

Bridging Gaps: How Authentic Leadership Transforms Compensation into Performance

*Dwi Novitasari*¹, *Riyan Sisiawan Putra*¹, *Agung Slamet Prasetyo*², *Salma Ika Desmadhani*², and *Syavira Sabaya*¹

¹Faculty of Business Economics and Digital Technology, Management Department, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

²Accounting Study Program, Widya Wiwaha School of Economics, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³Management Study Program, Widya Wiwaha School of Economics, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract. This study examines the role of authentic leadership as a mediator in the relationship between compensation, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The study was conducted at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia, Yogyakarta, a company operating in the cereal industry utilizing local raw materials. The research employed a quantitative method with a cross-sectional design, using convenience sampling techniques, and data analysis was performed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) method. The results indicate that authentic leadership fully mediates the relationship between compensation and job satisfaction with employee performance. Additionally, it was found that compensation and job satisfaction have a direct negative impact on performance. These findings contribute theoretically to the field of human resource management, particularly in understanding the factors that influence employee performance through the mediation of authentic leadership. The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of companies implementing authentic leadership to enhance employee performance.

Keywords: Compensation, Satisfaction, Leadership, Performance.

1 Introduction

The cereal market is showing great potential as more people adopt a healthy lifestyle. In Indonesia, around 60% of the market share is controlled by multinational companies. Leading players include Nestle, known for popular products like Koko Krunch and Nestum; Kellogg's, the largest cereal producer from the United States; and Pepsico, the maker of Quaker Oatmeal [1]. Cereals are widely consumed both domestically and globally. The cereal industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth, with a total investment reaching Rp. 56.60 trillion. Initially, domestic cereal production was limited due to reliance on imported wheat. However, in recent years, several Indonesian companies, such as PT Mayora Indah and PT Simba Indosnack Makmur, have entered the cereal market. Furthermore, there has been a rising demand for cereals made from alternative ingredients to wheat [2]. Eating cereal for breakfast provides various benefits as it is packed with nutrients and fiber. In

¹ Corresponding author: d.novietasarie@unusa.ac.id

addition to grains, cereals can also be made from taro tubers, a plant introduced to Indonesia by the Americans as an alternative staple to cassava and other tubers. PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia is the company behind Nutriflakes, a cereal made from natural ingredients, particularly arrowroot starch, a locally sourced material from Yogyakarta [3], [4], [5].

Compensation is strongly tied to performance and plays a crucial role in the efficient operation of an organization, highlighting the mutual relationship between employees and the organization. Through this relationship, organizations utilize employee skills to boost their competitiveness, while employees receive compensation to fulfill their livelihood needs [6–9]. Compensation refers to all types of external rewards that employees receive in exchange for their work, such as salaries, bonuses, and benefits [10,11]. Organizational behavior studies often examine job satisfaction, which gauges employees' levels of contentment with their jobs and can impact their behavior and performance [12]. High job satisfaction can significantly enhance employee performance, making it a crucial aspect of organizational psychology that deserves focus. It involves employees' feelings and attitudes toward their work environment and responsibilities and is closely tied to how well an organization manages psychosocial risks. Effectively addressing these risks is key to shielding employees from work-related stress [13]. Authentic leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes psychological well-being, ethical behavior, and fostering self-awareness, moral values, balanced judgment, and open communication between leaders and followers. This approach ultimately encourages personal growth and development [14]. Authentic leadership has a profound impact on both organizational and individual behavior, particularly that of employees [15]. Performance evaluations consider not only organizational results but also employee actions [16]. Despite extensive research on performance factors and evaluation methods, performance appraisals often fall short. Common challenges include skewed performance distributions, unreliable or invalid evaluation methods, limited employee feedback, and a focus on organizational benefits over individual development [17].

While previous research has emphasized the impact of authentic leadership on performance, its role as a mediator between factors like compensation, job satisfaction, and individual performance remains understudied. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how authentic leadership influences employee performance at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia Yogyakarta. Specifically, it will explore the relationships between compensation, job satisfaction, and authentic leadership, considering the unique challenges of performance evaluation in a local company entering the global market with locally sourced products.

2 Literature Review

Effective compensation is crucial for motivating employees and fostering organizational success. By offering fair and competitive rewards, organizations can attract top talent, retain existing employees, and boost morale. A well-designed compensation system should consider external market factors, internal fairness, and individual contributions to ensure employees feel valued and motivated [18], [19], [20]. Appropriate compensation not only rewards employees for their work but also supports their personal and professional development by positively impacting their self-esteem, sense of accomplishment, and social standing [21]. Compensation is shaped by various factors, including work experience, education, seniority, and performance. Employees with extensive experience add value to higher-level managerial positions by minimizing training costs and improving team performance [22]. The main objectives of compensation are to boost performance, maintain employee commitment, and attract top talent. These goals are met through strategies such as

skill-based pay and pay-for-performance plans [23], [24], [25]. Studies indicate that providing appropriate compensation can enhance employee productivity [26]. Additionally, higher compensation for truck drivers has been linked to better performance, particularly in safety [27].

Job satisfaction is shaped by several factors, such as work shifts, autonomy, staffing levels, teamwork, job stress, and emotional exhaustion. Previous research has generally grouped these factors into two categories: individual and organizational. Individual factors include age, health, autonomy, psychological empowerment, job involvement, burnout, and stress, while gender and experience are considered less influential. Organizational factors include the availability of resources, supervisor and managerial support, resource management, staffing, and social relationships [28], [29]. Job satisfaction is influenced by various factors, including financial compensation. Employees who earn higher salaries generally report higher levels of job satisfaction compared to those with lower incomes [30]. Job satisfaction reflects a person's overall opinion of their job, shaped by their experiences and feelings. Low job satisfaction can lead to decreased work performance and increased employee turnover. In professions like midwifery, factors like professional support and positive interactions with clients significantly impact job satisfaction [31]. Previous studies have found that job satisfaction can impact job development in the workplace, even when employees receive less supervisor support [32]. The dimensions of job satisfaction include: work atmosphere, working conditions, working hours, line managers, salary, development opportunities, information flow, overall company management, mission statement, social benefits, and job content [33]. Other dimensions include job burnout, time allocation, outdoor work, income, and workforce conditions. A study conducted with data from chefs working in 4- and 5-star restaurants in China found that job satisfaction can enhance employees' creative performance [34]. A survey of officers in China showed that job satisfaction significantly affects seafarers' job performance [35]. A meta-analysis has revealed a clear correlation between job satisfaction and positive performance outcomes [36]. Empirical research on job satisfaction and performance has demonstrated that job satisfaction, either on its own or in combination with other variables, has a significant impact on performance [37]. A study exploring the impact of job satisfaction on performance has revealed that job satisfaction can positively influence employee performance [38], [39].

Research and literature on authentic leadership over the past few decades have primarily focused on perceptions of authentic leaders and their impact on organizational outcomes. These studies have provided measurements of perceptions of authentic leaders and explored their relationship with various work and organizational results [40]. The traits of authentic leadership, especially from a moral internalization standpoint, are highly significant for employee well-being when addressing competitive pressures and social objectives. Authentic leaders are ethical leaders who possess a deep awareness of their thoughts, actions, and how others perceive them. They understand both their own and others' values, moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths. By listening non-judgmentally to the challenges and demands of the job, they help to reduce employee resistance [41]. Authentic leadership is characterized by four key behaviors: (a) a clear understanding of oneself, including motives, desires, and beliefs; (b) an objective approach to evaluating information; (c) actions that align with personal values and goals; and (d) open and honest communication with others [42]. The first two behaviors relate to a leader's ability to understand themselves fairly and realistically, align with their value framework, and make consistent decisions. The latter two behaviors reflect how leaders treat others based on their value framework. Essentially, the first two dimensions refer to principles guiding a leader's actions and thoughts, while the last two relate to the process of implementing leadership decisions regarding stakeholders [42], [43].

Authentic leaders assist in several ways, including: (a) Responding to the emotional demands of stakeholders; (b) Enhancing confidence and trust in governance systems regarding ethical dilemmas; (c) Fostering meaning, positive emotions, and relationships within teams; (d) Helping develop followers' psychological capital and positive performance; (e) strengthening innovation potential by providing emotional support and fostering a learning climate when innovation setbacks occur [42], [43]. Authentic leaders are deeply committed to ethical behavior, collective values, and serving the greater good. They demonstrate compassion, empathy, and a focus on the well-being of others, rather than personal gain [44]. The role of authentic leadership as a mediator has been relatively underexplored in previous studies, though some research has addressed this topic. A study conducted in the USA found that authentic leadership mediates the relationship between psychological capital and performance, highlighting its influence in enhancing employee outcomes [45]. Research on social profit organizations found that authentic leadership plays a key role in influencing the relationship between employee quality of life and organizational performance [41], [46].

In organizations, it is essential to focus on output, efficiency, and effectiveness, which necessitates performance measurement and management systems to improve both organizational and employee performance. These systems are used to assess and manage performance at both the organizational and individual levels, creating a cycle of goal setting, planning, monitoring, and evaluation [41], [47]. A performance management system, including assessment periods, documentation, and an evaluation team, is essential for evaluating employee performance. This system helps ensure a clear understanding of performance expectations, identifies areas for improvement, and provides opportunities for training and development [48], [49]. Performance management systems also act as an intervention tool, providing feedback to employees to support continuous improvement, helping them identify strengths and weaknesses, and supporting development needs [21], [48], [49]. In corporate management practices, decision-makers often use various incentive plans, such as piece rates, stock options, bonuses, promotions, and profit-sharing, to address performance reward issues [50]. Organizations require employee performance data to make managerial decisions, such as promotions and training, ensuring fairness based on employee attributes like age, gender, and race, and to comply with non-discriminatory practices [51]. Over the decades, the understanding and focus of performance have evolved. Initially, performance was viewed in terms of task-related behaviors, but now it encompasses broader roles within the context of dynamic and competitive organizations. Modern performance concepts include role performance, adaptive performance, proactive performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors [52].

3 Method

This study relied on both original data collected specifically for this research and existing data from other sources. Primary data were gathered through surveys, interviews, and experiments tailored to the research questions. Secondary data, such as information from government agencies or research institutions, were adapted and analyzed to fit the study's needs. Data collection methods included surveys, in-depth interviews, and analysis of existing organizational or internet-based data [53].

The study focused on all employees, but the sample included only permanent staff. A convenience sampling method was used, selecting participants who were readily available and could provide the necessary information [54], [55]. This study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with PLS software to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to

summarize the respondent characteristics. The outer model evaluated the validity and reliability of the measurement items using AVE, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability. The inner model assessed collinearity, path coefficients, mediation effects, and the strength of relationships between variables [53], [54].

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Characteristics

The characteristics of employees at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia are presented in Table 1, categorized by gender, age, length of service, and highest educational attainment. According to Table 1, 37.5% of employees are female and 62.5% are male. In terms of age distribution, 21.3% of employees are under 20 years old, 72.5% are between 21-30 years old, 5% are between 31-40 years old, and 1.2% are over 41 years old. Regarding the length of service, 74% of employees have been with the company for less than 5 years, 5.1% for 6-10 years, and 2.5% for more than 11 years. Lastly, in terms of educational background, 70% of employees have a high school, 13.7% hold an associate degree, and 16.2% have a bachelor's degree.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics Data of PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 30 | 37,5 % |
| Male | 50 | 62,5 % |
| Age | | |
| < 20 Years | 17 | 21,3 % |
| 21-30 Years | 58 | 72,5 % |
| 31-40 Years | 4 | 5% |
| > 41 Years | 1 | 1,2 % |
| Length of work | | |
| < 5 Years | 74 | 74% |
| 6-10 Years | 4 | 5,1% |
| >11 Years | 2 | 2,5% |
| Last education | | |
| High school | 56 | 70% |
| Associate degree | 11 | 13,7% |
| Bachelor's degree | 13 | 16,2% |
| Total | 80 | 100% |

4.1.2 Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model is conducted to determine the results of validity and reliability tests. The validity test is carried out to assess whether the construct meets the criteria to be continued as part of the research.

4.1.3 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is measured using the outer loading parameter, with a value greater than 0.7 for the construct being measured. Based on the analysis results shown in Figure 1, out of a total of 28 variables, 9 items have a value greater than 0.7. Meanwhile, 19 items have values below 0.7 and should therefore be excluded.

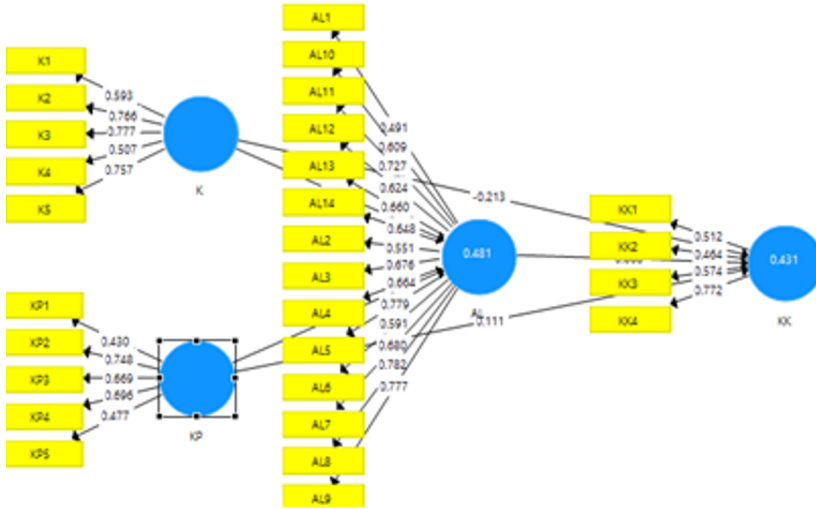


Fig. 1. Results of Outer Model Testing.

4.1.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity testing is conducted to assess whether each statement item is valid by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. The recommended AVE value is 0.5 or higher. As shown in Table 2, the AVE values for each construct are greater than 0.5, indicating that the study accurately explains the latent variables and confirms that all items are valid (Table 2).

Table 2. AVE Value

| Variabel | AVE |
|----------------------|-------|
| Compensation | 0.669 |
| Job satisfaction | 1.000 |
| Authentic leadership | 0.645 |
| Performance | 1.000 |

4.1.5 Reliability Testing

The measurement model also requires reliability testing to ensure that the research instruments are accurate and consistent in measuring a construct. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Based on Table 3, the reliability test results for all variables show Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.60 and composite reliability values

greater than 0.7. It can be concluded that the variables used in the study are both valid and reliable, allowing for the continuation of structural model testing.

Tabel 3. Reliability Testing Results

| Variabel | Crobanch's Alpha | Composite Reliability |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Compensation | 0.753 | 0.858 |
| Job satisfaction | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| Authentic leadership | 0.818 | 0.879 |
| Performance | 1.000 | 1.000 |

4.1.6 Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model)

The structural model is evaluated using collinearity diagnostics and hypothesis testing of the structural path coefficients.

4.1.7 Collinearity

The collinearity test is conducted to determine the level of correlation between the items, which is assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The recommended VIF values are greater than 0.20 and less than 5. The correlation values between the items can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. VIF Value

| Code | VIF |
|------|-------|
| K2 | 1.448 |
| K3 | 1.867 |
| K5 | 1.519 |
| KP2 | 1.000 |
| AL5 | 1.691 |
| AL8 | 1.857 |
| AL9 | 1.782 |
| AL11 | 1.565 |
| KK4 | 1.000 |

4.1.8 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted through several components: path coefficients, mediation effects, and the coefficient of determination.

4.1.9 Path Coefficient

The path coefficient (Table 5) is used to determine whether a hypothesis is accepted or rejected by examining the significance values between constructs, t-statistics, and p-values. In the bootstrapping method used in this study, a hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic is greater than 1.96 or if the p-value is less than 0.05. If these criteria are met, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected, and vice versa.

Table 5. Path Coefficient Results

| Hypothesis | t-statistic | p-values |
|---|-------------|----------|
| Compensation on Performance (H1) | 1.575 | 0.116 |
| Job Satisfaction on Performance (H2) | 1.627 | 0.104 |
| Mediation of Authentic Leadership on Compensation and Performance (H3a) | 2.742 | 0.006 |
| Mediation of Authentic Leadership on Job Satisfaction and Performance (H3b) | 2.156 | 0.032 |

4.1.10 Mediation Effect

This section will discuss the PLS-SEM analysis with mediation effects, specifically the relationship between exogenous and endogenous constructs through mediating variables (Table 6).

Table 6. Direct Effect, Indirect Effect, and Total Effect

| Direct Effect | Path Coefficients | t-statistic | p-values |
|---|-------------------|-------------|----------|
| Compensation => Performance | -0.217 | 1.575 | 0.116 |
| Job satisfaction => Performance | 0.194 | 1.627 | 0.104 |
| Indirect Effect | Coefficients | t-statistic | p-values |
| Compensation => Authentic leadership => Performance | 0.166 | 2.742 | 0.006 |
| Job satisfaction => Authentic leadership => Performance | 0.121 | 2.156 | 0.032 |
| Total Effect | Coefficients | t-statistic | p-values |
| Authentic leadership => Performance | 0.384 | 3.041 | 0.002 |
| Job satisfaction => Authentic leadership | 0.314 | 3.702 | 0.000 |
| Job satisfaction => Performance | 0.315 | 2.748 | 0.006 |
| Compensation => Authentic leadership | 0.433 | 5.350 | 0.000 |
| Compensation => Performance | -0.051 | 0.414 | 0.679 |

4.1.11 Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The structural model is evaluated by examining the percentage of variance explained, specifically by looking at the R-Square values for endogenous latent constructs (Table 7). Based on the R-Square results in Table 7, the R-Square value for authentic leadership is 0.320. This indicates that 32% of the variation in the authentic leadership variable is influenced by the compensation and job satisfaction variables, while the remaining 68% is

affected by other variables not included in this study. The performance variable shows an R-Square value of 0.198, meaning that 19% of the variation in performance is influenced by compensation and job satisfaction. The remaining 81% is influenced by other variables not covered in this research.

Tabel 7. R-Square

| Item | R-Square | R-Square Adjusted |
|----------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Authentic leadership | 0.320 | 0.302 |
| Performance | 0.198 | 0.167 |

4.2 Discussion

The research findings suggest that compensation negatively affects employee performance at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia. This indicates that the level of compensation, whether high or low, does not have a direct impact on employee performance. However, this does not mean that PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia should neglect the compensation provided to employees. Instead, compensation influences employee performance indirectly through job satisfaction, which then impacts performance. One of the objectives of providing compensation is to encourage employees to perform at their best. At PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia, compensation includes direct compensation, indirect compensation, and incentives. While compensation must be fair and appropriate, it does not have a direct impact on employee performance. The compensation system at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia is functioning well, as indicated by the positive responses from employees who rate it highly. This compensation consists of direct compensation, such as fixed salaries or wages paid monthly; indirect compensation, such as additional benefits provided if employees meet company targets; and incentives, which are rewards given to motivate employees to perform at their best and can be provided as needed. Providing fair and appropriate compensation is expected to enhance employee performance, encouraging them to work more effectively. However, the differences in the amounts of compensation given and received by each employee need to be reassessed. It is recommended to review and improve both the performance evaluation system and the compensation system. The findings of this study support previous research suggesting that different compensation strategies can positively impact employee performance [26]. Another supporting study, which found that compensation negatively affects employee performance, indicating that higher compensation does not necessarily lead to better performance [46]. However, these findings contradict a previous study, which showed that compensation positively impacts performance improvement [25].

Job satisfaction is an emotional attitude where employees find joy in and have a strong affinity for their work. The more aspects of the job that align with what employees desire, the higher their level of satisfaction tends to be. The job satisfaction of employees at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia has been rated very highly, as indicated by the responses from the survey participants. Employee satisfaction at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia encompasses psychological, physical, and social factors. Psychological factors include a high level of interest in the work and a positive attitude towards their job. Physical factors relate to job suitability with the employee's skills, reasonable working hours, and the provision of health insurance. Social factors involve positive social interactions with supervisors and coworkers from different departments. These factors are crucial in enhancing job satisfaction among employees at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia. Decision-makers within an organization must consider the goals that employees aim to achieve. Additionally, they should not underestimate the relationship between monitoring and employee satisfaction, stress, and

performance [56]. Similar to earlier studies, this research also found a negative correlation between job satisfaction and performance [48]. This finding contradicts previous research that has shown a positive relationship between job satisfaction and performance. This discrepancy emphasizes the complex nature of job satisfaction and its inconsistent impact on employee behavior [34]. A positive work environment, influenced by the satisfaction of colleagues, can significantly impact individual employee performance and reduce work-family conflict. Employees in units with more satisfied colleagues tend to perform better and experience less stress from balancing work and personal life [57]. Job satisfaction and the lowest job performance tend to be associated with skilled workers, and there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and performance [36].

The results indicate that the direct effect of compensation on employee performance shows a negative influence. In contrast, the indirect effect of compensation on employee performance, when mediated by authentic leadership, shows a positive influence. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that compensation is more effective in influencing employee performance indirectly. The study demonstrates that compensation impacts employee performance at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia when mediated by authentic leadership. This suggests that authentic leadership can mediate the effect of compensation on employee performance—meaning that higher compensation leads to improved performance. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which showed that authentic leadership can mediate the impact on performance [58]. Authentic leaders are characterized by self-awareness and confidence in their own motivations and beliefs. Research has shown that employee personality traits, such as ego-resilience, also impact performance. Employees with higher ego-resilience tend to perform better. Effective leadership for such individuals requires transparency, self-awareness, and ethical behavior [59]. The leaders at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia have demonstrated genuine and authentic behavior, working in alignment with their beliefs and supporting employee performance improvement. Essentially, leaders with authentic leadership characteristics create a sense of comfort and happiness for employees in their work. Furthermore, the leaders at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia can process self-relevant information without bias or favoritism and refuse to act against their convictions. The direct effect of job satisfaction on employee performance shows a negative influence. However, the indirect effect of job satisfaction on employee performance shows a positive influence when mediated by authentic leadership. In conclusion, job satisfaction more effectively influences employee performance indirectly. The findings of this study show that employee satisfaction at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia influences employee performance when mediated by authentic leadership. The level of job satisfaction and employee performance is determined by authentic leadership. These findings align with previous studies, who stated that authentic leadership partially mediates the relationship between organizational culture and job satisfaction [21]. At PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia, authentic leadership is defined in terms of behavioral dimensions that align with values, preferences, and needs. Leaders understand when to choose positive behavior and when to adjust their behavior according to the conditions faced. Appropriate leadership behavior that meets employee needs can enhance performance at PT Serelia Prima Nutrisia.

5 Conclusion

The research indicates that compensation has a negative direct effect on performance, but when mediated by authentic leadership, the effect becomes positive. The indirect effect is stronger than the direct effect, suggesting a full mediation. Similarly, job satisfaction

negatively impacts performance directly, but when mediated by authentic leadership, the effect becomes positive, also indicating a full mediation. Therefore, compensation and job satisfaction more effectively influence performance indirectly through authentic leadership.

This study has limitations. The focus on a single company within a specific industry limits the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, the cross-sectional design only provides a snapshot of behavior at a single point in time. Additionally, the study had a limited sample size and used a non-specific sampling method. Furthermore, the study did not examine the various types of compensation offered by the company, which could have provided additional insights. For practical implications, it is recommended that the company evaluate its current compensation system and make necessary improvements to enhance employee performance. Additionally, conducting surveys to understand the causes of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction can provide valuable feedback for improving job satisfaction and, consequently, performance. Future research should involve a broader range of companies and industries, use longitudinal studies to better capture behavioral changes over time, and consider using a larger sample size with a more rigorous sampling technique, such as probability sampling. Future studies could also explore different types of compensation, such as bonuses, incentives, or allowances.

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