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The mediating role of lecturer engagement in the relationship between human resource management, knowledge management, and higher education competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

Higher education competitiveness depends on effective Human Resource Management (HRM) and Knowledge Management (KM), with lecturer engagement as a key element bridging the relationship between the two. Lecturer engagement emotionally and professionally drives teaching performance, research, and innovation, which contribute to institutional excellence. This study aims to explore the mediating role of lecturer engagement in enhancing university competitiveness. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the mediating role of lecturer engagement in the relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM), Knowledge Management (KM), and university competitiveness. This research uses the explanatory method with a quantitative approach to explain the relationship between variables through numerical data, focusing on competitiveness, human resources, knowledge management, and employee engagement. Conducted at a private college in Jakarta with B accreditation, the study included 187 respondents selected through proportional stratified random sampling to ensure accurate representation. The variables were measured using Likert scales, with each variable consisting of several dimensions and indicators to assess their influence on the competitiveness of the institution. Data were analyzed using SEM- AMOS. Result of this study indicated that human resource management has positive and significant effect on knowledge management, and competitiveness of higher education directly and through employee engagement as mediation variable. Knowledge management has positive and significant effect on employee engagement, but has a negative and significant effect directly on competitiveness of higher education institution. Lecturer engagement has positive and significant effect on competitiveness of higher education institution.



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Introduction

Private universities in Jakarta face significant challenges in enhancing their competitiveness in Indonesia's higher education sector. One of the main issues is the limited resources, both financial and infrastructural. Many private universities struggle to develop adequate infrastructure to support academic activities, while state universities tend to have larger budgets and government support. These limitations often affect the quality of teaching, research, and development that can be carried out by faculty and other educators, which in turn impacts the

competitiveness of these universities at the national level (Welch & Aziz, 2022). These limitations also affect private universities ability to develop high-quality teaching, research, and community service. Faculty and educators at private universities are often constrained in accessing resources to develop competitive research, leading to suboptimal research and teaching quality (Al-Zoubi et al., 2023). This makes it difficult for private universities to compete with more established state universities in terms of funding and supporting facilities. Therefore, to improve their competitiveness, private universities needs to innovate in various aspects, from collaborating with industries to leveraging technology in teaching and research (Mintz., 2021).

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a crucial role in improving the competitiveness of private universities. Private universities need to have effective human resource management to enhance the quality of their lecturers and educators (Alfawaire & Atan., 2021). One approach that can be implemented is to develop HR management policies focused on empowering and developing lecturers through training, mentoring, and improving their welfare. Lecturers who are actively involved in institutional management and development tend to be more motivated and committed to providing the best for students and the institution. This is key to improving the quality of education offered by private universities (Dirwan et al., 2024).

Knowledge Management (KM) also plays a vital role in boosting the competitiveness of higher education institutions. Private universities must manage and leverage the knowledge within the institution to create innovations that can enhance both academic and non-academic performance (Iqbal., 2021). However, many private universities in Jakarta have yet to fully optimize the use of information technology to support knowledge management. Therefore, it is important for private universities to implement a knowledge management system that can support the efficient collection, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge across all levels of the institution. Effective KM implementation will help private universities face the challenges of globalization and the rapid development of technology (Asad et al., 2022).

Lecturer engagement, encompassing the active participation of lecturers in academic activities and institutional management, plays a pivotal role as a mediator between Human Resource Management (HRM), Knowledge Management (KM), and the competitiveness of higher education institutions (Agyei et al., 2023). Engaged lecturers are more likely to contribute proactively to enhancing the quality of education and research by leveraging effective HRM practices and fostering knowledge sharing within the institution (Tusriyanto et al., 2024). Their involvement not only drives innovation in teaching and learning processes but also strengthens the institution's ability to adapt to dynamic educational demands, ultimately boosting its overall competitiveness in the higher education landscape (Santos et al., 2024). With lecturer engagement, private universities can create a more innovative academic environment and encourage better collaboration in the teaching and learning process. Lecturer involvement in knowledge management can also enhance the more effective transfer of knowledge among fellow lecturers and students. Thus, lecturer engagement becomes a critical element in building stronger competitiveness at both the national and international levels (Hart & Rodgers 2024).

Previous study by Chi et al., (2024) state that expected to demonstrate how factors such as recruitment, training, decentralization, and integration dynamics influence lecturers' organizational commitment by fostering engagement and enhancing satisfaction. By examining these elements, the study aims to uncover the ways in which these human resource management practices contribute to the overall motivation and dedication of lecturers, ultimately improving their commitment to the institution and its goals. Thus, this study offers a novel contribution by investigating the mediating role of lecturer engagement in the relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM), Knowledge Management (KM), and higher education competitiveness. While existing literature often explores the individual impacts of HRM and KM on university performance, this research seeks to fill the gap by analyzing how lecturer engagement influences and strengthens the link between these factors and the overall competitiveness of universities. The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of how effectively engaged lecturers can act as a catalyst for improving organizational outcomes, thus enhancing the competitive position of universities in a rapidly evolving higher education landscape.

Method

Research using the explanatory method with a quantitative approach aims to explain the relationship or influence between the variables studied through numerical data. In this method, researchers collect quantitative data, such as numbers or scales, and analyze them to identify patterns, correlations, or significant differences between variables. This quantitative approach allows researchers to test hypotheses and provide a more objective and measurable explanation of the phenomenon under study, using instruments such as surveys or questionnaires to collect data from a number of representative samples. This research was conducted at a private college in Jakarta with B accreditation in the academic year 2023. These colleges were selected due to the need to improve their competitiveness in the higher education market. The research sample consisted of 187

respondents who were randomly selected with stratum proportions to ensure proper representation of the population. The sample selection using proportional stratified random sampling method aims to obtain a sample that includes relevant variations in the lecturer population, so that the sample can describe the entire population.

The measurement of competitiveness variable consists of 4 dimensions and 12 indicators measured by Likert scale. The human resource variable is measured using 5 dimensions and consist of 15 indicators, measured by Likert scale. Knowledge Management variable is measured with 4 dimensions consist of 12 indicators, and employee engagement is measured by 3 dimensions that consist of 9 indicators. Data were analyzed using SEM-AMOS.

Results and Discussions

Characteristic of Respondents

The characteristics of respondents based on gender were dominated by men, namely with a total of 55.4 percent. The status of lecturers is that most of the lecturers who are not in office are 71.3 percent and the remaining 28.7 percent are lecturers who occupy structural positions. Based on the age of the respondents, most of them were over 40 years old, namely 50.4 percent. As many as 44.6 percent have an age range between 30 to 40 years, and the rest are under 30 years of age as much as 5 percent. Based on years of service, most were between 5 and 10 years (38.6 percent), followed by those with more than 10 years of service (34.7 percent), and 19.8 percent with the tenure between 1 and 5 years, and under 1 year are 7.9 percent.

Variables Scores

Table 1 <Variables Scores>

Variables	Dimension	MeanScore	Std. Deviation
Competitiveness	Cost leadership	2.7679	.36432
	Product differentiation	3.9519	.69151
	Focus	3.4706	.91690
	Service Quality	3.6283	.99810
Human Resource Management	Recruitment	4.2803	.84220
	Training and development	4.0731	.93995
	Compensation	4.0748	.88121
	Performance Management	4.1503	.89573
	Employee Relation	3.9197	.91665
Knowledge Management	Knowledge acquisition	4.4299	.53252
	Knowledge storage	4.4653	.61493
	Knowledge distribution	4.4368	.65052
	Use of Knowledge	4.4031	.68816
Engagement	Vigor	4.3140	.83022
	Dedication	4.5763	.65455
	Absorbtion	4.3439	.70800

Source: Data processed (2023)

Variable scores based on respondents' perceptions are presented in table 1. The highest score for the competitiveness variable is on the product differentiation dimension with a score of 3.9519, while the lowest score is on the cost leadership dimension with a score of 2.7679. The highest human resource management practice variable score is on the performance management dimension, with a score of 4.1503. The lowest score is on the employee relation dimension with a score of 3.9197. The knowledge management variable score that has the highest score is the knowledge storage dimension with a score of 4.4653, while the lowest score is the use of knowledge with a score of 4.4031. The engagement score of the respondents has a score above 4 on all three dimensions, this means that the engagement of the respondents is in the good category. The dimension with the highest score is the dedication dimension with a score of 4.5763.

Result of Data Analysis

Confirmatory Analysis

The validity test was carried out based on the standardized loading factor value of each dimension, with the criteria for the CR value above 1.96 or with a probability less than 0.05. Based on the analysis, all of the dimensions have the CR value more than 1.96 with the probability less than 0.05, so all of the dimensions are valid. The reliability testing using the variance extract criteria for each latent variable on its constituent dimensions shows that all variables are greater than 0.6.

Model Fit

The results of the full model test show that the model can be categorized as meeting the fit criteria, this is based on more than part of the criteria being met properly. The AGFI criteria are still in the marginal category (not good). The results of the chi-square test calculation on the full model obtained a chi-square value of 12.456, still below the chi-square table. The probability value is 0.387 which the value is above 0.05. The CMIN/DF value of 2.11 is bigger than the standard value of 2.00. The GFI value of 0.940 is still above the standard value of 0.90 and the AGFI value of 0.911 which is bigger than 0.90 (good). The TLI value is 0.958 which is bigger than the standard value of 0.95. The CFI value is 0.959, which is still above 0.95 and the RMSEA value is 0.078, which is below 0.08. So, the model is sufficient.

Hypotheses Test and Discussion

Testing of the hypothesis is based on processing research data using SEM analysis, by analyzing the regression values shown in Table 5 (Regression Weights Structural Equation Modeling Analysis). Testing the hypothesis is to analyzed by the value of Critical Ratio (CR) and the value of Probability (P) of the results of data processing, compared with the required statistical limits, which are above 1.96 for the CR value and below 0.05 for the P value (probability). If the results of the data processing show a value that meets these requirements, then the proposed research hypothesis can be accepted. In detail, the research hypothesis testing will be discussed in stages in accordance with the proposed hypothesis.

Table 2 <Hypotheses Test>

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	The hypothesis
ENG	<---	HRM	.269	.083	3.256	.001	Accepted
ENG	<---	KM	2.063	.224	9.211	***	Accepted
Comp	<---	ENG	.291	.096	3.029	.002	Accepted
Comp	<---	HRM	.111	.047	2.379	.017	Accepted
Comp	<---	KM	-.572	.224	-2.558	.011	Rejected

Source : Data processed (2023)

Hypothesis Test 1

Hypothesis 1 in this study is that human resource management has positive and significant effect on engagement. Based on the data processing that has been carried out, it is known that the CR value on the influence of human resource management on engagement as shown in Table 4.8 is 3.256, and the P value is 0.001. These two values show values above 1.96 for CR and below 0.05 for P values, thus it can be said that hypothesis 1 of this study is accepted. These findings support several previous studies by ((Fayad & Easa, 2020; Parabakarana & Lasib, 2021; Haryani et al., 2022; Yustrilia et al., 2022) showed that human resource management practices had positive and significant effect on employee engagement. Thus, human resource management (HRM) has a positive and significant influence on employee engagement, where effective HRM practices can create a supportive work environment and reward employees, which in turn encourages them to be more engaged and committed to their work. This finding is in line with social exchange theory, which states that employees will reciprocate the support provided by the organization with higher levels of engagement, as well as with a resource-based view that emphasizes the important role of HRM in creating competitive advantage through higher employee engagement.

Hypothesis Test 2

Hypothesis 2 in this study is that knowledge management has a positive and significant influence on engagement. Based on the data processing that has been done, the CR value of the influence of knowledge management on engagement in Table 4.8 is 9.211 with a P value is 0.000. Both of these values show a value above 1.96 for CR and below 0.05 for P value, thus it can be said that hypothesis 2 of this study is accepted. This finding supports the previous study by (Lee et al., 2020; Rehman et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2012) which states that knowledge management has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement.

The results of this study, which show that knowledge management has a positive and significant influence on engagement, are in line with existing theories in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management. Based on knowledge-based theory, knowledge management practices that facilitate the sharing and utilization of knowledge in an organization can increase employee engagement by strengthening the sense of competence, involvement, and purpose (Fait et al., 2023). In the context of higher education, knowledge management can create a more engaging academic environment by empowering faculty and staff with resources and collaboration opportunities, thereby increasing their emotional and intellectual commitment to their work (Adhikari & Shrestha., 2023).

These results also support social exchange theory, which states that when employees perceive the organization as providing valuable knowledge resources and opportunities for growth, they will reciprocate by increasing engagement in their roles. The positive and significant CR value of 9.211 and P value of 0.000 in this

study reinforce the theoretical assertion that knowledge management practices, such as facilitating information access, encouraging collaboration, and promoting continuous learning, contribute significantly to increased employee engagement.

Thus, knowledge management has a positive and significant influence on employee engagement, as it facilitates the sharing and utilization of knowledge within an organization, which in turn enhances employees' sense of competence, involvement, and purpose. By providing valuable resources, fostering collaboration, and promoting continuous learning, knowledge management practices create an engaging environment that encourages employees to be more committed and motivated in their roles. This relationship underscores the importance of managing organizational knowledge effectively to boost employee engagement, particularly in higher education settings.

Hypothesis Test 3

Hypothesis 3 in this study is engagement has positive and significant effect on competitiveness. Based on the data processing that has been done, it is known that the CR value of the effect of engagement on competitiveness Table 5 is 3.029, and the P value is 0.002. Both of these values show a value above 1.96 for CR and below 0.05 for P value, thus it can be said that hypothesis 3 of this study is accepted. This result supported the major findings of the studies have concluded that employee engagement has a positive effect, for example (Siswadi et al., 2023) states that employee engagement has a positive effect on productivity and organizational commitment. Research on the effect of employee engagement on organizational competitiveness was put forward by (Gowri & Sujatha, 2022).

According to George et al., (2022) personal engagement theory, employees who are emotionally, cognitively, and physically involved in their work tend to make greater contributions to the overall success of the organization. The CR value of 3.029 and P value of 0.002 indicate that engagement has a strong influence on competitiveness, confirming that when employees are highly engaged, they tend to perform better, which directly affects the institution's competitive position. Rai & Chawla., (2022) in their Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model emphasized how employee engagement can improve job performance, organizational commitment (Gowri & Sujatha, 2022).ent, and, ultimately, organizational competitiveness. Engagement plays an important role as a driver of competitiveness, particularly in the higher education sector, where lecturers' commitment and engagement are critical to creating a productive academic environment and improving the reputation and quality of the institution.

Thus, employee engagement has a positive and significant influence on the competitiveness of higher education institutions, which indicates that the higher the level of employee engagement, the better their performance which contributes to improving the competitiveness of the institution. Employee engagement is a key factor in improving the competitiveness of universities, both through individual performance and contribution to the success of the organization as a whole.

Hypothesis Test 4

Hypothesis 4 in this study is that human resource management has positive and significant effect on competitiveness. Based on the data processing that has been done, it is known that the CR value of the effect of human resource management on competitiveness Table 5 is 2.379, and the P value is 0.017. Both of these values show a value above 1.96 for CR and below 0.05 for P value, thus it can be said that hypothesis 4 of this study is accepted. This result supported the major findings of the studies as (Pandit & Paul, 2023; Guo & Hou, 2022; Ferreira et al., 2021; Banmairuoy et al., 2022) provide analysis and descriptions which state the importance of human resource management in achieving organizational competitiveness. This is because human resource management plays a role in attracting, fostering, directing the organizational behavior of employees in achieving organizational goals. Organizational sustainability is the goal of human resource management which can be achieved by creating organizational competitiveness.

According to RBV theory, an organization's competitive advantage depends not only on its physical and financial resources, but also on its human resources. Organizations that are able to manage and develop their employees' competencies through effective HRM practices will have a greater competitive advantage. HRM plays an important role in improving employees' skills, knowledge, and motivation which in turn improves organizational performance and competitiveness (Nemar et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Human Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of investing in human capital to increase organizational productivity and competitiveness. Employees who have the right skills and knowledge can make a greater contribution to the achievement of organizational goals (Marchiori., 2022). Therefore, quality HRM practices, such as proper selection, training, career development, as well as motivating incentives, serve to improve individual capabilities and performance that will ultimately improve organizational competitiveness (Azmi & Hashim., 2022).

Hypothesis Test 5

Hypothesis 5 in this study is that knowledge management has positive and significant effect on competitiveness. Based on the data processing that has been done, it is known that the CR value of the effect of knowledge management on competitiveness Table 5 is -2.558, and the P value is 0.011. Both of these values show a value above 1.96 for CR and below 0.05 for P value, but the sign is negative thus it can be said that hypothesis 4 of this study is rejected.

This indicates that while knowledge management theory generally claims that good knowledge management can improve competitiveness, in this context, the findings suggest that there are certain factors that hinder this. The result of this study is not in line with previous research by (Rehman et al., 2022) by all the background studies say that the relationship between knowledge management and sustainable competitive advantage is highly positive. It is also not supporting an empirical result by (Kusuma & Efendi, 2022) they obtained the finding that knowledge management has a positive effect on competitive advantage. (Lei et al., 2021) also found there was positive impacts of knowledge management on organizational competitiveness. (Mahdi & Nassar, 2021) and (Wijaya & Suasih, 2020) also found that knowledge management has no direct significant effect on business performance but through competitive advantage.

Knowledge management theory, as described by Azeem et al., (2021), focuses on the importance of knowledge sharing processes that can enhance innovation and organizational competitiveness. However, the application of this theory in the context of higher education requires the readiness of infrastructure and culture that support collaborative learning and effective information management. If universities do not have an efficient system or if knowledge management is not accompanied by strengthening the capacity of human resources, the benefits that should be obtained cannot be achieved. Thus, knowledge management can have a significant negative influence on higher education competitiveness if it is not managed properly. When universities fail to utilize their knowledge, be it through ineffective information sharing systems or non-optimal knowledge management policies, the competitiveness of the institution will be hampered. This makes it difficult for universities to innovate, improve the quality of education, and compete with other institutions. Success in knowledge management relies heavily on a system that supports collaboration, continuous learning, and utilization of existing resources to improve competitiveness.

Conclusions

The analysis concludes that human resource management and knowledge management both have a positive and significant impact on employee engagement in higher education, which in turn positively affects the competitiveness of higher education. Additionally, human resource management directly influences higher education competitiveness. However, knowledge management negatively affects competitiveness when considered directly, without the mediating role of employee engagement. Thus, employee engagement serves as a key mediator in the relationship between human resource management, knowledge management, and the competitiveness of higher education. Based on the result analysis it can be recommended that to increase competitiveness of the higher education it can be done by implementation of good human resource management and knowledge management, because both of them can increase the employee engagement and then increase the competitiveness of higher education.

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