Work Engagement and Work Experience as Determinants of Bus Driver Performance at PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara on the Surabaya–Malang Route

Rangga Ardiyansyah[1], Hesty Prima Rini[2]
1,2Management Study Programme, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur, Indonesia

Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The objective of this study is to assess how work engagement and past work experience affect the performance of bus drivers at PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara on the Surabaya–Malang route. The research applied a quantitative design with a total of 44 bus drivers as respondents, all of whom operate along the Surabaya–Malang line. The responses collected via questionnaires were analysed using the PLS-SEM approach with the aid of SmartPLS software. A total sampling method was applied, encompassing all 44 participants in the study. It was found that driver performance is positively affected by work engagement as well as by work experience, with both effects being significant. These outcomes emphasize the critical role of employee engagement and accumulated experience in enhancing both the efficiency and overall performance of bus drivers.

Corresponding Author:
Rangga Ardiyansyah
E-mail: ranggaardi33344@gmail.com
E-mail: hestyprimarini.mnj@upnjatim.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Transportation plays a strategic role in the daily mobility of society, serving as a connector between locations in terms of space and time (Tumewu dkk., 2021). Land transportation has become the dominant choice due to its high accessibility and relatively affordable cost. The number of motor vehicles in Indonesia has reached 168 million units, with the highest concentration in East Java Province (Saptoyo & Galih, 2025). This condition reflects the high dependency on land transportation while simultaneously contributing to traffic congestion. To address this issue, bus companies play a crucial role as providers of mass transportation that is more efficient and economical.

PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara has been operating for more than two decades in land transportation services, particularly on the Surabaya–Malang route using executive-class intercity buses. As a professional service provider, PO Menggala prioritises punctuality, comfort, and hospitality. The fleet meets executive-class standards, equipped with supporting facilities such as air conditioning, ergonomic seating, power outlets, and on-board toilets. Ticket booking systems are available both offline and online, providing convenient access for a wide range of passengers. The company's

commitment to service quality is further demonstrated through regular driver performance evaluations to ensure safety and customer satisfaction.

Every company has strategic objectives that must be achieved through the optimal management of human resources, given that human performance is a key factor in responding to the dynamics of competition (Gardapati & Irbayuni, 2023). It represents the outcomes achieved by each individual through the completion of tasks aimed at attaining the organisation's objectives (Meinitasari & Chaerudin, 2023). A company's success is largely determined by the quality of its human resources, particularly through individual performance in carrying out their functions and responsibilities (Indrayana & Putra, 2024). PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara, as a provider of transportation services on the Surabaya–Malang route, places service quality as its foremost priority. Bus drivers hold a critical responsibility in guaranteeing smooth operations, passenger safety, and overall satisfaction, particularly in executive-class services. Consequently, managing driver performance through an effective human resource management system is vital to ensure that services meet established standards and align with customer expectations.

In practice, however, the performance appraisal of drivers over the past three years has shown fluctuations, reflecting challenges in the execution of their duties. Such fluctuations in driver performance may affect the achievement of the company's targets. Therefore, close attention to both quality and quantity—particularly through the performance of drivers who are directly responsible for delivering services to customers—is of critical importance. This study focuses on driver performance as one of the key aspects presumed to influence the company's success in maintaining its reputation, image, and customer relations. Driver performance may be influenced by several factors, including work engagement and work experience.

Work engagement refers to the level of emotional attachment (work spirit), dedication (enthusiasm), and focus that each individual demonstrates towards their profession (Nahot & Sutapa, 2022). A high level of work engagement encourages employees to perform their duties with enthusiasm, pride, and full involvement in their work (Putri dkk., 2025). Conversely, a low level of work engagement may result in reduced motivation, lack of initiative, and declining productivity. Ideally, work engagement should be maintained at an optimal level to ensure that employees remain motivated, focused, and able to make maximum contributions to achieving organisational goals. In the context of bus drivers, work engagement plays an essential role in maintaining service consistency, punctuality, and loyalty to their work. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the extent to which work engagement is established among drivers of PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara.

The preliminary survey indicates that several drivers experience a decline in work spirit, particularly when passing through congested routes such as the Waru–Sidoarjo–Porong toll road, which is perceived as both crowded and monotonous. Most of them regard their job merely as a routine rather than as part of their personal identity. The lack of recognition for their profession also diminishes pride and dedication, resulting in lower levels of work engagement and subsequently affecting their daily performance. In addition to work engagement, work experience is an important factor influencing employee performance. Work experience reflects the degree of mastery of knowledge and skills acquired through length of service and direct involvement in operational activities. Generally, the longer a person works, the higher their ability to accomplish tasks effectively (Deswanti dkk., 2023).

In addition, experience also encompasses contextual learning gained through direct interaction with challenges in the field (Kitta dkk., 2023). Drivers with longer work experience are generally more disciplined, responsible for the vehicles they operate, and less prone to violations. Experience further enhances understanding of route characteristics, including congestion points and accident-prone areas, thereby supporting punctuality and minimising disruptions during journeys. The work experience

of drivers at PO Menggala can be analysed through data on bus units damaged due to driver errors (human error) over the past three years, classified according to each driver's length of service.

Data indicate that the frequency of bus repairs due to driver errors has fluctuated over the past three years. Driver error is recorded as the main cause, closely associated with the level of work experience. Drivers with lower levels of experience tend to have a higher rate of driving errors, which often results in buses requiring repair. This situation may affect performance, as productivity is hindered by the lack of sufficient work experience among drivers.

The study is guided by contradictory evidence concerning how work engagement affects employee performance. A study by van Zyl dkk., (2021) demonstrated that work engagement positively and significantly influences performance, while findings by Nahot & Sutapa, (2022) revealed no such positive or significant relationship. Similar contradictions are also observed in investigations related to the role of work experience in shaping performance outcomes. For instance, Simanjuntak & Nainggolan, (2022) concluded that work experience contributes positively and significantly to employee performance, yet Sitompul & Simamora, (2021) reported a negative and insignificant influence.

Considering these inconsistencies, the present research aims to analyse how work engagement and work experience together impact employee performance. The results are expected to generate practical implications for organisations in strengthening employee engagement and making optimal use of work experience, while also offering theoretical contributions to the broader discussion on performance determinants with in the domain of human resource management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance

Performance constitutes a vital component of human resource management, as it demonstrates how effectively employees fulfil their roles and responsibilities in accordance with organisational goals. It can be understood as the results accomplished by an individual in completing assigned duties, which are shaped by factors such as prior experience, acquired skills, level of competence, and the ability to manage time efficiently (Readi dkk., 2020). Performance appraisal is a systematic process to evaluate the extent to which employees perform their duties in accordance with established standards (Rustiawan dkk., 2023). The findings from these assessments serve as feedback, helping employees to perform better in the future (Sihaloho & Siregar, 2020). The indicators of performance include work quality, work quantity, work attitude, discipline, and responsibility (Takrim dkk., 2021).

Work Engagament

Work engagement is an essential element of organisational behaviour, capturing the extent of employees' emotional, cognitive, and physical involvement in their work. It represents a positive psychological state connected to work, marked by energy, dedication, and full absorption in performing tasks (Putra & Darmastuti, 2021). Work engagement indicates the extent to which a person works not merely out of obligation, but also driven by intrinsic motivation and satisfaction with their job (Rahayu, 2025). This engagement contributes to enhancing individual productivity and loyalty within the organisation. Greater work engagement in employees corresponds to higher performance outcomes. The indicators of work engagement include vigour, dedication, and absorption (Setyawan dkk., 2023).

Work Experience

Work experience is one of the key factors in human resource management, as it shapes employees' competence and readiness in facing the world of work. Work experience refers to an active learning process through direct involvement in work activities, which helps improve technical skills and work efficiency (Hidayat & Wulantika, 2021). It reflects the length of time an individual has occupied a position, enabling them to understand and perform their duties optimally (Pongsimpin dkk., 2025). Work experience constitutes essential capital that supports advancements in both the quality and volume of work performance. The longer the work experience, the greater the employee's ability to handle various challenging conditions, which in turn enhances work effectiveness and efficiency. The indicators of work experience include length of service, level of knowledge, mastery of equipment, and problem-solving capacity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applies a quantitative method to analyse how work engagement and work experience contribute to employee performance. The study identifies work engagement and work experience as the independent variables, with performance serving as the dependent variable. The investigation was carried out on 44 bus drivers from PO Menggala who operate along the Surabaya–Malang route. The sampling procedure utilised a total sampling approach, thereby involving all members of the population as participants. Data were gathered through interviews and questionnaires designed with a five-point Likert scale. To process the data, the research applied the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach.

1. Primary data in this study include:
   - Work Engagement, consisting of 3 statements, and Work Experience, consisting of 4 statements, completed by 44 bus drivers of PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara on the Surabaya–Malang route.
   - Driver Performance, consisting of 5 statements, completed by the drivers' supervisors (mandor sopir), who assessed the performance of the drivers.
2. Secondary data in this study consist of performance appraisal records of the drivers over the past three years and data on the frequency of bus units requiring repair.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

This study involved 44 respondents, namely all bus drivers of PO Menggala on the Surabaya–Malang route. Data were collected through offline questionnaires, structured based on age, length of service, and the indicators of each variable, and completed directly by the drivers in accordance with their own experiences. The questionnaire responses served as the foundation for subsequent analysis in this study. Analysis of the collected data indicates that, among the bus drivers of PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara operating on the Surabaya–Malang route, the majority are aged between 21 and 35 years, accounting for 19 respondents (43%). Meanwhile, in terms of length of service, the largest group consisted of respondents with less than five years of experience, amounting to 20 respondents (45%).

Convergent Validity Test

Table 1 Outer Loadings

	Performance (Y)	Work Engagament (X1)	Work Experience (X2)
X1.1		0.887	
X1.2		0.897	
X1.3		0.892	
X2.1			0,820
X2.2			0.880
X2.3			0.892
X2.4			0.901
Y.1	0.892		
Y.2	0.817		
Y.3	0.836		
Y.4	0.805		
Y.5	0.851		

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

Based on the results shown in the table, every indicator in this research records an outer loading value exceeding 0.7. This demonstrates that each indicator fulfils the validity criteria and appropriately reflects the variables being studied, namely work engagement, work experience, and performance. Accordingly, all indicators can be considered valid and feasible for use in the next phase of analysis.

Discriminant Validity Test

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

Indicators	Performance (Y)	Work Experience (X2)	Work Engagement (X1)
X1.1	0.757	0.711	**0.887**
X1.2	0.766	0.724	**0.897**
X1.3	0.829	0.805	**0.892**
X2.1	0.691	**0.820**	0.599
X2.2	0.839	**0.880**	0.735
X2.3	0.823	**0.892**	0.757
X2.4	0.847	**0.901**	0.823
Y.1	**0.892**	0.790	0.801
Y.2	**0.817**	0.718	0.678
Y.3	**0.836**	0.791	0.758
Y.4	**0.805**	0.706	0.709
Y.5	**0.851**	0.850	0.747

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

According to the table, each indicator of work engagement, work experience, and performance demonstrates the highest cross-loading on its corresponding construct, validating that all indicators meet the required standards for inclusion in the measurement model.

Table 3 AVE

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Performance (Y)	0.707
Work Experince (X2)	0.763
Work Engagement (X1)	0.796

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

Drawing on the AVE values shown in the table, this indicates that every indicator sufficiently represents its respective construct, confirming that the requirements for convergent validity have been fully satisfied.

Reliability Test

Table 4 Construct Reliability and Validity

	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Performance (Y)	0.923	0.896
Work Experience (X2)	0.928	0.896
Work Engagement (X1)	0.921	0.872

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

From the calculation results presented in the table, it is evident that all variables exceed the 0.70 threshold for composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, indicating their reliability and consistency in yielding valid data.

Inner Model
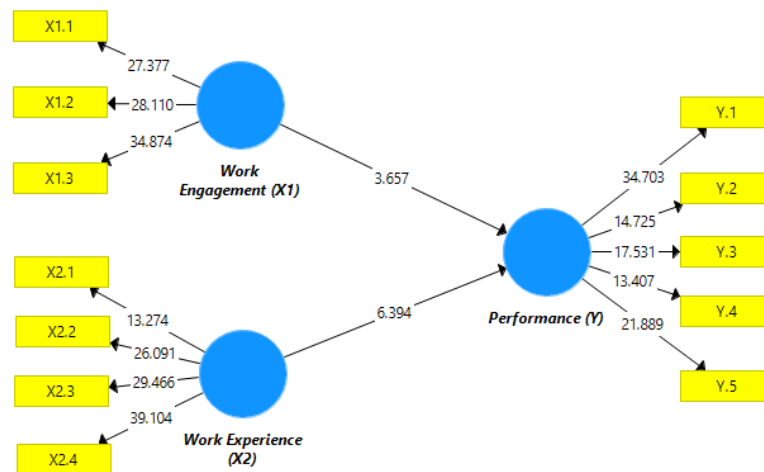
Figure 1 Path Diagram (Inner Model)
Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

R-Square Test

Table 5 R-Square

	R-Square
Performance (Y)	0.885

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

The R-square value indicates how much the independent variables explain the dependent variable. An R-square of 0.70 is considered strong, 0.50 moderate, and 0.25 weak (Sahir, 2022). In this study, the R- square for performance (Y) was 0.885, meaning work engagement (X1) and work experience (X2) explain 88.5% of its variance, which falls into the strong category.

Hypothesis Test

Table 6 Path Coefficients and Specific Direct Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Work Experience (X2) -> Performance (Y)	0.612	0.623	0.097	6.296	0.000
Work Engagement (X1) -> Performance (Y)	0.367	0.355	0.102	3.608	0.000

Source: Output SmartPLS, 2025

Based on the result of hypothesis testing, the interpretation of the causality test is as follows:

1. Work Engagement has a significant positive effect on performance with a path coefficient of 0.367, T-statistic 3.608 where the p-value = 0.000 is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ (5%).
2. Work experience exerts a significant positive influence on performance, with a path coefficient of 0.612, a T-statistic of 6.296, and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ (5%).

Discussion

Work Engagement as a Determinant of Performance

The findings of this study indicate that work engagement significantly contributes to improving the performance of bus drivers at PO Menggala operating on the Surabaya–Malang route. This suggests that drivers with higher levels of work engagement tend to achieve superior performance outcomes. Among the indicators, dedication emerges as the most representative dimension of work engagement, as it records the highest factor loading value. Dedication describes a favourable psychological state in which employees exhibit enthusiasm, pride, and a motivating spirit in performing their responsibilities. This outcome aligns with the study by Atikah dkk., (2024), which indicated that work engagement significantly contributes to improving employee performance.

Impact of Work Experience on Performance

This research reveals that bus drivers' performance at PO Menggala on the Surabaya–Malang route is substantially influenced by their work experience. This suggests that greater work experience leads to improved performance outcomes. Among the indicators, problem-solving ability emerges as the strongest representation of work experience, as it records the highest factor loading value. Problem-solving ability reflects the drivers' capacity to quickly and accurately assess situations and determine effective solutions when facing unexpected challenges during the trip. This result aligns with the study of Syamsuri, (2022), which confirmed that work experience significantly affects performance.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of data collected from bus drivers in this research of PO Menggala Garuda Lokatara on the Surabaya–Malang route, it can be concluded that work engagement significantly contributes to enhancing driver performance. Furthermore, work experience serves as an essential factor in supporting drivers' effectiveness while on duty. These findings hold considerable relevance for the bus driving profession, where punctuality, high-quality service, and the assurance of passenger safety are critical requirements.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that PO Menggala implement internal programmes aimed at fostering emotional engagement among drivers. Such initiatives may include a drivers' aspiration and sharing forum, monthly awards recognising the best-performing drivers, as well as team-building gatherings to strengthen interpersonal bonds. These activities are expected to enhance drivers' work engagement, thereby supporting the optimisation of their daily performance. Furthermore, to strengthen drivers' work experience, PO Menggala is advised to develop practical training programmes through emergency simulations, emotional and stress management workshops, and technical machinery familiarisation. These measures are essential to cultivate a problem-solving mindset when facing challenges on the road.

Upcoming research should take into account additional determinants that may contribute to employee performance, such as motivation, work environment, work stress, compensation, and job satisfaction. The inclusion of these factors would allow for a more holistic analysis and offer deeper insights into the various determinants of employee performance.

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