

The Mediating Role of Teamwork in the Influence of Interpersonal Communication and Work Motivation on Employee Performance among Wedding Vendor Teams in Malang

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Abstract

Introduction/Main Objectives: This study explores how interpersonal communication and work motivation shape employee performance when teamwork functions as a mediating factor. The topic is relevant because project-based creative industries, such as wedding services, rely heavily on fast coordination and smooth role alignment across team members.

Background Problems: The research addresses issues frequently encountered in wedding vendor teams—misaligned perceptions, inconsistent motivation, and ineffective coordination—leading to the core question of whether communication and motivation can enhance performance through the presence of strong teamwork.

Novelty: The contribution of this study lies in its integrated examination of interpersonal communication, work motivation, and teamwork within a single structural model focused on the wedding vendor sector. This context has received limited academic attention, especially regarding how collaborative interactions affect employee performance in creative service environments.

Research Methods: An explanatory quantitative design was applied using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 3.2.9. Data were collected from 61 respondents representing seven categories of wedding vendors, including make-up artists, wedding organizers, photographers, decorators, sound system providers, tent services, and catering providers.

Finding/Results: The results indicate that interpersonal communication and work motivation both strengthen teamwork, yet neither variable directly influences employee performance. Performance improvements emerge only when these factors operate through cohesive team interactions. Mediation testing confirms that teamwork acts as a crucial intermediary, with full mediation found for the effect of interpersonal communication and partial mediation for work motivation.

Conclusion: The study concludes that fostering open communication, building collective motivation, and improving role coordination are essential for developing effective teamwork that ultimately enhances performance. These insights highlight the importance of collaborative dynamics in creative industries that demand rapid adaptation and intensive cooperation.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Work Motivation, Teamwork, Employee Performance, Creative Service Industry



Introduction

In an era where competition among businesses continues to tighten, organizational achievement is no longer driven primarily by technological sophistication or financial strength. Rather, it is increasingly determined by the effectiveness of the people within the organization. Core aspects such as strong interpersonal communication, high work motivation, and solid teamwork serve as critical drivers that shape both individual outcomes and overall organizational performance (Robbins & Judge, 2017). In the service sector, particularly in the wedding and event industry, the demand for punctual, precise, and high-quality service continues to rise. These conditions place interpersonal interaction among employees as a strategic factor that directly affects workflow efficiency and client satisfaction.

Recent studies highlight that team effectiveness is one of the crucial determinants of organizational performance, especially in work environments that require cross-functional collaboration and rapid adaptation to customer needs. A comprehensive review by (McGuier et al., 2023), indicates that team role structure, coordination, and communication processes consistently correlate with organizational outcomes and implementation effectiveness. Similar findings were discussed by (Tanjung et al., 2023), emphasizing that communication, discipline, and motivation are key drivers of employee performance across different industries.

In Malang, the creative industry is growing rapidly (Aisyah, 2025), including the wedding vendor sector that involves diverse service providers. Increasing competition demands strong internal coordination and stable work motivation to maintain service quality. However, many vendors still experience challenges such as misaligned information, differing perceptions among team members, and work pressures that lead to fluctuating motivation levels. These issues may reduce service consistency and hinder optimal performance. For this reason, understanding how interpersonal communication and motivation contribute to effective teamwork becomes an essential topic, particularly in creative service sectors where collaboration is central to operational success.

Interpersonal communication serves as the foundation for building coordination and task clarity. Open, empathetic, and two-way communication enhances trust and facilitates smooth information flow within teams (Jung et al., 2023; Kusumawati, 2020). In addition, internal communication networks influence how tasks are executed and how quickly team members interpret and respond to information (Guo et al., 2023). Work motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, encourages employees to act more responsibly and proactively (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Strong motivation not only improves individual commitment but also contributes to the formation of collective motivation within teams, as discussed by (Grenier et al., 2024), and supported by (Manzoor et al., 2021; Yusuf, 2025).

Recent research also reinforces the importance of these variables in shaping organizational outcomes. (Saputri, 2024), found that teamwork and effective communication significantly enhance employee performance in service-based industries. (Zaky, 2023), emphasized that trust, coordination, and role clarity among team members play a crucial role in determining team performance effectiveness. Furthermore, the study by (Irawati et al., 2024), confirmed that communication and teamwork exert a meaningful influence on employee performance within organizational settings. Despite these contributions, limited attention has been given to understanding how such internal factors operate specifically within the wedding vendor industry, which relies heavily on rapid coordination and interdependent task execution.

Research Methods

This part outlines the complete methodological approach, covering the research design, the population under study, sampling techniques, measurement tools, and the analytical procedures employed. A quantitative explanatory design is employed to investigate the causal linkages among interpersonal communication, work motivation, teamwork, and employee performance. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), note that explanatory quantitative designs are appropriate for testing causal links through inferential statistics, enabling generalizable conclusions and theoretical advancement.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of employees working for wedding vendors in Malang. These vendors represented seven service categories—make-up artists, wedding organizers, photographers, decorators, sound system providers, tent providers, and catering services. A total of 61 active employees were identified. Given the relatively small population size, the study adopted a census or saturated sampling technique whereby all population members were included as respondents. (Sugiyono, 2017), states that this technique is suitable when the population is small, allowing all elements to be observed and producing more representative findings.

Research Instrument

The data for this research were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended items designed to assess four principal constructs—interpersonal communication, work motivation, teamwork, and employee performance. Each indicator was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), in accordance with behavioral measurement principles outlined by (Hair Jr et al., 2021). Indicators for interpersonal communication, teamwork, and employee performance were adapted from (Robbins & Judge, 2017) organizational behavior framework, emphasizing openness, empathy, message clarity, coordination, and responsibility. Work motivation indicators were based on Self-Determination Theory by (Ryan & Deci, 2020), focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation driven by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teamwork indicators were aligned with collective motivation concepts from (Grenier et al., 2024), while employee performance indicators were supported by empirical evidence from (Manzoor et al., 2021). A pilot test was conducted to ensure clarity, contextual relevance, and internal consistency before distributing the final questionnaire.

Data Analysis Technique

The data in this study were examined using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, with all analyses conducted through SmartPLS version 3.2.9. This technique was selected because it is well suited for complex model structures, works effectively with smaller sample sizes, and continues to provide dependable results even when the data do not fully meet normality requirements (Hair Jr et al., 2021). The analysis process started with evaluating the measurement model to ensure that each indicator accurately represented its corresponding construct. Convergent validity was confirmed by checking whether factor loadings reached at least 0.70 and whether the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50. Reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha, with both measures required to meet a minimum threshold of 0.70. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the AVE exceed the inter-construct correlations, alongside the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, where a maximum threshold of 0.90 is recommended (Hair Jr et al., 2021). These procedures confirm that each construct is theoretically distinct and does not overlap conceptually.

Once the measurement model met all required standards, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among the latent constructs. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor, with values below 5 indicating an acceptable level. The model's predictive power was examined through the coefficient of determination (R^2), where thresholds of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 reflect weak, moderate, and substantial explanatory capacity. The significance of the structural paths was tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, and t-values greater than 1.96 were interpreted as statistically significant at the five percent level (Hair Jr et al., 2021). The mediation test was performed by examining the specific indirect effects through a bootstrapping procedure. Full mediation was identified when only the indirect relationship reached statistical significance, whereas partial mediation was confirmed when both the direct and indirect paths were significant. The overall fit of the model was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, with values of 0.08 or lower indicating an acceptable degree of model fit. This evaluation was complemented by the Normed Fit Index, which provided an additional indicator of the model's adequacy (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Result

This section outlines the empirical results obtained using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling technique, processed through SmartPLS version 3.2.9. The analysis progressed through multiple phases, beginning with an evaluation of the measurement model to confirm indicator reliability and validity, followed by an assessment of the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among the latent constructs. The dataset consisted of 61 respondents representing various categories within Malang's wedding vendor industry. The subsections that follow elaborate on the extent to which interpersonal communication and work motivation shape employee performance, with teamwork acting as an intervening mechanism. The presentation of results is organized to highlight the strength of each structural relationship and to clarify how team dynamics contribute to individual performance outcomes. Furthermore, the findings offer empirical reinforcement for the conceptual model established earlier in the study.

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The outer model evaluation was conducted to ensure the accuracy of indicators in representing their respective latent constructs. The conceptual model consists of four main constructs—interpersonal communication (X1), work motivation (X2), teamwork (M), and employee performance (Y)—developed based on relevant theoretical foundations and prior research. The assessment verified whether each indicator strongly loads onto its intended construct without overlapping with others (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

All indicators demonstrated outer loading values between 0.766 and 0.941, surpassing the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70. Moreover, each construct achieved an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value greater than 0.50. These results indicate that the indicators consistently capture the underlying latent constructs, thereby confirming convergent validity. Reliability tests demonstrated Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values between 0.887 and 0.963, meeting the standard criteria of instrument reliability. High ρ_A and AVE values further confirm the internal consistency and stability of each construct. Hence, the measurement model is deemed reliable and suitable for subsequent structural analysis. Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio, with all values below the 0.90 threshold, indicating that the constructs are statistically distinct.

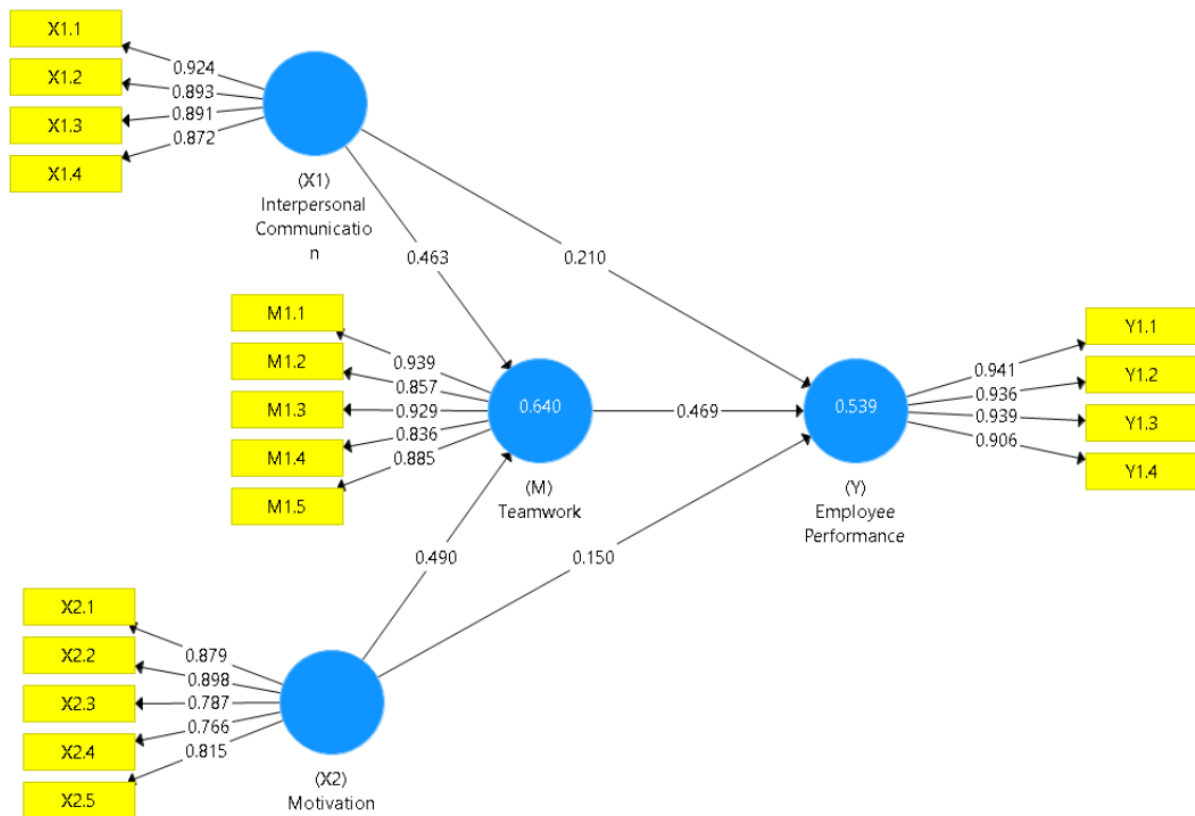


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Table 1. Convergent Validity and Measurement Reliability Indicators (Outer Loading Values)

M	X1	X2	Y
M1.1	0.939		
M1.2	0.857		
M1.3	0.929		
M1.4	0.836		
M1.5	0.885		
X1.1		0.924	
X1.2		0.893	
X1.3		0.891	
X1.4		0.872	
X2.1			0.879
X2.2			0.898
X2.3			0.787
X2.4			0.766
X2.5			0.815
Y1.1			0.941

Y1.2	0.936
Y1.3	0.939
Y1.4	0.906

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	(AVE)
M	0.934	0.945	0.95	0.792
X1	0.917	0.919	0.942	0.802
X2	0.887	0.897	0.917	0.69
Y	0.948	0.954	0.963	0.866

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Assessment Using Fornell–Larcker Criterion

	M	X1	X2	Y
M	0.89			
X1	0.663	0.895		
X2	0.679	0.408	0.831	
Y	0.71	0.582	0.554	0.93

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

	M	X1	X2	Y
M		0.707	0.738	0.742
X1			0.448	0.619
X2				0.595
Y				

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The R^2 value for teamwork (M) was 0.640, indicating that interpersonal communication and work motivation jointly account for 64% of its variance. Meanwhile, employee performance (Y) obtained an R^2 value of 0.539, showing that the three predictor variables collectively explain 53.9% of its variance. According to the benchmarks proposed by Hair Jr et al. (2021), these values fall within the range that reflects moderate explanatory power.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

Construct	R Square	R Square Adjusted
M	0.64	0.628
Y	0.539	0.514

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Table 6. Hypotheses Test Summary – Direct Effects

Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Inferences
M → Y	0.469	3.47	0.001	Supported
X1 → M	0.463	4.869	0	Supported
X1 → Y	0.21	1.585	0.114	Not Supported
X2 → M	0.49	4.794	0	Supported
X2 → Y	0.15	1.212	0.226	Not Supported

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Table 7. Hypotheses Test Summary – Specific Indirect Effects (Mediation)

Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Inferences
X1 → M → Y	0.217	3.112	0.002	Supported; Full Mediation
X2 → M → Y	0.23	2.472	0.014	Supported; Partial Mediation

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Path analysis results indicate that interpersonal communication (X1) has a positive and significant effect on teamwork (M), with a β (path coefficient) of 0.463, t-value of 4.869, and p-value of 0.000. Likewise, work motivation (X2) significantly influences teamwork (M), as reflected by a β value of 0.490, t-value of 4.794, and p-value of 0.000. Teamwork (M) also demonstrates a significant positive effect on employee performance (Y), with $\beta = 0.469$, $t = 3.470$, and $p = 0.001$. In contrast, the effects of interpersonal communication on performance ($\beta = 0.210$; $t = 1.585$; $p = 0.114$) and work motivation on performance ($\beta = 0.150$; $t = 1.212$; $p = 0.226$) are not statistically significant. These findings confirm that neither variable directly enhances performance; rather, their influence is transmitted through teamwork as a mediating factor.

Mediation Analysis

The indirect pathway from interpersonal communication to performance through teamwork yields a path coefficient (β) of 0.217, accompanied by a t-value of 3.112 and a p-value of 0.002, indicating robust evidence of full mediation. Conversely, the indirect influence of work motivation on performance through teamwork produces a coefficient (β) of 0.230, with a t-value of 2.472 and a p-value of 0.014, signifying partial mediation. Collectively, these findings highlight the essential role of teamwork in channeling and amplifying the effects of both communication and motivation on employee performance within wedding vendor teams in Malang.

Model Fit

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.065, which falls below the recommended cutoff of 0.08, signifies that the model exhibits a satisfactory degree of fit to the observed data. Additionally, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) score of 0.822 further supports the adequacy of the model, aligning with acceptable standards commonly applied in social science research.

Table 8. Model Fit Summary

Fit Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.065	0.065
NFI	0.822	0.822

Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Discussion

The findings show that interpersonal communication and work motivation significantly influence teamwork, yet neither variable exerts a direct effect on employee performance. The mediation analysis demonstrates that the impact of interpersonal communication on performance is transmitted entirely through teamwork, indicating a full mediation mechanism. In contrast, the influence of work motivation on performance is only partially channeled through teamwork, suggesting partial mediation. These results imply that performance enhancement in creative sectors, including wedding vendor services in Malang, is more strongly driven by the quality of team collaboration than by individual attributes.

These outcomes align with the perspectives of (Guo et al., 2023; Salas et al., 2018), who argue that transparent communication and coordinated member interaction form the core foundations of effective teamwork. The results also support Self-Determination Theory proposed by (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and are consistent with (Grenier et al., 2024), both highlighting the role of intrinsic motivation in reinforcing collaborative behavior within teams. Additional evidence is provided by studies conducted by (Anisah et al., 2024; Nusraningrum et al., 2024), which similarly demonstrate that communication and motivation affect performance primarily through the mediating role of teamwork.

The absence of any significant direct influence of communication and motivation on performance suggests that these factors only generate meaningful outcomes when supported by strong team interaction, as emphasized by (Setiawan et al., 2024). Conceptually, the results reinforce the position of teamwork as the central mechanism that links psychological antecedents to work-related outcomes. From a managerial standpoint, these findings underscore the need for fostering open communication, shared motivation, and coordinated cross-functional collaboration to optimize performance within creative service industries.

Conclusion

This study examines the extent to which interpersonal communication and work motivation shape employee performance, with teamwork functioning as the mediating factor among wedding vendor employees in Malang. The PLS-SEM results indicate that both interpersonal communication and work motivation play meaningful roles in strengthening teamwork, yet neither variable directly affects employee performance. The mediation assessment shows that the impact of interpersonal communication on performance is transmitted entirely through teamwork, reflecting full mediation, whereas the effect of work motivation is only partly mediated by teamwork, indicating partial mediation. Taken together, these findings highlight that the effectiveness of teamwork acts as the primary channel through which communication and motivation contribute to improvements in employee performance.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enhances the understanding of teamwork as an intermediary variable that links individual factors to organizational performance, particularly within creative service industries that require coordination across different roles. From a practical standpoint, the findings recommend that wedding vendor businesses foster a culture

of open communication, strengthen collective motivation, and develop collaborative work systems to improve team performance. The limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size and its focus on the Malang area. Therefore, future research is encouraged to involve a larger population, include contextual variables such as leadership style and organizational culture, and employ a longitudinal approach to provide a more comprehensive understanding of performance dynamics in creative industries.

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