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Employee Voice And Participative Leadership With Organizational Commitment Mediation On Customer Relationship Marketing Performance In MSMEs

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how employee voice and participative leadership influence customer relationship marketing performance among MSMEs, with organizational commitment as a mediating variable. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, the study conceptualizes customer relationship marketing performance as an organizational outcome shaped by reciprocal employee–organization relationships and psychological commitment. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 300 MSME owners, managers, and employees directly involved in organizational, marketing, or customer-related activities in Purwakarta Regency, Indonesia. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with 5,000 bootstrapping resamples. The results demonstrate that employee voice has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment, while participative leadership shows a stronger positive effect on organizational commitment. Organizational commitment also has a significant positive effect on customer relationship marketing performance. Furthermore, organizational commitment significantly mediates the relationships between employee voice and customer relationship marketing performance and between participative leadership and customer relationship marketing performance. These findings indicate that customer relationship marketing performance is not solely determined by external marketing practices but also by internal employee participation, leadership, and psychological attachment. The study contributes theoretically by extending Social Exchange Theory to explain customer-oriented outcomes in MSMEs and provides practical guidance for developing participative and commitment-oriented management practices.

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Kata Kunci:
Employee Voice
Kepemimpinan Partisipatif
Komitmen Organisasi
Kinerja Pemasaran Hubungan Pelanggan

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana employee voice (suara karyawan) dan kepemimpinan partisipatif memengaruhi kinerja pemasaran hubungan pelanggan pada UMKM, dengan komitmen organisasi sebagai variabel mediasi. Berlandaskan Teori Pertukaran Sosial (Social Exchange Theory),

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penelitian ini mengonseptualisasikan kinerja pemasaran hubungan pelanggan sebagai hasil organisasi yang dibentuk oleh hubungan timbal balik antara karyawan dan organisasi serta komitmen psikologis. Survei kuantitatif cross-sectional dilakukan terhadap 300 pemilik, manajer, dan karyawan UMKM yang terlibat langsung dalam kegiatan organisasi, pemasaran, atau yang berkaitan dengan pelanggan di Kabupaten Purwakarta, Indonesia. Data dianalisis menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) dengan 5.000 resample bootstrapping. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa employee voice memiliki pengaruh positif yang signifikan terhadap komitmen organisasi, sementara kepemimpinan partisipatif menunjukkan pengaruh positif yang lebih kuat terhadap komitmen organisasi. Komitmen organisasi juga memiliki pengaruh positif yang signifikan terhadap kinerja pemasaran hubungan pelanggan. Selain itu, komitmen organisasi secara signifikan memediasi hubungan antara employee voice dengan kinerja pemasaran hubungan pelanggan, serta antara kepemimpinan partisipatif dengan kinerja pemasaran hubungan pelanggan. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa kinerja pemasaran hubungan pelanggan tidak hanya ditentukan oleh praktik pemasaran eksternal, tetapi juga oleh partisipasi karyawan internal, kepemimpinan, dan keterikatan psikologis. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dengan memperluas Teori Pertukaran Sosial untuk menjelaskan hasil yang berorientasi pada pelanggan di UMKM serta memberikan panduan praktis untuk mengembangkan praktik manajemen yang partisipatif dan berorientasi pada komitmen.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) increasingly depend on the ability to maintain strong and sustainable relationships with customers, yet many MSMEs still struggle to transform everyday customer interactions into consistent customer relationship marketing performance. Customer relationship marketing requires organizations to understand customer needs, respond quickly to complaints and suggestions, maintain trust, and develop long-term relationships rather than focusing only on individual transactions. Recent evidence indicates that relationship marketing can strengthen SME performance by improving customer loyalty, trust, and long-term relationship quality (Omar, Aris, & Nazri, 2022). At the same time, organizational factors such as employee participation and commitment are increasingly recognized as important foundations for service and customer-oriented performance. Employees who are encouraged to express ideas and concerns can provide valuable information about customer expectations and operational problems. However, many MSMEs still operate through highly centralized decision-making, where customer-related information remains concentrated in owners or managers. This condition limits the organization's ability to convert employee knowledge into effective customer relationship strategies.

Empirically, MSMEs frequently interact directly with customers, making employees an important source of market and relationship knowledge. Nevertheless, customer information is not always systematically communicated to decision makers, particularly in small firms where formal communication structures are limited. Research on employee voice demonstrates that opportunities for employees to express opinions and suggestions are associated with stronger organizational commitment because employees perceive that their contributions are valued by the organization (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011). In MSMEs, employee voice can therefore become an important mechanism through which frontline experiences are communicated to owners and managers. When employees can report customer complaints, suggest service improvements, and communicate emerging customer preferences, firms may respond more effectively to changing market expectations. However, the absence of participative decision-making can suppress such information flows. Consequently, customer relationship activities may become dependent on managerial intuition rather than collective organizational knowledge (Farndale et al., 2011).

Recent organizational behavior research further suggests that employee voice is influenced by the quality of leadership and the psychological relationship between employees and their

organization. Participative leadership provides employees with opportunities to become involved in decision making, contribute ideas, and influence work-related outcomes. Such leadership can strengthen employees' perceptions that their knowledge and opinions are meaningful to organizational development. Research on leadership and employee voice indicates that supportive leadership conditions can encourage employees to speak up and contribute constructive ideas, while organizational commitment represents an important psychological condition associated with employees' willingness to engage in voice behavior (Cheng, Bai, & Hu, 2019). Without participative leadership, employees may hesitate to communicate customer-related problems because they perceive that managerial decisions are already predetermined. This creates a structural challenge for MSMEs in which employees are often closest to customers but have limited influence over strategic decisions. Thus, leadership and employee participation become critical organizational conditions for transforming frontline customer knowledge into relationship-oriented performance.

Despite growing interest in employee voice and participative leadership, research has rarely integrated these two factors with organizational commitment to explain customer relationship marketing performance specifically in MSMEs. Previous research has established that employee voice can contribute to organizational commitment, but much of the literature has examined commitment as an organizational outcome rather than as a mechanism connecting employee participation with marketing-related performance (Farndale et al., 2011). Similarly, studies of participative leadership have frequently focused on employee or job performance rather than customer relationship marketing outcomes. Recent empirical research has shown that organizational commitment can function as a mediating mechanism between participative leadership and employee performance, suggesting that leadership participation may influence outcomes partly by strengthening employees' attachment to the organization (Widya Mandala et al., 2024). However, the extent to which this mechanism explains customer relationship marketing performance in MSMEs remains insufficiently examined. This creates a research gap concerning how employee-level voice and leadership-level participation jointly generate customer-oriented organizational outcomes.

This study is theoretically grounded in Social Exchange Theory, which explains organizational relationships as reciprocal exchanges in which positive treatment from one party generates obligations and positive responses from another. In the organizational context, when employees are given opportunities to express their opinions and participate in decision making, they may perceive that the organization values their contributions and supports their role. Such perceptions can strengthen organizational commitment and encourage employees to reciprocate through constructive behaviors that benefit the organization (Farndale et al., 2011). Participative leadership is therefore expected to create a social exchange environment in which employees feel recognized and involved, while employee voice represents an active contribution to organizational improvement. Organizational commitment then functions as the psychological mechanism through which these positive exchanges are translated into stronger organizational behavior. This theoretical perspective is particularly appropriate for MSMEs because interpersonal relationships between owners, managers, employees, and customers are generally more direct and intensive. Thus, Social Exchange Theory provides a focused explanation of how participation and reciprocal relationships can ultimately contribute to customer-oriented performance.

The urgency of this research is strengthened by the increasing importance of customer retention, loyalty, and relationship quality for MSMEs operating in highly competitive markets. Relationship marketing has been shown to contribute to SME performance by strengthening trust, reciprocity, customer relationships, and other relational mechanisms that support financial and nonfinancial outcomes (Omar et al., 2022). Similarly, research on social customer relationship management demonstrates that CRM-related capabilities can explain substantial variation in SME performance, particularly when firms possess the organizational readiness to use customer information effectively (2024). However, customer relationship marketing is not solely a technological or managerial process. Employees who interact directly with customers are frequently the first to identify changes in customer expectations, service failures, and opportunities for relationship development. When these employees lack opportunities to communicate their observations, valuable customer knowledge may not reach organizational decision makers. Therefore, strengthening employee voice and participative leadership becomes increasingly urgent for MSMEs seeking to improve customer relationship marketing performance.

Another reason for the study's urgency lies in the inconsistent empirical understanding of how leadership and employee behavior are translated into organizational outcomes. Some studies indicate that participative leadership improves employee performance through organizational commitment,

whereas other evidence suggests that the influence of leadership depends on intervening psychological and relational mechanisms (Monica, Wulani, & Nagel, 2023). Likewise, employee voice has been demonstrated to have a positive relationship with organizational commitment, but the consequences of voice may depend on how organizations respond to employee contributions (Farndale et al., 2011). These findings indicate that simply providing employees with opportunities to speak may not be sufficient to generate superior organizational performance. Employees must also perceive that participation is supported by leadership and embedded in a meaningful relationship with the organization. In MSMEs, where formal human resource systems are often less developed, these social and relational mechanisms may be particularly important. Understanding organizational commitment as a mediating mechanism can therefore clarify why employee voice and participative leadership may produce different levels of customer relationship marketing performance across MSMEs.

From a practical perspective, MSME owners and managers need evidence-based guidance on how internal employee relationships can be converted into stronger customer relationships. Existing research on MSME performance frequently emphasizes relationship marketing orientation, digital CRM, market capabilities, and external customer strategies, while internal employee participation receives comparatively less attention. Evidence from SMEs shows that relationship marketing contributes to marketing and business performance through stronger customer relationships, trust, loyalty, and market responsiveness (Farida, Naryoso, & Yuniawan, 2017; Shiratina et al., 2023). Yet these outcomes depend heavily on employees who execute customer-facing activities on a daily basis. Employees who are encouraged to voice ideas can communicate customer insights, while participative leaders can ensure that these insights become part of organizational decisions. Strong organizational commitment can further encourage employees to consistently invest effort in maintaining customer relationships. Hence, investigating these internal mechanisms offers actionable insights for MSME owners seeking to build customer-centered organizations rather than relying exclusively on promotional or technological strategies.

Specifically, this study aims to examine the effects of employee voice and participative leadership on customer relationship marketing performance among MSMEs, while testing the mediating role of organizational commitment in these relationships. By integrating employee behavior, leadership style, and organizational commitment into a single framework, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how internal organizational processes influence customer-oriented marketing outcomes. The model extends previous research that has separately examined employee voice and organizational commitment (Farndale et al., 2011), participative leadership and commitment-related outcomes, and relationship marketing performance in SMEs (Omar et al., 2022). The focus on MSMEs is particularly relevant because these businesses depend heavily on direct interactions between employees, owners, and customers, while often operating with limited formal structures. The study therefore contributes theoretically by explaining organizational commitment as a mechanism connecting employee voice and participative leadership with customer relationship marketing performance, while also providing practical implications for MSME managers seeking to strengthen customer relationships through internal organizational practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory explains that relationships within organizations develop through reciprocal exchanges between employees and organizational actors. Employees tend to respond positively when they perceive that the organization provides valued resources, support, recognition, and opportunities for participation. These positive experiences generate an obligation to reciprocate through favorable attitudes and behaviors that contribute to organizational objectives (Blau, 1964). In organizational settings, social exchange is therefore not limited to economic transactions but also involves psychological and relational resources such as trust, support, recognition, and involvement. When employees perceive that their organization values their contributions, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the organization and demonstrate behaviors that benefit organizational performance. Consequently, Social Exchange Theory provides an important explanation for understanding how organizational practices can influence employee attitudes and subsequent behavioral outcomes.

The development of Social Exchange Theory in organizational research has increasingly emphasized the importance of leadership, employee participation, and organizational support in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. Leaders represent important organizational agents because their treatment of employees communicates whether employees are valued and trusted by the organization. Participative leadership can create reciprocal relationships by involving employees in decision making and

recognizing their knowledge and contributions. Similarly, employee voice allows employees to contribute ideas, concerns, and suggestions that can improve organizational functioning. When such contributions are acknowledged and considered, employees may develop stronger psychological attachment and commitment to the organization (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011). Thus, employee voice and participative leadership can be interpreted as social exchange resources that encourage employees to reciprocate through stronger organizational commitment.

In relation to this study, Social Exchange Theory provides an appropriate framework for explaining how employee voice and participative leadership influence customer relationship marketing performance through organizational commitment. Employee voice provides employees with opportunities to communicate customer-related information, operational problems, and suggestions for improvement, while participative leadership creates an environment in which employees are involved in organizational decisions. These practices may strengthen employees' perception that their contributions are valued, consequently increasing their commitment to the organization. Organizational commitment can then motivate employees to invest greater effort in maintaining customer relationships, responding to customer needs, and supporting organizational marketing objectives. Therefore, customer relationship marketing performance can be understood as an organizational outcome that emerges from reciprocal exchanges between employees and the organization. By applying Social Exchange Theory, this study explains not only the direct contribution of employee voice and participative leadership but also the psychological mechanism through which these organizational practices can generate stronger customer relationship marketing performance (Blau, 1964; Farndale et al., 2011).

Employee Voice

Employee voice refers to employees' voluntary expression of ideas, suggestions, concerns, and information intended to improve organizational functioning. Voice allows employees to communicate information that may otherwise remain unavailable to organizational decision makers, particularly information obtained through direct experience with work processes and customers. Unlike silence or passive compliance, employee voice reflects employees' willingness to contribute information that can challenge existing practices and support organizational improvement (Morrison, 2011). Voice is particularly important in organizations where employees possess operational knowledge that managers may not directly observe. Through voice behavior, employees can identify problems, propose solutions, and communicate emerging opportunities. Therefore, employee voice represents an important mechanism through which employee knowledge can be incorporated into organizational decision making.

From the Social Exchange Theory perspective, employee voice can emerge when employees perceive that the organization provides a supportive environment in which their contributions are valued and respected. When employees are given opportunities to communicate their opinions, they may perceive greater recognition and inclusion within the organization. Such perceptions can strengthen the reciprocal relationship between employees and the organization. Employees may subsequently respond by developing stronger psychological attachment and willingness to contribute to organizational objectives. In MSMEs, this mechanism is particularly relevant because employees frequently have direct contact with customers and may possess valuable information regarding customer preferences, complaints, and expectations. When employees are encouraged to communicate this information, organizations can obtain richer customer knowledge while employees simultaneously develop stronger perceptions of organizational inclusion (Morrison, 2011).

Empirical research supports the relationship between employee voice and organizational commitment. Farndale et al. (2011) demonstrated that employee voice is associated with organizational commitment, particularly when employees perceive that their participation is supported and their contributions can influence organizational processes. Employee voice can strengthen employees' sense that they are legitimate organizational participants rather than merely recipients of managerial decisions. This perception can foster a stronger emotional connection with the organization and increase employees' willingness to support organizational objectives. In customer-oriented MSMEs, employee voice may also provide an important source of customer intelligence because frontline employees are directly exposed to customer experiences. Accordingly, employees who are encouraged to express customer-related insights are expected to develop stronger organizational commitment (Farndale et al., 2011).

H1: Employee voice has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

Participative Leadership

Participative leadership refers to a leadership approach in which leaders involve employees in decision making, encourage their opinions, and provide opportunities for employees to influence

organizational activities. Rather than relying exclusively on top-down decision making, participative leaders recognize that employees possess knowledge and experiences that can contribute to better organizational decisions. Participation can include consultation, joint problem solving, information sharing, and employee involvement in decisions that affect their work (Somech, 2005). Participative leadership therefore emphasizes employee involvement and shared influence rather than unilateral managerial control. This leadership approach can be particularly valuable in MSMEs because organizational boundaries are relatively flexible and employees often perform multiple roles that provide them with direct knowledge of customers and operational conditions.

Within the Social Exchange Theory perspective, participative leadership represents an important organizational resource that can initiate positive reciprocal relationships between leaders and employees. When leaders provide employees with opportunities to participate, employees may interpret such behavior as evidence that their knowledge, competence, and contribution are valued. This perception can create a sense of obligation to reciprocate through positive attitudes toward the organization. Participative leadership may consequently strengthen organizational commitment because employees experience greater inclusion, recognition, and psychological ownership of organizational decisions. Furthermore, employee participation can increase employees' understanding of organizational goals and create stronger alignment between individual and organizational interests (Somech, 2005).

Previous empirical research has demonstrated that participative leadership is associated with positive employee attitudes and organizational outcomes. Participative decision making can increase employees' involvement in organizational processes and strengthen their perception that they have meaningful influence over their work environment. Research examining leadership and employee attitudes also suggests that supportive and participative leadership can strengthen employees' psychological attachment to organizations by improving perceptions of organizational support and fairness. More recent evidence indicates that organizational commitment can function as an important mechanism linking participative leadership with employee-related performance outcomes (Widya Mandala et al., 2024). These findings suggest that participative leadership does not merely influence employee behavior directly but can also operate through employees' psychological attachment to the organization. Therefore, participative leadership is expected to positively influence organizational commitment among MSMEs.

H2: Participative leadership has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the degree to which employees identify with an organization, are willing to remain part of it, and are motivated to contribute to its objectives. Organizational commitment reflects an employee's psychological attachment to the organization and willingness to exert effort on behalf of organizational goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with strong organizational commitment tend to perceive organizational membership as valuable and meaningful, which can encourage persistence and greater willingness to contribute beyond minimum job requirements. Commitment is therefore an important employee attitude because it connects employees' individual interests with broader organizational objectives. In customer-oriented businesses, strong commitment can also encourage employees to maintain consistent service quality and develop stronger relationships with customers.

From the Social Exchange Theory perspective, organizational commitment represents an important outcome of positive exchanges between employees and organizational actors. Employees who experience recognition, participation, support, and fair treatment may develop a sense of obligation to reciprocate by demonstrating loyalty and greater effort. Employee voice and participative leadership provide employees with opportunities to experience such positive exchanges because they communicate that employees' knowledge and opinions are valued. Organizational commitment can therefore function as the psychological mechanism through which organizational practices are transformed into employee motivation and subsequent performance. In MSMEs, this mechanism may be particularly important because employees often maintain close interpersonal relationships with owners and managers, making the quality of social exchange highly visible in everyday work interactions.

Empirical literature has consistently identified organizational commitment as an important determinant of employee behavior and organizational performance. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) demonstrated that organizational commitment is associated with important work-related outcomes, including employee behavior and performance. Strong commitment can encourage employees to devote greater effort to organizational objectives and maintain their involvement even when

work conditions become demanding. In customer relationship contexts, committed employees are more likely to perceive customer satisfaction and relationship development as organizational priorities rather than merely individual job requirements. Their stronger identification with organizational goals can therefore encourage behaviors that support consistent customer interaction, responsiveness, and relationship maintenance. Accordingly, organizational commitment is expected to contribute positively to customer relationship marketing performance.

H3: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on customer relationship marketing performance.

Customer Relationship Marketing Performance

Customer relationship marketing performance refers to the extent to which an organization successfully develops, maintains, and strengthens long-term relationships with customers through relationship-oriented marketing activities. Unlike transactional marketing, relationship marketing emphasizes customer retention, trust, satisfaction, loyalty, communication, and the development of mutually beneficial long-term relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Customer relationship marketing performance therefore reflects the ability of a firm to convert customer-oriented activities into stronger relationship outcomes. For MSMEs, customer relationship marketing is particularly important because long-term relationships can generate repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, customer loyalty, and greater stability of revenue. Consequently, relationship marketing performance represents an important dimension of MSME competitiveness.

Within the Social Exchange Theory perspective, customer relationships can also be understood as reciprocal exchanges in which trust, commitment, communication, and mutual value are continuously developed. Employees play an important role in these exchanges because they frequently represent the organization in direct interactions with customers. Employees who possess strong organizational commitment may be more willing to invest additional effort in understanding customer needs, resolving problems, responding to complaints, and maintaining positive relationships. Their commitment to the organization can therefore strengthen the consistency and quality of customer relationship activities. In MSMEs, where customer interactions are often highly personal, employees' attitudes and behaviors can directly influence customers' perceptions of the organization. Consequently, organizational commitment represents an important internal foundation for achieving stronger customer relationship marketing performance.

Previous research supports the strategic importance of relationship marketing for SME performance. Omar, Aris, and Nazri (2022) demonstrated that relationship marketing orientation can contribute to SME performance through mechanisms associated with stronger customer relationships, trust, and relational value. Similarly, Farida, Naryoso, and Yuniawan (2017) found that relationship marketing and related customer-oriented capabilities can contribute to marketing performance among SMEs. These findings indicate that effective customer relationship marketing depends not only on external marketing activities but also on internal organizational capabilities and employee behaviors. Employees who are committed to organizational goals are more likely to consistently support customer-oriented practices and maintain relationship quality. Therefore, organizational commitment is expected to have a positive effect on customer relationship marketing performance (Omar et al., 2022; Farida et al., 2017).

H4: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on customer relationship marketing performance.

The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is proposed as the central mediating mechanism through which employee voice influences customer relationship marketing performance. Employee voice provides employees with opportunities to communicate information, suggestions, and concerns that can improve organizational functioning. However, voice behavior alone may not automatically produce stronger marketing performance. The effectiveness of employee contributions depends partly on employees' psychological attachment to the organization and their willingness to consistently translate their contributions into organizationally beneficial behavior. Through positive social exchange, employees whose voices are encouraged and valued may develop stronger organizational commitment. This commitment can subsequently motivate them to devote greater effort to customer-related activities and support organizational relationship marketing objectives (Farndale et al., 2011).

From the Social Exchange Theory perspective, the mediation process occurs because employee voice communicates an exchange relationship between employees and the organization. When employees are allowed to express their opinions and perceive that their contributions matter, they may feel recognized and valued. This positive experience strengthens organizational commitment, which subsequently encourages employees to reciprocate through behaviors that support organizational goals. In

MSMEs, committed employees may use information obtained from customer interactions to improve service, communicate customer needs to managers, and maintain stronger relationships with customers. Thus, organizational commitment provides the psychological pathway through which employee voice can ultimately contribute to customer relationship marketing performance. This mechanism extends previous research by moving beyond the direct relationship between voice and employee attitudes toward an organizational marketing outcome.

Empirical evidence regarding employee voice and organizational commitment provides support for this proposed mechanism. Farndale et al. (2011) demonstrated that employee voice is associated with stronger organizational commitment, indicating that opportunities for employee participation can strengthen employees' attachment to their organization. At the same time, research on relationship marketing emphasizes that employee involvement and organizational commitment are important for developing customer-oriented relationships and performance (Omar et al., 2022). Combining these perspectives suggests that employee voice may improve customer relationship marketing performance partly because employees who are encouraged to speak up become more committed and consequently more willing to support customer-oriented organizational objectives. Accordingly, organizational commitment is expected to mediate the relationship between employee voice and customer relationship marketing performance.

H5: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between employee voice and customer relationship marketing performance.

Participative leadership is also expected to influence customer relationship marketing performance indirectly through organizational commitment. Participative leaders involve employees in decision making, communicate trust, and recognize employees' contributions. These practices can create positive social exchanges that strengthen employees' psychological attachment to the organization. However, participation itself does not necessarily guarantee improved customer relationship outcomes unless employees internalize organizational objectives and are motivated to act consistently in support of those objectives. Organizational commitment provides this motivational mechanism by encouraging employees to identify with organizational goals and invest additional effort in achieving them. Consequently, participative leadership can strengthen customer relationship marketing performance by creating a more committed workforce.

The mediating mechanism is particularly relevant in MSMEs because participative leadership can directly connect employees' frontline knowledge with managerial decision making. Employees who participate in decisions may better understand organizational priorities and feel greater responsibility for the outcomes of those decisions. When this participation strengthens organizational commitment, employees may become more willing to maintain customer relationships, respond to customer needs, and contribute to marketing initiatives. Evidence linking participative leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance suggests that commitment can operate as an important psychological pathway through which participative leadership generates performance outcomes (Widya Mandala et al., 2024). Therefore, organizational commitment is expected to translate participative leadership into stronger customer relationship marketing performance.

H6: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between participative leadership and customer relationship marketing performance.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among employee voice, participative leadership, organizational commitment, and customer relationship marketing performance. The quantitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to empirically test the proposed direct and indirect relationships among the research constructs and to determine whether organizational commitment functions as a mediating mechanism. The unit of analysis is individual MSME owners, managers, or employees who are directly involved in organizational decision making, customer interaction, or customer relationship marketing activities. The research focuses on MSMEs operating in Purwakarta Regency, Indonesia, providing a relevant context for examining how employee participation and organizational commitment contribute to customer-oriented marketing performance.

MSMEs frequently depend on close interactions between employees, owners, and customers to maintain customer satisfaction, trust, and long-term relationships. In such environments, employees who interact directly with customers can possess valuable information regarding customer needs, complaints, preferences, and emerging market expectations. However, the extent to which such information contributes to organizational performance depends on employees' willingness to express their opinions and

the extent to which leaders involve employees in organizational decision making. Organizational commitment may further determine whether employees consistently translate these organizational experiences into customer-oriented behaviors. Therefore, data are collected using structured questionnaires distributed to eligible MSME respondents. The cross-sectional design enables the study to capture respondents' perceptions regarding employee voice, participative leadership, organizational commitment, and customer relationship marketing performance at a specific point in time.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of MSMEs operating in Purwakarta Regency, Indonesia, particularly businesses that maintain direct interactions with customers and conduct customer relationship marketing activities. The target population includes MSMEs operating in sectors such as food and beverages, retail, fashion, handicrafts, services, and other customer-oriented business activities. Based on information from the local MSME administration, the population is assumed to consist of approximately 1,200 MSMEs.

The minimum sample size is determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error. Based on the estimated population, the required minimum sample is approximately 300 respondents. A purposive sampling technique is applied to ensure that respondents possess sufficient knowledge and experience to evaluate the variables examined in this study. Respondents are required to meet the following criteria: (1) they are MSME owners, managers, or employees; (2) they have been involved in the MSME for at least one year; (3) they are directly involved in customer interaction, marketing, service, or organizational decision-making activities; and (4) they have sufficient knowledge of the organization's internal management practices and customer relationship activities.

This sampling strategy is intended to ensure that respondents can meaningfully assess the extent to which employees are encouraged to express opinions, leaders involve employees in decision making, employees demonstrate commitment to the organization, and the MSME achieves effective customer relationship marketing performance. Respondents with direct exposure to customers are particularly relevant because customer relationship marketing performance depends substantially on employees' daily interactions and their ability to respond to customer needs.

Data Collection Procedure

Data are collected using self-administered structured questionnaires based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire consists of two main sections. The first section collects demographic and business-related information, including gender, age, educational background, position within the MSME, business sector, length of employment or business experience, and involvement in customer-related activities. The second section measures the four constructs included in the research model: employee voice, participative leadership, organizational commitment, and customer relationship marketing performance.

Prior to the main survey, a pilot test involving approximately 30 MSME respondents is conducted to assess the clarity, readability, and initial reliability of the questionnaire items. The pilot test is also intended to identify ambiguous wording and ensure that the measurement items are understandable within the MSME context. Feedback obtained from the pilot stage is used to refine the questionnaire before the main data collection process. The final questionnaire is subsequently distributed over a four-week period through direct visits to MSMEs and online distribution using digital communication platforms.

The combination of direct and online questionnaire distribution is intended to increase respondent accessibility and improve the response rate. Participation is voluntary, and respondents are informed that their responses will remain confidential and will be used exclusively for academic purposes. Respondents are also informed that there are no right or wrong answers and that they should provide responses based on their actual experiences within their respective MSMEs. This procedure is intended to reduce response bias and encourage respondents to provide honest evaluations of organizational leadership, employee participation, commitment, and customer relationship marketing practices.

Data Analysis Technique

The data are analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM is selected because the research model is predictive in nature and involves multiple latent constructs and mediation relationships. The method is also appropriate for examining complex relationships between employee-related, leadership-related, and organizational constructs and can be applied without requiring strict multivariate normality assumptions.

The analysis is conducted in two main stages. The first stage evaluates the measurement model to establish the reliability and validity of the research instruments.

Convergent validity is assessed using outer loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicator loadings are expected to exceed 0.70, while AVE values should be greater than 0.50. Internal consistency reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, with values above 0.70 generally indicating satisfactory reliability. Discriminant validity is evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) to confirm that employee voice, participative leadership, organizational commitment, and customer relationship marketing performance represent empirically distinct constructs.

The second stage evaluates the structural model. Collinearity among predictor constructs is examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The structural model is subsequently assessed through path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and predictive relevance. The R^2 values indicate the extent to which the exogenous constructs explain variance in the endogenous constructs. The model's predictive capability is additionally evaluated using relevant PLS-SEM predictive assessment procedures.

Hypothesis testing is conducted using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The direct effects of employee voice on organizational commitment, participative leadership on organizational commitment, and organizational commitment on customer relationship marketing performance are examined through the estimated path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. A relationship is considered statistically significant when the p-value is below 0.05 and the corresponding t-statistic exceeds the relevant critical value.

The mediation analysis focuses on organizational commitment as the mediating variable. The indirect effect of employee voice on customer relationship marketing performance through organizational commitment and the indirect effect of participative leadership on customer relationship marketing performance through organizational commitment are assessed using bootstrapping. The mediation analysis determines whether organizational commitment significantly transmits the effects of employee voice and participative leadership to customer relationship marketing performance. Through this procedure, the study can distinguish between direct and indirect effects and establish whether organizational commitment functions as a significant mediating mechanism in the proposed research model.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Respondent Profile

Descriptive analysis is conducted to present the characteristics of respondents and to ensure that the sample adequately represents the MSME context. Respondent profiling focuses on gender, age, education level, business sector, position within the MSME, and length of business operation. These characteristics are important because respondents are required to possess sufficient experience with organizational practices, employee participation, leadership processes, and customer relationship activities. The respondents consist of MSME owners, managers, and employees who are directly involved in customer interaction, marketing, or organizational decision-making activities in Purwakarta Regency, Indonesia. A sample of 300 respondents is considered adequate for the PLS-SEM analysis conducted in this study.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 300)

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	164	54.7
Female	136	45.3
Age		
< 30 years	76	25.3
30–40 years	128	42.7
> 40 years	96	32.0
Education		
High school	108	36.0
Diploma/Bachelor	154	51.3
Postgraduate	38	12.7
Position		
Owner	118	39.3
Manager/Supervisor	72	24.0
Employee	110	36.7
Business sector		
Food & Beverage	124	41.3
Fashion & Retail	78	26.0
Services	98	32.7
Business age		
< 3 years	91	30.3
3–5 years	104	34.7
> 5 years	105	35.0

The table shows that male respondents slightly dominate the sample, accounting for 54.7%, while female respondents represent 45.3%. The largest age group is respondents between 30 and 40 years, representing 42.7% of the sample. More than half of the respondents have a diploma or bachelor's degree,

indicating an adequate educational background for evaluating organizational and customer relationship practices. In terms of position, MSME owners represent the largest group, followed by employees and managers or supervisors. Food and beverage businesses constitute the largest business sector, while the remaining respondents are distributed across fashion and retail and service businesses. More than two-thirds of the MSMEs have operated for at least three years, suggesting that most respondents possess sufficient organizational and customer relationship experience. Overall, the respondent composition is considered appropriate for subsequent measurement and structural model analysis.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is assessed to determine whether the indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs. The evaluation is based on outer loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicator loadings above 0.70 indicate that items have strong relationships with their associated constructs, while AVE values above 0.50 demonstrate that a construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators. These criteria are used to establish whether the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent validity. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Convergent Validity Results

Variable	Indicator Loading Range	AVE
Employee Voice	0.742–0.876	0.648
Participative Leadership	0.731–0.891	0.671
Organizational Commitment	0.756–0.884	0.662
Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	0.724–0.893	0.658

The results indicate that all indicator loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70. Employee voice demonstrates loading values ranging from 0.742 to 0.876, while participative leadership shows loadings between 0.731 and 0.891. Organizational commitment and customer relationship marketing performance also demonstrate satisfactory loading ranges. Furthermore, the AVE values for all constructs exceed 0.50, ranging from 0.648 to 0.671. These findings indicate that each construct explains a sufficient proportion of the variance in its indicators. Therefore, the measurement model satisfies the requirements for convergent validity, and no indicators need to be removed.

Reliability Test

Reliability analysis is conducted to assess the internal consistency of the indicators associated with each latent construct. Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) are used as the primary criteria. Values above 0.70 indicate satisfactory internal consistency, demonstrating that the indicators consistently measure the same underlying construct. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Employee Voice	0.871	0.907
Participative Leadership	0.884	0.911
Organizational Commitment	0.878	0.906
Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	0.889	0.913

The results show that all constructs have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, ranging from 0.871 to 0.889. Composite Reliability values also exceed the recommended threshold, ranging from 0.906 to 0.913. Customer relationship marketing performance demonstrates the highest Cronbach's alpha, while participative leadership shows strong composite reliability. These results indicate that the indicators consistently measure their respective constructs. No construct falls below the minimum reliability criterion. Therefore, the measurement instrument demonstrates adequate internal consistency and is suitable for structural model assessment.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). This criterion is used to determine whether the constructs in the model are empirically distinct from one another. HTMT values below 0.90 indicate adequate discriminant validity, suggesting that the constructs represent conceptually different phenomena. This assessment is particularly important in the present study because employee voice, participative leadership, and organizational commitment are theoretically related but represent different organizational concepts. The HTMT results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Variable	EV	PL	OC	CRMP
Employee Voice (EV)	—			
Participative Leadership (PL)	0.684	—		
Organizational Commitment (OC)	0.721	0.756	—	

Variable		EV	PL	OC	CRMP
Customer Relationship Marketing (CRMP)	Performance	0.647	0.682	0.774	—

The results show that all HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value is 0.774 between organizational commitment and customer relationship marketing performance, while the lowest value is 0.647 between employee voice and customer relationship marketing performance. These results indicate that no pair of constructs demonstrates excessive conceptual overlap. Employee voice remains empirically distinct from participative leadership, while organizational commitment is also distinguishable from customer relationship marketing performance. Therefore, discriminant validity is established for all constructs in the measurement model.

Collinearity Test

Collinearity assessment is performed to determine whether the predictor constructs exhibit excessive correlation that could distort the estimation of structural relationships. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is used as the main criterion, with values below 5.00 indicating the absence of serious multicollinearity. Lower VIF values suggest that predictor constructs provide sufficiently independent explanatory information. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Collinearity (VIF) Results

Predictor	Endogenous Variable	VIF
Employee Voice	Organizational Commitment	1.824
Participative Leadership	Organizational Commitment	1.824
Employee Voice	Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	2.146
Participative Leadership	Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	2.238
Organizational Commitment	Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	2.417

All VIF values are below the threshold of 5.00, with values ranging from 1.824 to 2.417. These findings indicate that employee voice and participative leadership do not exhibit problematic multicollinearity when predicting organizational commitment. Similarly, the predictors of customer relationship marketing performance remain within acceptable collinearity levels. Therefore, the structural model can be evaluated without substantial concern regarding multicollinearity bias.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model. R^2 represents the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct that can be explained by its predictor variables. In this study, R^2 is evaluated for organizational commitment and customer relationship marketing performance. Values around 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 can generally be interpreted as weak, moderate, and substantial explanatory power, respectively.

Table 6. R^2 Values

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Organizational Commitment	0.521	Moderate
Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	0.614	Moderate–Substantial

The results indicate that employee voice and participative leadership jointly explain 52.1% of the variance in organizational commitment. This finding suggests that both employee participation and leadership practices provide meaningful explanatory power for employees' psychological attachment to the organization. Meanwhile, organizational commitment, together with employee voice and participative leadership, explains 61.4% of the variance in customer relationship marketing performance. The relatively high R^2 value indicates that the proposed model possesses substantial explanatory capacity in predicting customer relationship marketing performance. The remaining variance may be explained by other organizational and marketing factors that are not included in the current model.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The analysis evaluates path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values to determine whether the proposed relationships are statistically significant. A hypothesis is supported when the path coefficient is in the predicted direction, the t-value exceeds 1.96, and the p-value is below 0.05. The results of the direct-effect analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Direct Effects and Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Employee Voice → Organizational Commitment	0.327	5.684	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H2	Participative Leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.461	8.137	0.000	Supported
H3	Organizational Commitment → Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	0.514	10.326	0.000	Supported

The results demonstrate that employee voice has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (β = 0.327, t = 5.684, p < 0.001), supporting H1. This finding indicates that employees who are encouraged to express ideas, concerns, and customer-related information tend to demonstrate stronger commitment to their MSMEs. Participative leadership also has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (β = 0.461, t = 8.137, p < 0.001), supporting H2. The relatively larger coefficient indicates that participative leadership represents a particularly important predictor of organizational commitment in the examined MSME context. Furthermore, organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on customer relationship marketing performance (β = 0.514, t = 10.326, p < 0.001), supporting H3. This result suggests that employees with stronger organizational attachment and willingness to contribute are more likely to support customer-oriented activities and strengthen long-term customer relationships.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis is conducted to determine whether organizational commitment functions as an intervening mechanism connecting employee voice and participative leadership with customer relationship marketing performance. The indirect effects are assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The mediation results are evaluated based on the indirect path coefficient, t-value, and p-value. A significant indirect effect indicates that organizational commitment transmits the influence of the respective independent variable to customer relationship marketing performance.

Table 8. Indirect Effects and Mediation Results

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H4	Employee Voice → Organizational Commitment → Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	0.168	5.021	0.000	Supported
H5	Participative Leadership → Organizational Commitment → Customer Relationship Marketing Performance	0.237	6.847	0.000	Supported

The mediation results show that organizational commitment significantly mediates the relationship between employee voice and customer relationship marketing performance (β = 0.168, t = 5.021, p < 0.001), supporting H4. This result indicates that employee voice contributes to customer relationship marketing performance partly by strengthening employees' commitment to the organization. Employees who are given opportunities to express opinions and communicate customer-related information may feel more valued and involved, which subsequently strengthens their willingness to support organizational customer relationship objectives.

Organizational commitment also significantly mediates the relationship between participative leadership and customer relationship marketing performance (β = 0.237, t = 6.847, p < 0.001), supporting H5. The stronger indirect coefficient suggests that participative leadership can generate customer relationship marketing benefits by strengthening employees' psychological attachment to the MSME. When leaders involve employees in decisions and consider their contributions, employees may develop stronger identification with organizational objectives and become more willing to invest effort in maintaining customer relationships. Overall, both mediation hypotheses are supported, confirming organizational commitment as an important psychological mechanism connecting internal organizational practices with customer relationship marketing performance.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that employee voice has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment among MSMEs. This result suggests that when employees are given opportunities to express ideas, concerns, suggestions, and customer-related information, they are more likely to develop stronger psychological attachment to the organization. Employee voice allows MSME employees to perceive that their knowledge and experiences are valued by owners and managers. Such recognition can strengthen employees' sense of belonging and willingness to contribute to organizational objectives. This finding is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees tend to reciprocate positive organizational treatment through favorable attitudes and behaviors (Blau, 1964). In the MSME context, where communication between employees and owners is often relatively direct, creating opportunities for employee voice can become an important mechanism for strengthening commitment. The result therefore indicates that employee voice is not merely a communication practice but also an organizational resource that can strengthen employees' psychological connection with the business.

The positive relationship between participative leadership and organizational commitment demonstrates that leadership involvement plays an important role in strengthening employees' attachment to MSMEs. Participative leaders involve employees in decision making, listen to their opinions, and provide opportunities to influence decisions that affect their work. These practices can create perceptions of trust, recognition, and inclusion, encouraging employees to perceive themselves as important organizational participants rather than merely task performers. The stronger coefficient observed for participative leadership compared with employee voice suggests that leadership behavior may be particularly influential in shaping organizational commitment. From the Social Exchange Theory perspective, participative leadership represents a valuable organizational exchange resource because employees receive recognition, involvement, and influence in return for their contributions to organizational objectives (Blau, 1964). This finding indicates that MSME owners and managers can strengthen employee commitment by shifting from highly centralized decision making toward more participative leadership practices.

The significant positive effect of organizational commitment on customer relationship marketing performance highlights the importance of employees' psychological attachment in achieving customer-oriented outcomes. Employees with stronger organizational commitment are more likely to identify with organizational goals and invest additional effort in activities that support the business. In the context of customer relationship marketing, committed employees may be more attentive to customer needs, more responsive to complaints, and more willing to maintain long-term relationships with customers. This finding is consistent with the relationship marketing perspective, which emphasizes commitment as an important foundation for developing and maintaining successful relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The result also supports previous evidence that relationship marketing can improve SME performance by strengthening customer trust, loyalty, and relationship quality (Omar, Aris, & Nazri, 2022). Thus, customer relationship marketing performance is not exclusively determined by external marketing activities but is also influenced by the internal commitment of employees who implement customer-oriented practices.

The mediation effect of organizational commitment in the relationship between employee voice and customer relationship marketing performance provides deeper insight into how employee participation is transformed into customer-related outcomes. Employee voice provides MSMEs with valuable information regarding customer complaints, preferences, service problems, and opportunities for improvement. However, the contribution of voice may become more meaningful when employees develop stronger commitment to the organization. Employees who feel that their opinions are valued may develop a greater sense of belonging and consequently become more willing to invest effort in maintaining customer relationships. This finding supports Social Exchange Theory because positive organizational responses to employee contributions can generate reciprocal commitment and subsequent organizationally beneficial behavior (Farndale et al., 2011). The significant indirect effect therefore suggests that employee voice contributes to customer relationship marketing performance not only through the information employees provide but also through the commitment that develops from being heard and valued.

Similarly, the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between participative leadership and customer relationship marketing performance demonstrates that leadership participation influences customer outcomes through employees' psychological attachment to the organization. Participative leadership provides employees with opportunities to contribute to decisions and creates a stronger sense of ownership over organizational goals. When employees perceive that leaders trust and value their contributions, they may respond with stronger organizational

commitment. This commitment can subsequently motivate employees to devote greater effort to customer service, customer communication, complaint resolution, and relationship maintenance. The finding is consistent with evidence that participative leadership can influence performance-related outcomes through organizational commitment (Widya Mandala et al., 2024). Therefore, participative leadership does not merely improve internal employee experiences but can also generate external customer-related benefits through the psychological mechanism of organizational commitment.

Taken together, the results demonstrate that customer relationship marketing performance in MSMEs is best explained through an integrated model combining employee participation, leadership practices, and psychological commitment. Employee voice provides a channel through which frontline knowledge and customer information enter organizational processes, while participative leadership creates an environment that encourages employee involvement and shared decision making. Organizational commitment then functions as the central psychological mechanism that transforms these internal organizational conditions into customer-oriented performance. This pattern strongly supports Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating that positive organizational exchanges generate reciprocal employee commitment, which subsequently contributes to organizational outcomes. The findings also indicate that MSMEs should not view customer relationship marketing solely as a marketing department responsibility. Instead, effective customer relationship performance is partly constructed through everyday interactions between leaders and employees and through the extent to which employees feel valued, involved, and committed to the organization.

CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications.

This study extends Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating how employee voice and participative leadership contribute to customer relationship marketing performance through organizational commitment in the MSME context. The findings indicate that organizational commitment serves as an important psychological mechanism connecting internal social exchange practices with external customer-oriented outcomes. By integrating employee voice, participative leadership, and customer relationship marketing performance into a single model, the study expands existing research that has often examined these relationships separately. The findings demonstrate that customer relationship marketing performance is not solely an outcome of marketing strategies but is also shaped by reciprocal relationships and psychological attachment within the organization.

Managerial Implications.

For MSME owners and managers, the findings suggest that improving customer relationship marketing performance requires attention to internal employee management. Managers should provide employees with regular opportunities to express ideas, communicate customer complaints, and suggest improvements. At the same time, leaders should involve employees in decisions that affect their work and recognize their contributions to organizational development. Strengthening organizational commitment can further encourage employees to invest greater effort in customer service, customer retention, and relationship maintenance. Thus, MSMEs should combine participative leadership, open employee communication, and commitment-building practices rather than relying exclusively on promotional activities or customer-facing technologies.

Limitations and Future Research.

This study relies on cross-sectional data, which limits the ability to establish strong causal conclusions regarding the relationships among employee voice, participative leadership, organizational commitment, and customer relationship marketing performance. The use of self-reported questionnaire data may also introduce common method bias and subjective assessment of organizational performance. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine how employee participation and commitment develop over time. Future studies could also incorporate objective customer relationship indicators, such as customer retention rates, repeat purchase levels, customer satisfaction scores, or customer lifetime value. Comparative studies across different MSME sectors and regions could further examine whether the proposed relationships vary according to organizational size, business sector, leadership characteristics, or market conditions.

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