

“The impact of employee engagement and innovation performance on business success in manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo”

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THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND INNOVATION PERFORMANCE ON BUSINESS SUCCESS IN MANUFACTURING AND SERVICE ENTERPRISES IN ALBANIA AND KOSOVO

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the interplay between employee engagement and innovation performance in shaping the success of manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo. The data collection involved the distribution of questionnaires to entrepreneurs, managers, and employees of the enterprises, with direct interviews conducted in some cases. The data collection period spanned from the end of 2022 to the beginning of 2023. SPSS was employed to create the database and analyze the collected data. The study encompasses 190 companies operating in the services and production sectors, with 100 located in Albania and 90 in Kosovo. The selection of these sectors is based on their significant contribution to the region's economic landscape. Of the total enterprises, 105 (55%) are manufacturing enterprises, and 85 (45%) are service enterprises.

The findings reveal a robust and positive correlation between employee engagement, innovation performance, and business success. Employee engagement ($r = 0.458^{**}$) and innovation performance ($r = 0.396^{**}$) exhibit significant correlations ($p < 0.01$), with both factors demonstrating statistical significance ($p = 0.000$). The multivariate regression analysis confirms the positive influence of both employee engagement and innovation performance on business success, supported by a significance of ANOVA analysis ($p = .000$). This study contributes to the understanding of the specific dynamics of employee engagement and innovation performance in the context of manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo. It offers valuable insights for managers and entrepreneurs seeking to enhance the success of their organizations.

Keywords

employee engagement, innovation performance,
business success, manufacturing, service enterprises

JEL Classification

E24, O31, L20, D83, M20

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary business, the success of enterprises is intricately woven with multifaceted elements, among which employee engagement and innovation performance stand out as pivotal contributors. Within the intricacies of today's business environment, success is not a singular achievement but an outcome influenced by a multitude of interconnected variables. Among these, employee engagement and innovation performance have emerged as critical determinants. Previous research consistently highlights the positive impact of heightened employee engagement, not only on productivity but also on overall job satisfaction. Simultaneously, effective innovation performance is crucial in elevating product quality and establishing market differentiation.

At this juncture, there is an urge to underscore the inherent relevance of the scientific problem at hand: understanding the pivotal roles of employee engagement and innovation performance in steering sustainable success within Albania and Kosovo's manufacturing and service enterprises. This information may not only contribute to the academic discourse but also provide actionable insights for practitioners navigating the complex terrain of business management in this region.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of employee engagement and innovation performance in the realm of business success has been a subject of substantial inquiry in recent years.

Recent research underscores the pivotal role that employee engagement plays in shaping the path to business success. Employee engagement refers to the emotional commitment and involvement that employees have toward their work, organization, and overarching goals. Many studies confirm a robust, positive correlation between employee engagement and various beneficial outcomes, including heightened productivity, elevated job satisfaction, and increased business commitment (Saks, 2006; Kahn, 1990). Engaged employees consistently display a proclivity to go above and beyond their prescribed job duties, exhibiting higher levels of discretionary effort and actively contributing to the organization's overall prosperity. They epitomize motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction, consequently yielding improved business performance and heightened customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, Bakker and Demerouti (2017) highlight the instrumental role of work engagement in nurturing innovative work behavior. Engaged employees manifest a heightened propensity for creativity, generating innovative ideas, and actively participating in business innovation processes. This propensity is underpinned by their elevated levels of intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, and a profound sense of purpose. These attributes, in turn, foster their willingness to explore new horizons and contribute to business innovation endeavors. Their proactive behaviors and readiness to challenge the status quo assume an indispensable role in fueling innovation, ultimately driving business success.

Innovation performance stands as another pivotal cog in the machinery of business success. Innovation encompasses the creation and applica-

tion of novel ideas, products, processes, or services that bestow a competitive advantage upon organizations. Dyer et al. (2011) assert the critical role of innovation in securing and sustaining a competitive advantage. They underline the imperative of cultivating an innovation-centric culture and nurturing the innovation skills of employees to propel business success. Organizations that embrace innovation as a central tenet continuously seek avenues for enhancing their products, services, and internal processes, leading to heightened customer satisfaction, an augmented market share, and bolstered profitability.

Hennessey and Amabile (2010) provide valuable insights into the relationship between employee creativity and innovation. The study uncovers that individuals who are intrinsically motivated, have a sense of autonomy, and operate within a supportive environment are more prone to contribute to organizational innovation. Employees empowered to take calculated risks, share their ideas, and engage in collaborative efforts are poised to assume pivotal roles in innovation. Their creativity, problem-solving acumen, and willingness to experiment and acquire new knowledge collectively contribute to the genesis and execution of novel ideas and innovative practices. These innovative endeavors subsequently impact business success by augmentation of product quality, process efficiency, and market differentiation.

Recent studies have ventured into a comprehensive exploration of the combined influence of employee engagement and innovation performance on business success. Engaged employees, far from being confined to their capacity to drive innovation, also foster a culture of innovation within organizations. Schaufeli et al. (2002) scrutinized the mediating role of innovation in the nexus between employee engagement and business performance. The study illuminated the fact that engaged employees, far from merely affecting business outcomes, are pivotal drivers of innovation, thereby contributing to improved

business performance, including financial success, an augmented market share, and heightened customer loyalty.

Likewise, Zhou and Shalley (2008) unveiled the interactive effect of employee engagement and creativity on organizational performance. Their findings elucidate that the presence of engaged employees alongside high levels of creativity augments innovation performance, ultimately culminating in business success. Engaged employees are motivated and committed to catalyzing innovation efforts, whereas creativity injects a stream of novel and valuable ideas that can be translated into tangible outcomes. The union of employee engagement and creativity engenders a potent synergy that stokes the fires of innovation, setting organizations on a trajectory toward success.

Furthermore, Christensen (2016) delves into disruptive innovation and its transformative impact on business success. He accentuates the imperative for organizations to embrace disruptive technologies and innovative business models to retain competitiveness in dynamic market environments. Organizations that proactively adapt to disruptive changes and embrace innovation as a central strategic imperative are likelier to thrive and sustain their relevance in today's fast-paced and uncertain business landscape.

The culmination of recent research underscores the profound impact of employee engagement and innovation performance on business success. Engaged employees are not only catalysts for innovation but also the architects of a culture of innovation within organizations. Innovation, in turn, amplifies business performance and competitiveness. To foster business success, contemporary organizations must develop strategies that enhance employee engagement through effective leadership, nurturing supportive work environments, and providing opportunities for growth and development. Simultaneously, organizations must cultivate a culture that encourages and rewards innovation, equipping employees with the requisite resources and autonomy to generate and implement innovative ideas.

Future research endeavors should explore the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that shape the intricate relationship between employee

engagement, innovation performance, and business success. A profound understanding of these dynamics will empower organizations to devise targeted interventions and strategies to enhance employee engagement, nurture innovation, and propel sustainable business success.

2. AIM AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between employee engagement, innovation performance, and business success within manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo. It aims to investigate whether higher levels of employee engagement and innovation performance are positively associated with greater business success. Additionally, it seeks to contribute to the existing literature on management and entrepreneurship by highlighting the significance of these factors in driving sustainable success in various business settings.

Hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and business success in manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo.

H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between innovation performance and business success in manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a quantitative descriptive research method to determine the relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable. The analysis of this study focuses on primary sources gathered through questionnaires. The dependent variable and the independent variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strong disagreement, and 5 represents strong agreement.

Data was collected from 190 manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo. Data collection involved the distribution of specially prepared questionnaires to entrepreneurs, managers, and em-

employees of the enterprises. In some cases, direct interviews were also conducted. The data collection period spanned from the end of 2022 to the beginning of 2023. The statistical package SPSS was used to create the database and analyze the collected data.

The study encompasses 190 companies operating in the services and production sectors, with 100 located in Albania and 90 in Kosovo. Of 190 enterprises, 105, or 55%, are manufacturing enterprises, and 85, or 45%, are service enterprises. According to years of operation, 65 or 34% are enterprises operating from 4 to 6 years, and 125 or 66% are enterprises operating for more than 6 years.

The variables considered in the analysis are employee engagement and increased innovation as independent variables, while business success is the dependent variable. A quantitative research approach is employed, gathering information through structured questionnaires and direct interviews with employees and management.

Statistical analysis was conducted using the following techniques:

- Multicollinearity Analysis to assess the multicollinearity among independent variables (employee engagement and innovation performance) by calculating tolerance levels and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF).
- Pearson Correlation Matrix to examine the correlation between the dependent variable (business success) and the independent variables (employee engagement and innovation performance).
- Multivariable Regression Analysis to investigate the impact of employee engagement and innovation performance on business success.
- ANOVA test to determine the significance level of the multivariable regression analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multicollinearity refers to a high correlation among independent variables in a regression model, which can impact the reliability and inter-

pretation of the results. The criteria proposed by O'Brien (2007) were followed to assess multicollinearity. A tolerance value below 0.20 or 0.10 and a variance inflation factor (VIF) value of 5 or 10 and above indicate the presence of multicollinearity.

Table 1 presents the results of the multicollinearity assessment, demonstrating that all independent variables have tolerance levels exceeding 0.20. Furthermore, the VIF values for each variable are below the threshold of 5 or 10. Additionally, the correlation matrix illustrates that the correlation coefficients among the predictors are below 0.80.

Based on this analysis, no significant multicollinearity issues exist in the model that would impact the interpretation of the findings. The obtained results confirm the acceptance of the correlation coefficients, tolerance values, and VIF values, thus supporting the reliability of the analysis.

Table 1. Assessment of multicollinearity

Variables	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Employee Engagement	.875	1.143
Innovation Performance	.875	1.143

Pearson Correlation Matrix reveals a strong positive correlation between business success and both employee engagement ($r = 0.458$, $p < 0.01$) and innovation performance ($r = 0.396$, $p < 0.01$), robustly supporting H1 and H2. Table 2 displays the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable in the model. The results confirm the acceptable reliability of the independent research variables, as the correlations among the determinants are not excessively high, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Notably, significant findings emerge regarding the relationships between the dependent variable (business success) and the independent variables (employee engagement and innovation performance). There is a strong correlation between the dependent variable (business success), employee engagement ($r = 0.458^{**}$), and innovation performance ($r = 0.396^{**}$). Both correlations have a P-value of < 0.01 , providing robust support for the first and second hypotheses.

Therefore, based on the Pearson correlation analysis, these two research hypotheses positively influence the company's success. These hypotheses are

Table 2. Pearson correlation analysis results

Variables		Pearson Correlation		
		Business Success	Employee Engagement	Innovation Performance
Pearson Correlation	Business Success	1.000	.458	.396
	Employee Engagement	.458	1.000	.354
	Innovation Performance	.396	.354	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Business Success	.	.000	.000
	Employee Engagement	.000	.	.000
	Innovation Performance	.000	.000	.
N	Business Success	190	190	190
	Employee Engagement	190	190	190
	Innovation Performance	190	190	190

Note: A dot indicates that the correlations are statistically significant at the chosen level (likely 0.05 or 0.01) for all the pairs of variables in the table.

further examined using multivariable regression analysis.

The regression analysis examined the relevant indicators of business success using the identified independent variables in this model. The analysis focused on investigating specific indicators of the variables used to measure business success. The R-value indicates the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. A higher R-value signifies a stronger linear relationship.

Table 3, the regression analysis summary, demonstrates an R² value of 0.272, corresponding to 27.2%. This indicates that the selected independent variables in this study, namely employee engagement and innovation performance, contribute 27.2% to achieving business success in small and medium enterprises in Albania and Kosovo. The remaining 72.8% represents other factors that positively influence the success of small and medium-sized enterprises, which were not included in this study.

The Durbin-Watson statistic reveals a serial correlation of the residuals as 1.512, falling within the

acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5. This suggests the absence of autocorrelation issues in the data.

The results of the regression analysis indicated that both employee engagement and innovation performance had a positive effect on business success. The adjusted R² value was 0.264, and the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.512, with a significant F-statistic (F = 34.909, p < 0.001). These results support H1 and H2 and suggest that employee engagement and innovation performance are significant predictors of business success.

The ANOVA test revealed a significant difference between the groups, with a significant F-statistic (F = 34.909, p < 0.001), further confirming the relationships observed in the multivariable regression analysis. Table 4 presents the results of the ANOVA analysis. The primary focus lies on the values in the “Sig” column, which represent the exact significance level for the ANOVA analysis. If the values in this column are lower than the pre-determined critical value of alpha (α), the effect is considered significant. Typically, the alpha value is set at 0.01, and any value below this threshold indicates a significant effect, while any value above it

Table 3. Regressions

R = 0.521 R² = 0.272 Adjusted R² = 0.264
Durbin Watson (d) = 1.512 F = 34.909

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.762	.356		4.946	.000		
	Employee Engagement	.336	.062	.363	5.438	.000	.875	1.143
	Innovation Performance	.304	.076	.267	4.008	.000	.875	1.143

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Business Success.

Table 4. ANOVA analysis

		ANOVA ^a				
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34.145	2	17.073	34.909	.000 ^b
	Residual	91.455	187	.489		
	Total	125.600	189			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Business Success. b. Predictors: (Constant), Innovation Performance, Employee Engagement.

indicates a non-significant effect. The significance level is reported as .000 in the provided example, indicating highly statistically significant effects.

The results of this study reveal compelling insights into the interplay of employee engagement, innovation performance, and business success in manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo. The positive correlations between employee engagement, innovation performance, and business success align with previous research in business behavior, management, and entrepreneurship. These findings underscore the critical role of engaged employees in fostering innovation and driving business success. Engaged employees are more motivated, committed, and satisfied, enhancing performance and customer satisfaction. Likewise, the positive relationship between innovation performance and business success highlights the importance of continuous innovation in gaining a competitive advantage in today's dynamic market environments.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature that emphasizes the significance of employee engagement and innovation for business success. Previous research has shown that employee engagement positively influences productivity, job satisfaction, and business commitment (Gruman & Saks, 2020). Similarly, innovation performance has been linked to product quality, market differentiation, and profitability (Dyer et al., 2011). These findings align with these prior studies and provide additional empirical support for the importance of these factors.

The positive relationships observed in this study can be attributed to several factors. Engaged employees exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, and a sense of purpose, which fosters their willingness to explore new possibilities and contribute to business innovation efforts. Their proactive behaviors and

willingness to challenge the status quo are crucial in driving innovation. On the other hand, organizations prioritizing innovation continuously seek ways to improve their products, services, and internal processes, leading to increased customer satisfaction, market share, and profitability. The combination of employee engagement and creativity creates a powerful synergy that fuels innovation, setting organizations on a path to success.

Future research in this domain should delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors influencing the relationships between employee engagement, innovation performance, and business success. Additionally, investigating the moderating variables that may enhance or mitigate these relationships can provide a more nuanced understanding of how organizations can effectively leverage engaged employees and innovation for sustainable success.

Furthermore, studies that explore the specific strategies and interventions organizations can employ to enhance employee engagement and foster innovation are essential. Identifying best practices and practical approaches can guide managers and entrepreneurs in effectively implementing these concepts in their organizations.

The assessment of multicollinearity confirms that all independent variables have tolerance levels greater than 0.10 and VIF (Variance Inflation Factors) values less than 10. These results indicate that the tolerance and VIF values are acceptable in this study. The analysis also reveals no significant multicollinearity issue among the independent variables (employee engagement and innovation performance) and the dependent variable (business success). These findings provide positive validation for the chosen variables.

The Pearson correlation matrix analysis demonstrates a strong correlation between the dependent variable and the independent variables. The

independent variables, namely employee engagement ($r = 0.458^{**}$) and innovation performance ($r = 0.396^{**}$), exhibit significant levels of $p < 0.01$ (employee engagement $p = 0.000$; innovation performance $p = 0.000$). These findings support the influence of the first and second hypotheses.

Table 3 presents the results of the multivariable regression analysis, providing further evidence for the influence of the variables in this study. The analysis confirms that employee engagement has a positive effect on business success, as does innovation performance. Additionally, the ANOVA anal-

ysis demonstrates a significance level of .000, indicating that the effects are statistically significant.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of employee engagement and innovation performance in driving business success. The results align with prior research and contribute to the management, entrepreneurship, and business behavior literature. As organizations continue to navigate the challenges of the dynamic business landscape, they should prioritize strategies that promote employee engagement and innovation as essential components of their success.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationships between employee engagement, innovation performance, and business success in manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo. The paper uncovered significant positive correlations between these variables through quantitative research methods and data analysis. Employee engagement and innovation performance were key drivers of business success.

The results of this study highlight the importance of fostering engaged employees who are motivated, committed, and satisfied in their work. These individuals are more likely to drive innovation, challenge the status quo, and contribute to business success. Additionally, innovation performance, characterized by creating and implementing new ideas, products, and processes, plays a pivotal role in achieving a competitive advantage and improved market positioning.

To conclude, organizations in the manufacturing and service sectors should recognize the significance of employee engagement and innovation performance as integral components of sustainable success. Organizations can enhance their performance, improve customer satisfaction, and gain a competitive edge in the dynamic market environment by promoting a culture of engagement, continuous innovation, and strategic management. These findings offer valuable insights for managers and entrepreneurs seeking to thrive in today's challenging business landscape.

Organizations should prioritize creating a culture that values employee engagement and innovation to achieve sustained success. This begins with establishing a supportive work environment where effective leadership, transparent communication, growth opportunities, and recognition for high performance are emphasized.

In addition, organizations should actively encourage and facilitate innovation by providing resources and autonomy while fostering psychological safety for employees to generate and implement creative ideas. Collaboration, knowledge sharing, and experimentation should be promoted within teams. Leaders must exhibit behaviors that support innovation, including endorsing risk-taking and viewing failure as a valuable learning experience. Providing a clear vision and purpose aligned with innovation goals is crucial, and leaders should create platforms for open dialogue and idea generation, inviting employees to contribute their insights.

Investing in employee development is vital. By offering training programs that enhance innovation skills, creative problem-solving, and adaptive thinking, organizations empower employees to contrib-

ute to innovation and stay ahead of market trends. Regular monitoring and assessment of employee engagement and innovation performance are essential. Surveys, performance evaluations, and tracking key innovation metrics help identify areas for improvement and inform decisions for sustainable success.

This study has several limitations. First, the study focused on manufacturing and service enterprises in Albania and Kosovo, which may not represent all business sectors or other regions. The findings might not generalize to a broader population. Second, while questionnaires and interviews were used, there might have been response or social desirability bias in the self-reported data. Future studies could consider more objective measures. Finally, the study's focus on Albania and Kosovo might limit the generalizability of findings to different cultural or geographic contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Ludmilla Shkurti, Labeat Mustafa.

Data curation: Ludmilla Shkurti, Labeat Mustafa.

Formal analysis: Ludmilla Shkurti, Labeat Mustafa.

Investigation: Ludmilla Shkurti, Labeat Mustafa.

Methodology: Ludmilla Shkurti.

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Software: Labeat Mustafa.

Writing – original draft: Ludmilla Shkurti.

Writing – review & editing: Labeat Mustafa.

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