over the past decades, particularly to define in detail the terminology of leadership within the context of organisation (Mukhezakule & Tefera, 2019; Rao & Zaidi, 2020). For example, the study of Hogan and Kaiser (2005) indicates that leadership is an extremely significant phenomenon, and perhaps it is the most important key issue in the human sciences. This is because leadership explains team, group, and organisation performance. Furthermore, good leadership helps the performance of teams and groups to be promoted effectively, whereas bad leadership lowers the life quality of every individual who is associated with such bad leadership (Guhr et al., 2019; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; McCarter et al., 2022). Moreover, there are some leadership patterns within the context of organisational leadership; however, according to the literature, transformational leadership has become one of the most interesting research streams of leadership study among scholars (Faupel & Süß, 2019). Transformational leadership is defined as the ability of a leader to inspire and motivate people or followers in order to accomplish over people's own expectations, which are assessed by transformational leadership indicators, namely: inspirational motivation with idealised influence, or IMII (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Guhr et al., 2019; Nemr & Liu, 2021).

Resource-based view of tourism management (RBVTM)

The resource-based view (RBV) contends that a firm can only achieve sustained competitive advantage if it possesses resources and capabilities that are valuable, uncommon, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Lockett & Thompson, 2001; Safari & Saleh, 2020). Additionally, the resource-based view of tourism management (RBVTM) is viewed as a strategic management approach that highlights the internal resources and capabilities of tourism organisations as the basis of their competitive advantage strategy and implementation (Kruesi & Bazelmans, 2023; Sisneros-Kidd et al., 2019). Moreover, in the context of tourism management, the RBV is advantageous for the firm's identification and leveraging of its resources and capabilities variation, such as: (a) tangible resources, which cover the physical assets of the forms, such as hotels, resorts, restaurants, and transportation services; (b) intangible resources, such as a company's name recognition or brand reputation, customer loyalty and relationships, employee intellectual property, knowledge, and skills; and (c) organisational capabilities, which consist of a firm's ability for resource management and coordination effectively, innovation, and change adaptation (Duarte, 2017; Lockett & Thompson, 2001; Ofori & Appiah-Nimo, 2022).

The relationship between EM, EP, and L on the underpinning perspective of RBVTM

Even though SMEs in Indonesia have flourished since a few decades ago and have offered major contributions to the economic growth of Indonesia, nonetheless, this trend later triggers the dynamics of competition levels in the majority of Indonesian industries. Therefore, SME owners are also required to improve their businesses. In line with this notion, scholars indicate that in order to improve the business process and minimise business risks, one of the most important factors that needs to be emphasised is the correct human resource strategy. In doing so, it is critical for SMEs to pay attention and improve periodically on their EM as well as EP in order to acquire a more suitable, accurate, and effective human resource strategy. The reason is that being more accurate and precise in choosing and implementing the strategy of EM as well as EP may potentially have a positive impact on the human resource strategy of the firm, especially the way the firm wins and/or survives in competitive markets.

Furthermore, as suggested by some scholars, such as Guhr et al. (2019) and McCarter et al. (2022), it is important to emphasise the role of leadership in improving the development of the firm. However, fewer studies have been conducted to explain the mediation role of

leadership on the relationship between EM and EP, especially with the emphasis on a resource-based view of tourism management and in the context of Asian countries, e.g., Indonesia. Following this phenomenon, as a research novelty of this study, this study then places leadership as the mediation variable on the relationship between EM and EP in order to fulfil the research gap of this study as well as to contribute to the body of knowledge theoretically and managerially. Subsequently, based on the discussion above, this study thus offers the conceptual framework in the following Figure 1. In line with Figure 1, the research hypotheses of this study are: (1) H1: EM affects L positively; (B) H2: L positively affects EP; (C) H3: EM positively affects EP; and (D) H4: L, as the mediation variable, affects positively the relationship between EM and EP.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework (Processed and designed in 2023)
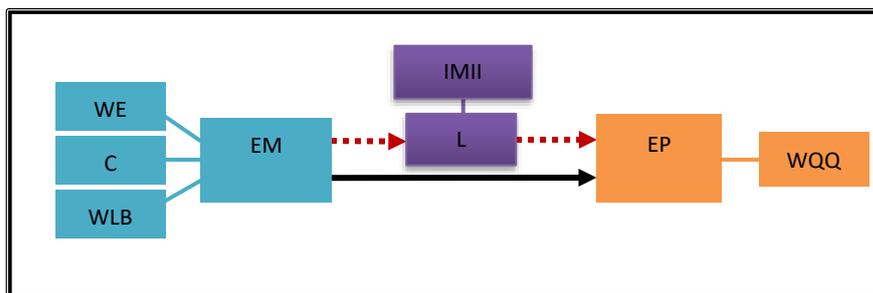
Methods

This study uses a quantitative research method with the support of several approaches, as suggested by Bougie and Sekaran (2019), namely: (1) observation, which is a process of collection of any important information that is related to the research questions that is gathered directly from SMEs in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia; (2) research questionnaire, which contains a number of questions that are related to the research problem and is disseminated to the designated SMEs in Makassar; and (3) interview, which is a proper method to gather any additional information in the process of the research. Additionally, Sekaran and Bougie (2016) also suggest that the research data source can be collected from two sources, which are: (a) the primary data source, e.g., the research questionnaires; and (b) the secondary data source, which is acquired from particular related documentation, such as books, online publications, or databases. This study was also conducted in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, from January 2023 to July 2023.

According to the records of the Ministry of Cooperation and SMEs of Indonesia, this study finds over thousands of SMEs in Makassar; however, only 487 SMEs in Makassar are active, officially registered, and continually extend their licenses. Based on this report, this study recommends that such 487 SMEs become this study's research population, and based on the study of Sekaran and Bougie (2016), it is recommended to have 210 to 215 sample sizes from such a population. Following the rule of thumb above, this study then applies non-probability sampling, especially the purposive sampling technique, which helps this study collect specific characteristics of the samples that are relevant to the research question. Subsequently, after distributing 225 questionnaires, there are 219 questionnaires returned, and finally, there are 213 questionnaires that meet the requirements to be analysed further.

This study uses the first test, which is the validity test, due to the recommendations of several studies, e.g., the study of Andersen and Wagtmann (2004) and Bougie and Sekaran (2019), which suggests that the validity test is viewed as a handy tool in calculating the accuracy level of the research content. If the result of the convergent validity test shows the

loading factor score is equal to or higher than 0.70, then both the indicator and the construct are valid. Whereas, if the AVE, or average variance extracted score, is equal to or higher than 0.05, then the variance and/or discriminant element, which is extracted from every indicator, is considered to be valid. The second test is the reliability test. The reason is due to the suggestion of Juergensen et al. (2020), which recommend that the reliability test is one of the tools of the assessment structures in finding the consistency level of a similar group's final measured score and resulting similar result. In the reliability test, the Cronbach alpha shows the vital score to indicate whether the variable has a Cronbach alpha score equal to or higher than 0.60 (reliable) or whether the variable does not have such a standard score (unreliable) (Haeruddin & Natsir, 2016; Musa et al., 2019; Mustafa et al., 2018; Mustafa et al., 2015). Based on the suggestion of some scholars (Cepeda-Carrion et al., 2019; Ringle et al., 2020), in order to assess the problematic models that are from the cause-effect relationship with the latent variables, it is important to apply the third test, which is the partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM). By using this test, this study also helped to predict the calculation model, direct the non-normal data, work effectively with a broad range of sample sizes, and test research hypotheses (Cepeda-Carrion et al., 2019).

Results and discussions
The validity test results: Convergent and average variance extracted analysis
Literature indicates that the loading factor score, which is from the convergent validity test, becomes one of the vital factors in disclosing whether the construct in this study is valid or invalid to be inserted and used in the questionnaire. Moreover, as suggested by the study of Cepeda-Carrion et al. (2019), this study eventually uses the convergent validity test over the application of Smart-PLS statistical software, which later delivers particular results that help this study confirm whether all research indicators and constructs in the questionnaire are valid or not. If the loading factor score is ≥ 0.70, it can be concluded that the tested indicator or construct is valid (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019; Musa et al., 2019; Mustafa et al., 2018). Subsequently, Table 1 displays convergent validity test scores.

Table 1. Discriminant validity test results – Outer Loadings

Indicators	Employee Morale	Employee Performance	Leadership
WE1	0.742		
WE2	0.763		
WE3	0.765		
C1	0.725		
C2	0.779		
C3	0.742		
WLB1	0.768		
WLB2	0.763		
WLB3	0.839		
WLB4	0.779		
IMII1			0.760
IMII2			0.808
IMII3			0.761
IMII4			0.819
IMII5			0.833
WQQ1		0.895	
WQQ2		0.842	
WQQ3		0.844	
WQQ4		0.772	

According to Table 1, the results show that every indicator, which is from WE to WQQ, has a loading factor score higher than 0.70. For example, the loading factor score of WE1 is 0.742 and that of WLB2 is 0.763. Based on the study of Bougie and Sekaran (2019) about the rule of

thumb of loading factor score, every indicator that is applied in this study is then valid and meets the requirement for further advanced structural model analysis. Furthermore, as recommended by the study of Natsir et al. (2021), the acceptable score of AVE for every construct is equal to or higher than 0.50. The following Table 2 shows the results of the AVE analysis of this study.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, the results of the AVE analysis indicate that the AVE score of every variable that is observed in this study is valid and acceptable to be applied in further statistical analysis. This is because the score of AVE for each variable in this study meets the rule of thumb. In other words, each AVE score, which is in Table 2, is equal to or higher than 0.50. For X, or employee morale, it has a 0.588 AVE score, followed by AVE scores for both employee performance and the leadership variable, which are 0.704 and 0.635.

Table 2. AVE analysis results

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Morale (X)	0.922	0.923	0.588
Employee Performance (Y)	0.859	0.872	0.704
Leadership (Z)	0.856	0.857	0.635

The reliability test results

This study uses the reliability test due to several reasons, which are suggested by several scholars (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019; Juergensen et al., 2020; Musa et al., 2019), namely: (1) to find out the score of the consistency level of similar groups; and (2) to disclose the score of Cronbach alpha of each variable in this study, given the fact that the Cronbach alpha score becomes the vital score in order to confirm whether the variable is reliable or not. The following Table 3 shows the reliability test results.

Table 3. Reliability test results

Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Employee Morale (X)	0.922	0.935
Employee Performance (Y)	0.859	0.905
Leadership (Z)	0.856	0.897

As shown in Table 3, the results indicate that all the variables in this study are reliable and can be used for further structural model analysis. The main reason is that each Cronbach's alpha score for each variable is higher than 0.70. For example, the Cronbach's alpha score of employee morale (X) is 0.922, employee performance (Y) is 0.859, and leadership (Z) is 0.856.

Structural model analysis: Goodness fit model (R-squared or R^2)

The analysis of R^2 is described as the determination coefficient within the regression model, and it defines the proportion of variance in a dependent variable (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019; Lerner et al., 1985; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). It is also used to disclose how good the data in the regression model is. When the score of R^2 is 0, it can be interpreted accordingly, meaning that the regression model is not suitable for the sample. Whereas, when the score of R^2 is 1, it can be concluded that the regression model is suitable and that it perfectly fits the data inside both the sample and the regression model. Additionally, Table 4 specifically demonstrates the influence, or R^2 score, of employee morale (X) on employee performance (Y), with a 0.733, or 73.3%, R^2 score. In addition, employee morale (X) has 0.791 (79.1%) of the R^2 score on leadership (Z), and the remaining score (20.9%) comes from another variable, which is not included within the test.

Table 4. R-Squared analysis results

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Performance (Y)	0.733	0.731
Leadership (Z)	0.791	0.790

Hypothesis test results: The inner model and path coefficient analysis

The analysis of the inner model helps this study determine the relationship between the latent constructs within this study. This analysis is also seen as the test of a structural model, which is useful in calculating the causal relationship among variables and/or latent variables. Additionally, the following Figure 2 describes the result of the inner model analysis. Subsequently, the results of the inner model analysis in Figure 2 show that there are both normal and causal relationships between the latent construct and among variables within this study.
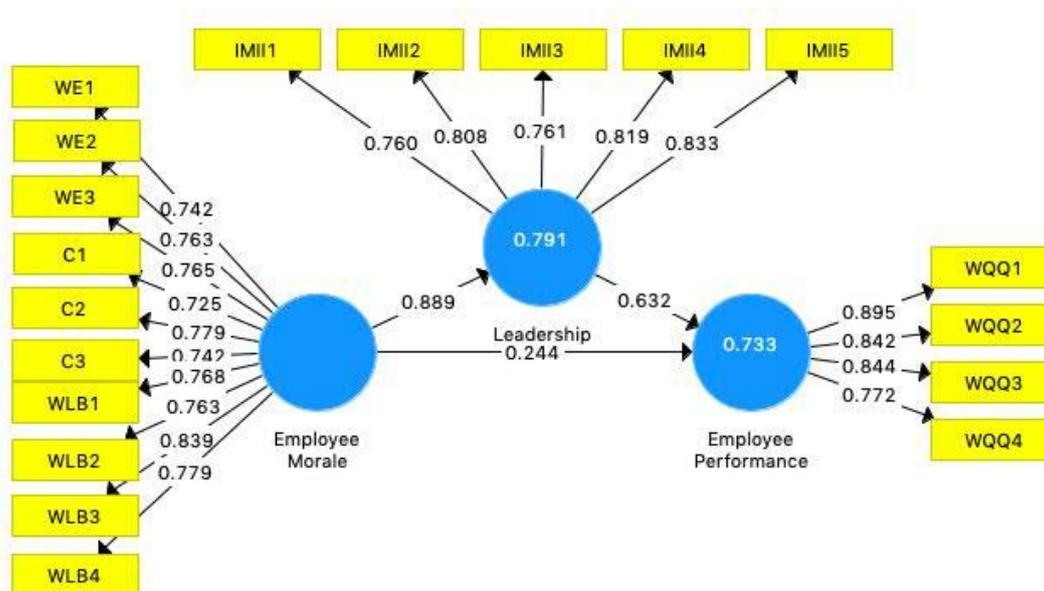

Figure 2. The Results of the Inner Model Analysis

In a more detailed explanation regarding the results of the inner model analysis, this study then conducts an analysis of the path coefficient to observe in detail and to find out whether every hypothesis in this study is accepted or rejected. The path coefficient analysis results are described in the following Table 5.

Table 5. The Results of the Analysis of Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Hypothesis Test Results
EM (X) -> L (Z)	0.889	0.890	0.016	56.773	**0.000**	**Accepted**
L (Z) -> EP (Y)	0.632	0.632	0.080	7.910	**0.000**	**Accepted**
EM (X) -> EP (Y)	0.244	0.246	0.086	2.841	**0.005**	**Accepted**

The effect of EM on L (H1), L on EP (H2), and EM on EP (H3)

Based on the results in in Table 5 and Figure 2, especially on the original sample (O) and P-values score of EM on L, this study concludes that EM has a significant and positive effect on L; in other words, if EM increases, then L also escalates. Likewise, as the P-value score of EM on L is lower than 0.05, this study consequently confirms that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. Moreover, for the effect of L on EP, which is demonstrated in Table 5 and Figure 2, this study indicates that L significantly and positively influences L. This is because both the scores of the

original sample score of L on EP show a positive result, which is 0.632, and the P-Values score of L on EP is lower than 0.05, i.e., there is a significant effect of L on EP. Additionally, according to the results of the path coefficient analysis of L on EP, this study then accordingly concludes that H2 is accepted and H0 is rejected. Subsequently, in regard to Figure 2 and Table 5, this study also correspondingly concludes that H3 is accepted and H0 is rejected. This is because the effect of EM on EP from the results of path coefficient analysis shows that the original sample score of EM on EP is positive, or 0.244, and the P-values score of EM on EP is also lower than 0.05, which means that EM has a significant effect on EP.

The total indirect effect analysis – The mediation role of L on EM and EP (H4)

As revealed in Table 6, the results of the total indirect effect analysis show that the original sample score of L on EM and EP is 0.562. In other words, such a score indicates that L has a positive effect in mediating the relationships between EM and EP. Besides, the P-values score, which is 0.000, also indicates that L has a significant mediation role on the relationship between EM and EP because the P-values score of L on EM and EP is lower than 0.05. Accordingly, based on the discussions above, this study confirms that H4 is accepted and H0 is rejected.

Table 6. The Results of the analysis of path coefficient (Data Processed, 2023)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
EM -> L -> EP	0.562	0.562	0.073	7.726	**0.000**

Conclusions/implications and recommendations

The findings of this study, especially the results in Table 5, indicate that through the approach of the underpinning perspective of RBVTM, this study discovers that employee morale of researched SMEs (tourism SMEs from Makassar, Indonesia) plays a significant role on the leadership and on the employee performance of researched SMEs. This later signifies that, in particular, if SMEs fail to formulate and implement a proper human resource strategy, as well as manage effectively their organisational resources and capabilities in general, then they are considered to potentially deal with several issues in their development and improvement processes. For example, there will be a potential risk or threat to the employee's feelings, e.g., dissatisfaction, sadness, or unhappiness, or even the employee's knowledge and/or intellectual property, that later hinders the productivity of such employee, particularly, and the whole organisation generally, e.g., the decline in SMEs brand reputation, customer loyalty and relationships, innovation, and their change adaptation. These findings are also similar to the study of Anitha (2014), which suggests that several satisfaction factors of employees, e.g., job security, a sustainable compensation package, and the availability of food and drink in the workplace, could increase the morale of workers and later contribute to enhancing the firm's productivity at all.

Furthermore, the findings of this study, which are especially demonstrated in Table 5 and Figure 2, indicate that most of the observed SMEs in this study are keen to advance and expand maximally their human resource strategy, especially their employee performance, through the selection of a proper leadership strategy for their higher officers. For example, good leadership helps the performance of SMEs employees, whether in an individual, team, or group, whereas bad leadership lowers the life quality of employees. This phenomenon also happens not only within the context of small firms but also in large firms, as explained in the recent study by of Byun et al. (2020), which indicates leadership plays a critical role in promoting the personalities of followers, which are the employees and the organisational

environment and size. Subsequently, the findings of this study also reveal that leadership has a significant and positive mediation role on the relationship between employee morale and employee performance. Hence, this study concludes that it is critical and important for SMEs to implement a strategical leadership style in order to inspire and motivate effectively and efficiently the people, followers, and employees for the purpose of the accomplishment of employees' own expectations, such as feeling happy and/or motivated, that later helps SMEs acquire easily and successfully their goals and/or objectives, e.g., the increasing trend of brand reputation, innovation, and/or adapt to change, especially the frequent turbulency events in the dynamics of markets, which are volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA).

In order to contribute to theoretically, this study proposes several research implications, namely: (1) employee morale has a significant and positive role on SMEs' employee performance development and improvement; (2) employee morale in the context of SMEs in Makassar also affects leadership significantly and positively, especially the implementation of proper transformational leadership strategy; (3) leadership strategy also positively plays a significant role on SMEs' employee performance; and (4) leadership strategy, especially the proper selection and implementation of the transformational leadership strategy has a significant mediation effect on the relationship between SMEs' employee morale and performance. Moreover, for managerial implications, this study suggests that it is critical for all business owners, especially the owners of SME, the government, and policymakers, to pay more attention to the selection and implementation of human resource strategies. With the correct selection and implementation of a suitable human resource strategy, it will potentially improve and develop employee morale and performance, as well as leadership management in particular, and it will advance the whole performance of SME in general in competing and surviving within VUCA tourism markets. This study offers in-depth analysis and discussion concerning the employee morale role on employee performance and the mediation effect exploration of leadership among both the employee morale and performance relationship, there is a limitation, however, to this study, which is the expansion of more research locations. As such, this study recommends that future research locations should be in other parts of developing countries but Indonesia, and this study also strongly recommends applying a different research method, which is a qualitative method, and a different specific grounded viewpoint.

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