

The Influence of Supervisors' Communication Style, Empathy, and Support on Employee Loyalty, Mediated by Emotional Intelligence Management: A PLS-SEM Analysis

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Abstract

Keywords

superior communication style; superior empathy; superior support; emotional intelligence management; employee loyalty.

Employee loyalty is a crucial factor in supporting organizational sustainability and effectiveness. However, various studies have shown that loyalty is influenced not only by structural factors but also by the quality of relationships between supervisors and subordinates. This study aimed to analyze the influence of supervisors' communication style, empathy, and support on employee loyalty through emotional intelligence management as a mediating variable. The study was grounded in Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory, which explain that the quality of social interactions in the workplace can shape employees' positive attitudes and behaviors toward the organization. This study used a quantitative approach with a survey method involving 205 employees. The sampling technique was purposive sampling, while the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that supervisors' communication style had a positive and significant effect on employees' emotional intelligence management ($\beta = 0.195$; $p < 0.05$). Conversely, supervisors' empathy and support did not significantly influence emotional intelligence management. In addition, emotional intelligence management did not significantly influence employee loyalty and was unable to mediate the relationship between supervisors' communication style, empathy, or support and employee loyalty. These findings indicate that supervisors' communication plays an important role in shaping employees' emotional management abilities, but employee loyalty is a more complex construct influenced by other factors outside the research model. This study contributes to the development of organizational communication studies by demonstrating that the effectiveness of supervisors' communication is more relevant to developing employees' psychological aspects than to directly forming loyalty. These findings also provide opportunities for further research to explore other factors that contribute to increasing employee loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Employee loyalty is a crucial factor in determining the sustainability and effectiveness of an organization. Loyalty is reflected not only in employees' desire to remain with the organization but also in their commitment, emotional attachment, and willingness to contribute beyond formal job requirements. Loyal employees tend to demonstrate a high level of commitment, a strong sense of belonging, and a willingness to exert additional effort to support

the achievement of organizational goals (Abu-Shamaa et al., 2015; Adikoeswanto et al., 2020; Karmakar, 2020; Yinusa & Ogoun, 2024). Conversely, low employee loyalty can lead to increased turnover intention, decreased productivity, lower work engagement, and weakened organizational competitiveness (Ngirande, 2021; Cretu, 2023).

From an organizational communication perspective, employee loyalty is not formed instantly but is the result of continuous social interaction between employees, the organization, and their supervisors. Social Exchange Theory explains that relationships between supervisors and subordinates are built on reciprocity, where positive treatment received by employees encourages positive attitudes and behaviors toward the organization. In this perspective, supervisors' communication style, empathy, and support are important factors shaping employee loyalty because they influence the quality of interpersonal relationships in the workplace. In addition, Organizational Support Theory explains that employees' perceptions of organizational support influence their level of attachment and loyalty to the organization (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Ishaq et al., 2025; Jano et al., 2019; Kurtessis et al., 2017). In this context, supervisors are seen as representatives of the organization who play a key role in shaping employees' perceptions of support. Thus, effective communication, empathy, and supervisor support are theoretically expected to enhance employee loyalty (Bhatti & Alzahrani, 2024).

However, empirical evidence suggests that employee loyalty does not always align with theoretical expectations. Changes in the work environment, increased workforce mobility, and generational shifts have made employee loyalty increasingly complex (Martin & Ottemann, 2016). Many employees continue to fulfill their duties and responsibilities but do not demonstrate strong emotional attachment or willingness to contribute beyond formal requirements. Wang (2020) explains that low emotional attachment may lead individuals to perform only at minimum standards without showing greater initiative. This condition indicates that employee loyalty is influenced not only by structural and economic factors but also by relational and psychological factors within the work environment (Dhir et al., 2020; Tam et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2019).

Various previous studies have examined the influence of supervisors' communication style, empathy, and support on employee loyalty. Dewi and Panuju (2018) found that leadership communication style influences employee work attitudes by fostering more positive working relationships. Siregar et al. (2022) also showed that clear and open supervisory communication positively influences employee loyalty. On the other hand, Titisari & Wardana (2021) found that empathetic leadership can increase employee loyalty by creating more humane and supportive working relationships. Research by Riyanto et al. (2021) indicates that leadership support contributes to increased employee loyalty and retention by fostering positive organizational perceptions.

However, previous research still shows inconsistencies. Some studies found that communication, empathy, and supervisory support significantly influence employee loyalty, while others indicate that these relationships are not always direct. Furthermore, most previous studies examined these variables separately or focused only on their direct effects on employee loyalty. This suggests a research gap regarding the mechanisms through which communication, empathy, and supervisor support influence employee loyalty. One variable that may explain this relationship is emotional intelligence management. Mayer and Salovey (1997) define

emotional intelligence as an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions in personal and social contexts. In organizational settings, emotional management is crucial because employees face job demands, work pressure, interpersonal conflict, and environmental changes. Employees with strong emotional management skills tend to build more positive work relationships and demonstrate stronger organizational commitment. Several studies have shown that emotional intelligence is related to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work engagement, and performance (Ainsworth & Furnham, 2022; Cretu, 2023). Gong et al. (2021) further found that the influence of emotional intelligence on organizational outcomes is mediated by the quality of interpersonal relationships in the workplace. These findings indicate that emotional intelligence functions not only as an individual characteristic but also as a psychological mechanism linking organizational factors to employee behavior.

Based on the above description, the novelty of this study lies in the integration of supervisors' communication style, empathy, and support within a single research model, with emotional intelligence management positioned as a mediating variable affecting employee loyalty. Previous studies generally examined these variables separately, while this study provides a more comprehensive explanation through psychological mechanisms of emotional intelligence management. Thus, this study not only examines the direct influence of relational factors on employee loyalty but also explores the internal processes through which these effects occur. Based on the background, research gaps, and novelty outlined above, this study aims to analyze the influence of supervisors' communication style, empathy, and support on employee loyalty through emotional intelligence management as a mediating variable. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of organizational communication studies and provide practical implications for organizations in designing human resource management strategies that sustainably enhance employee loyalty.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative survey approach to analyze the influence of supervisors' communication style, empathy, and support on employee loyalty through emotional intelligence management as a mediating variable. The study was conducted among employees of a telecommunications company in South Tangerang City, with the company's identity anonymized to maintain confidentiality. The population consisted of all employees in the company. A purposive sampling technique was applied, with inclusion criteria requiring respondents to be active employees who had experience interacting with supervisors in their work activities. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, resulting in 205 valid responses that met the research criteria.

The research instrument was developed based on indicators derived from previous theories and studies related to supervisors' communication style, empathy, support, emotional intelligence management, and employee loyalty. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The analysis included evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) through validity and reliability testing, as well as evaluation of the structural model (inner

model) using the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and tests of direct and indirect (mediation) effects among the study variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 205 respondents who were active employees at a telecommunications company in South Tangerang. Respondents came from various divisions and departments, providing a fairly representative picture of the organization's conditions. The majority of respondents were between 26 and 30 years old and had worked for 1 to 3 years. These characteristics indicate that most respondents had sufficient experience interacting with superiors and understood organizational dynamics. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS software. The results of the measurement model evaluation showed that all research indicators met the criteria for convergent validity with outer loading values above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50. In addition, all constructs had Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, thus being declared reliable. Discriminant validity testing through the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) also showed that all constructs had values below 0.90, thus meeting the criteria for discriminant validity.

The results of the structural model test indicate that superior communication style has a positive and significant effect on emotional intelligence management. Conversely, superior empathy and superior support do not have a significant effect on emotional intelligence management. Emotional intelligence management also does not have a significant effect on employee loyalty. Testing for indirect effects indicates that emotional intelligence management is unable to mediate the relationship between superior communication style, superior empathy, or superior support on employee loyalty.

The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing Results

| Connection Variables | Coefficient Track | T-Statistic | P-Value | Results |
|--|-------------------|-------------|---------|----------------|
| Communication Style – Management Intelligence Emotional | 0.195 | 2,918 | 0.004 | Significant |
| Empathy Boss – Management Intelligence Emotional | 0.087 | 0.928 | 0.354 | No Significant |
| Support Boss – Management Intelligence Emotional | -0.058 | 0.533 | 0.594 | No Significant |
| Management Intelligence Emotional – Loyalty Employee | 0.114 | 1,302 | 0.193 | No Significant |
| Communication Style – Management Intelligence Emotional – Loyalty Employee | 0.022 | 1,075 | 0.282 | No Significant |
| Empathy Boss – Management Intelligence Emotional – Loyalty Employee | 0.010 | 0.591 | 0.554 | No Significant |
| Support Boss – Management Intelligence Emotional – Loyalty Employee | -0.007 | 0.371 | 0.711 | No Significant |

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2026)

Research findings indicate that superiors' communication style is the only variable significantly influencing employees' emotional intelligence management. These results indicate that open, clear, and supportive communication can help employees recognize and manage emotions when facing various work demands. These findings align with Social Exchange Theory, which explains that positive interactions between superiors and subordinates will result in positive employee responses in the form of improved work attitudes and behaviors. Conversely, superior empathy did not significantly influence emotional intelligence management. This finding indicates that superiors' attention and understanding of subordinates' conditions are not sufficient to improve employees' emotional management abilities. This ability is likely more influenced by internal individual factors, work experience, and organizational conditions, which were not measured in this study.

Supervisor support also had no significant effect on emotional intelligence management. These results indicate that supervisor support is not yet a dominant factor in shaping employees' emotional management skills. This finding could be due to the presence of other, more powerful factors, such as organizational culture, work environment, and individual characteristics, that contribute to the development of emotional intelligence. This study also found that emotional intelligence management had no significant effect on employee loyalty. These results indicate that the ability to manage emotions does not necessarily lead to higher employee loyalty to the organization. Employee loyalty is a complex construct and is influenced by various other factors, such as compensation, career development opportunities, job satisfaction, job security, and organizational culture. The insignificant effect of emotional intelligence management on employee loyalty resulted in the inconclusive mediation of all relationships in this study. Therefore, emotional intelligence management was unable to bridge the influence of superior communication style, superior empathy, or superior support on employee loyalty. This finding suggests that improving employee loyalty requires a more comprehensive approach that does not solely focus on communication and emotional management.

Overall, this study confirms that superior communication style plays a significant role in improving employee emotional intelligence management. However, employee loyalty is still influenced by various other factors not yet included in the research model. Therefore, future research is recommended to include variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, organizational culture, and compensation to obtain a model with better predictive ability for employee loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study found that supervisors' communication style had a positive and significant effect on employees' emotional intelligence management, whereas supervisors' empathy and support did not show significant effects. In addition, emotional intelligence management did not significantly influence employee loyalty and therefore did not mediate the relationships between supervisors' communication style, empathy, and support and employee loyalty. These findings indicate that effective supervisory communication plays an important role in helping employees manage emotions in the workplace; however, employee loyalty is a more complex construct influenced by multiple factors beyond the proposed model.

Therefore, improving employee loyalty cannot rely solely on communication style, empathy, support, and emotional intelligence management. Other factors such as job satisfaction, compensation, organizational commitment, organizational culture, and career development opportunities should also be considered. Future research is recommended to expand the model by incorporating these variables and to use more diverse research settings to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of employee loyalty.

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