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Antecedents of Perceived Business Performance among Private Business Organizations: A Partial Least Square Approach

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Abstract

This study is very important to ensure that business organizations can formulate and plan a strategic plan to continue to ensure that their business performance remains viable and sustainable. The aim of this study is to assess the direct relationships between corporate image, employee engagement, organizational culture, employee loyalty, and business performance among private business organizations. This study is vital to be carried out because many private organizations face difficulty to maintain their business performance in the coming years. The research model of this study consists of three independent variables: corporate image, employee engagement, organizational culture, employee loyalty as a mediator, and business performance as a dependent variable. This study adopts a quantitative approach by using primary data for analysis. Primary data were utilized in this study and a survey questionnaire which was adopted and adapted from previous studies was used for data collection. 329 clean data were used in the data analysis by utilizing the structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. Smartpls3 was used in this study to run the multivariate data analysis and test the proposed hypotheses. In addition, the model measurement and structural model assessment procedures also were performed by using Smartpls3. The PLS-SEM technique was employed for this study due to its assessment ability. Initially, the convergent validity was evaluated on the measurement model by assessing the construct reliability and validity. Then, the discriminant validity was assessed and confirmed through cross-loading and Hetrotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios. Subsequently, the structural model was assessed and the hypotheses testing reveals that corporate image, employee engagement, and organizational culture, have a positive and significant influence on employee loyalty and business performance was strongly affected by employee loyalty. This shows that corporate image, employee engagement, and organizational culture are very important factors and business organizations need to pay serious attention if they want to ensure that the planned business performance can be achieved.

Keywords: Corporate Image, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, Employee Loyalty, Business Performance.

Introduction

Today, most business organizations think about how to ensure their business can sustain itself in the future by focusing on their business performance. Companies realize there is stiff competition in goods and service markets where business organizations have to look for new approaches to keep on hold to their customers. Customers' need has become very sophisticated and demanding. In a vibrant business environment, customer engagement allows for sales promotion, improvement of product quality, rise in customer satisfaction, cost and risk minimization, and competitive advantage enhancement. In addition to land, labor, and capital, international competitiveness and changing surrounding circumstances have made institutions more aware of and prone to adopting change continuously, as it requires effective participation from every level of the organization and within all levels of institutions, as human resources is also an asset (Chin, 2011; Muhaisen et al., 2020). The mission is to organize institutional work and improve institutional performance since it is critical to the organization's smooth management and attainment of its objectives (Sarrab et al., 2013).

As a result, in this changing and competitive global ecosystem, if human resources are managed effectively, they can become a competitive advantage for a business organization, and it is clear that leaders have a significant influence on subordinates, so the importance of leadership standard in the institutions and organizations sector grows. Malaysian business organizations are still behind in terms of competitive advantage in the global business environment due to their low productivity and poor business performance (Tehseen et al., 2015). In addition, Malaysian business organizations are found to provide a lower contribution to the nation's GDP and exports as compared to business organizations of many neighboring countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore (Halim, et al., 2013). Realizing the importance of Malaysian business organizations as an important element of economic growth, it is vital to discover factors that can enhance competitiveness and reduce the disparity between Malaysian business organizations and business organizations in these countries in terms of contribution to the economy. Business organizations must give attention to the needs and requirements of their employees as all motives that enhance productivity and positively influence performance effectiveness.

The undivided loyalty of the employees in the business organization is also an important factor in the business organizations. Loyalties employees produce the performance of the organization and build competitive advantage (Foster et al., 2013). However, employee loyalty is a complex issue as it is not possible to recognize whether they have been committed and loyal by simply asking questions or performing an observation (Zanabazar & Jigjiddorj, 2018). This study will benefit private organizations in strategizing their businesses to ensure the targeted business performance will be achievable. Employees in the private business organization can better understand how they can implement the organization's plan to ensure the positive results of their operations. Also, findings from this study will benefit policymakers in introducing future business policies affecting private business organizations and ensuring positive business performance by the private organizations towards the country's economy. The overall research model proposed in this study has not been tested before in previous studies. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the relationship between corporate image, employee engagement, and organizational culture towards employee loyalty and employee loyalty to business organizational performance in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Performance

The performance concept has various definitions, which involve nature and tremendous reputation as it appears in regular verbal communication. Performance is a living reality and in real work, undeniably, any activity that involved monetary payment was attention, and performance can be sensed (Folan et al., 2007). Lebas (1995) suggested performance has never been objective and it was only clarifying the direction that was heading. Performance was a reality that had been socially developed. Forlan et al (2007) emphasized that the main priority of business organizations was a specific aim achievement. In addition, the business organization was evaluated based on the future target that intended to achieve. Laitinen (2002) interpreted performance as the object-capability to generate results in a dimension resolving a priority related to a target. Therefore, it was crucial to identify an object to which the performance was to be evaluated. Followed by identifying the perspective in which one was keen and lastly fixed the target for the result.

Corporate Image

Corporate image is conceptual in a company that is involved with beliefs, ideas, and impressions that you obtain, whether you experience it directly, through your five senses, or acquire information from the company (Zameer et al., 2018; Lieva et al., 2016; Balmer et al., 2020). Corporate image can appear as positive responses in terms of active roles, support, participation, and other positive acts and negative reactions in terms of refusal (Sallam, 2016; Balmer et al., 2020). According to Young and Jin (2019); Lieva et al (2016), an image can be connected to every individual or company through positive or negative reactions depending on how the forming of and interpretation of the image process takes place (Kim and Kim, 2019; Lieva et al., 2016; Osman, 2014). The capability of any business organization to maintain a steady corporate image was vital to organization performance. According to Bouchet (2014), the corporate image stands for how stakeholders explain an organization. Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) suggested corporate image is a firm's characteristic. A business organization that fails to manage its image properly or disregards it was possible to face several obstacles. Corporate image begins with high-level management when implementing effective company policies. Business organizations can persistently accumulate data on corporate image to successfully place them better in the market and develop how they perform. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H_1 : There is a positive and significant relationship between corporate image and employee loyalty among private business organizations in Malaysia

Employee Engagement

Just as there were different views on loyalty, employee engagement had the same problem. Employee engagement has been found to suffer from conceptual confusion. There were many studies measuring employee engagement in different ways, but in the end, their definitions were much more similar. We know that the focus of employee engagement was limited to three broad thinking worlds. The role-theoretic approach used by Rich et al (2010) was considered to be the psychological presence necessary to play the organizational role necessary to play the person's organizational role. Employee engagement has been defined in a variety of ways and today employee engagement was very important and therefore widely used by many consulting firms (Unal & Turgut, 2015; Burhannudin et al., 2020). They

lead to a shift in considering participation from aspects of job performance to those more intrinsic to employees. The definition of their employee engagement was "Employee engagement was about participation and passion for work." Another important definition is given by the international development aspect which defined employee engagement as "the extent to which people value what they do and believe they value it for doing." This definition was said to be closer to employee loyalty and job satisfaction. This definition encompasses almost every type of perspective on employee engagement. Employee engagement was also associated with employee loyalty (Milliman et al., 2018; De Simone et al., 2018; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018). Milliman et al (2018); Karatepe and Ngeche (2012) affirmed that employee engagement has a link with job involvement. When an employee engages with his/her task in the company, he/she will have a better job involvement, at the same time as job involvement was related to employee loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₂: There is a positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and employee loyalty among private business organizations in Malaysia

Organizational Culture

Ineson et al (2013) mentioned there were various reasons that an employee won't stay long in an organization and one of the reasons was because employees are satisfied or unhappy with their job and the organization itself. Turkyilmaz et al (2011) explained that the more employees go with the organizational culture; the more satisfied the employee will be with their job. Dawson, Abbott, and Shoemaker (2011) proposed that strong job satisfaction will have a direct effect on employee loyalty in their organizations. Working environment culture was the feature that influenced employee engagement and he stressed that employees who lacked commitment to their organization will eventually become loyal to its organization (Aljayi, 2016). Cropanzano and Rupp (2008); Yuxin et al (2021) suggested that relationships between employees and organization will establish trust, loyalty, and commitment providing employees and organization were benefiting. In addition, if employees were not having a good relationship with their superiors, it will create an unpleasant situation and can affect employee loyalty. The organization can keep hold of the employee by having a solid organizational culture that offers value to the employees. Further, an organization should focus on organizational culture if want to achieve employee loyalty which eventually will lead to high performance (Ineson et al., 2013; Lam & Ozorio, 2012; Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₃: There is a positive and significant relationship between organizational culture and employee loyalty among private business organizations in Malaysia

Employee Loyalty

The employee loyalty concept has been studied by many researchers and scholars from a wide range of standpoints and described in various ways. Loyalty is displayed by a person's behavior, attitude, and psychology and cultivated through the communication between organization and individual. It can be expressed as an employee's attempts to attain the organization's objectives and enhanced productivity, efficiency, and delivery service quality to the customers. Gould (2003) concurred that strong employee loyalty and commitment

cause improved organizational performance. As loyalty was a vital factor in organizational performance, the well-organized way to enhancement was to raise the level of employees' feeling that they were important to the organization (Mekonnen, 2006; Chan et al., 2000). Employee loyalty can be described as the raised employee commitment to the organizational achievement and confidence in doing correct the thing functioning for the organization. However, the existence of low loyalty levels discovered by Mekonnen (2006) that linked to low employees' interest to stay in the organization due to some constraints, such as salary or welfare had to remain competitive during their stay in the organization and if these conditions no longer exist, the employees will cease to demonstrate their loyalty to the organization. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H₄: There is a positive and significant relationship between employee loyalty and employee business performance among private business organizations in Malaysia

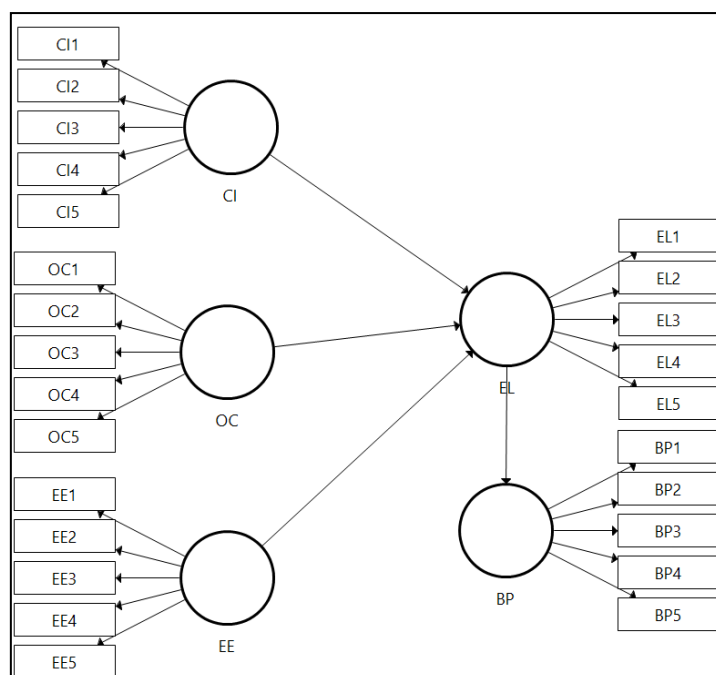


Figure 1: Specified Model

Note: BP=Business Performance, EL=Employee Loyalty, CI=Corporate Image EE=Employee Engagement, OC=Organizational Culture

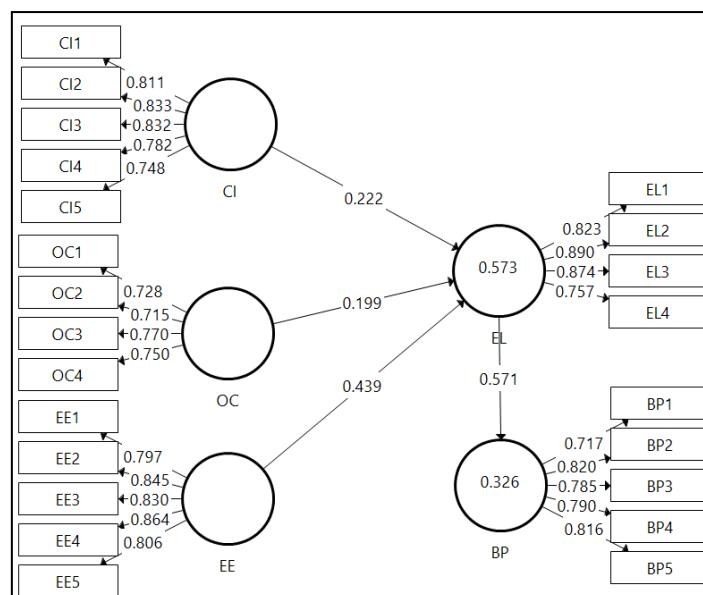


Figure 2: Re-specified Model

Note: BP=Business Performance, EL=Employee Loyalty, CI=Corporate Image EE=Employee Engagement, OC=Organizational Culture

Research Methodology

Employees who were working in private organizations were selected for this study. This study used primary data and a survey instrument was utilized for data collection. The survey questionnaire used in this study was developed with a careful evaluation of previous studies to acquire appropriate measurements that were being frequently used and have well-built reliability and validity. Survey questionnaires were sent via email to the targeted respondents by utilizing the non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling to collect data. There was a total of 25 observed variables constituted of the exogenous variables and the endogenous variable measurement. Corporate image construct consists of 5 measurement items (Lee, 204), employee engagement consists of 5 measurement items (Saks, 2006), organizational culture constructs consist of 5 measurement items (Van den Berg and Wilderom, 2004), employee loyalty construct consists of 4 measurements (Matzler & Rentzl's, 2006) and business performance construct consists of 5 measurement items (Ganeshasundaram & Henley, 2007). A five-point Likert scale was employed ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to measure the measurement items of each construct. Out of 485 questionnaires distributed, 353 were collected. This made-up a 72.8% response rate and it was adequate to conduct data analysis by employing the structural equation modeling technique (SEM). After data screening and deleting the outliers process, 329 questionnaires were cleared and ready to be analyzed. Table 1 demonstrated the respondents' profiles of the sampled ODL students. Smartpls3 was used in this study to run the multivariate data analysis and test the proposed hypotheses. In addition, the model measurement and structural model assessment procedures also were performed by using Smartpls3. The PLS-SEM technique was employed for this study due to its assessment ability (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 1
Respondents' Profile

		Frequency	Percent
GENDER	Male	131	39.8
	Female	198	60.2
AGE	20-30 yrs	26	7.9
	30-40 yrs	145	44.1
	40-50 yrs	78	23.7
	50-60 yrs	59	17.9
	>60 yrs	21	6.4
YR OF SERVICE	<5 yrs	41	12.5
	5-10 yrs	74	22.5
	10-15 yrs	57	17.3
	15-20 yrs	45	13.7
	20-25 yrs	41	12.5
	25-30 yrs	44	13.4
	>30 yrs	27	8.2
MGT LEVEL	Top Mgt	38	11.6
	Middle Mgt	188	57.1
	Operational	103	31.3
INCOME	<RM4,850	113	34.3
	RM4,851-RM10,970	142	43.2
	> RM10,971	74	22.5

Data Analysis

Common Method Bias

Kock (2015), suggested that if the variance inflation factor (VIF) is greater than 3.3, it shows there is an issue of common method bias. Common method bias occurs when there are variances in responses from respondents are caused by the instrument and not by the actual respondents' predispositions that the instrument tries to uncover. To verify whether there is a problem with collinearity and common method bias, the full collinearity test was conducted. As demonstrated in Table 2, all factor-level after the full collinearity test showed that the variance inflation factors (VIF) were less than 3.3 and hence it proved the model did not face any common method bias issue.

Table 2

Full Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

	BP	EL	CI	EE	OC
BP		1.461	1.533	1.556	1.509
EL	2.243		2.32	2.077	2.323
CI	2.478	2.442		1.928	2.47
EE	2.842	2.471	2.179		2.783
OC	1.593	1.598	1.613	1.609	

Note: BP=Business Performance, EL=Employee Loyalty, CI=Corporate Image
EE=Employee Engagement, OC=Organizational Culture

Measurement Model

The structural model was evaluated and substantiated the reliability and validity of construction measurement by utilizing the PLS-SEM algorithm. Hair et al (2017) proposed two important elements in PLS-SEM: reliability and validity for the study of the outer goodness model. First of all, the specified model was introduced (Figure 1). After an initial evaluation of the reliability and validity of outer loadings, certain items of the constructs have shown lower loadings and this has caused the construct reliability and validity which was the average variance extracted (AVE) below the threshold of 0.5, therefore requiring certain items of lower loading to be deleted. After the deletion of lower loading items, all constructs have achieved the threshold of AVE of a minimum of 0.5 with the range of 0.549 to 0.702 (Table 3). This confirmed the establishment of convergent validity of all constructs. The composite reliability as shown in Table 3, ranged from 0.830 to 0.916, which is above the threshold of 0.7 as suggested by Hair et al. (2017), Further, discriminant validity was evaluated to confirm its presence in this study by evaluating the cross-loading of the measurement items. The statistical results demonstrated that all item loadings were higher than their respective cross-loadings (Table 4). The presence of discriminant validity was further evaluated by calculating the Hetrotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios and the statistical results showed that all the five constructs' ratios were < 0.9 (Table 5) as suggested by (Henseler et al., 2015). The complete bootstrapping was done for HTMT. Therefore, as mentioned by Hair et al (2014), this study has demonstrated the latent constructs' reliability and validity.

Table 3

Construct Reliability and Validity

	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
BP	0.847 (0.867,0.908)	0.861 (0.826, 0.887)	0.890 (0.867,0.908)	0.618 (0.568,0.663)
CI	0.861 (0.879,0.916)	0.861 (0.829,0.886)	0.900 (0.879,0.916)	0.643 (0.594,0.685)
EE	0.886 (0.894,0.935)	0.888 (0.850,0.911)	0.916 (0.894,0.935)	0.687 (0.628,0.741)
EL	0.857 (0.882,0.921)	0.866 (0.832,0.890)	0.904 (0.882,0.921)	0.702 (0.654,0.744)
OC	0.727 (0.795,0.860)	0.728 (0.646,0.782)	0.830 (0.795,0.860)	0.549 (0.493,0.607)

Note: CA=Cronbach Alpha, CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Extracted

Table 4

Cross Loadings

	BP	CI	EE	EL	OC
BP1	0.717	0.328	0.311	0.331	0.337
BP2	0.820	0.429	0.383	0.440	0.349
BP3	0.785	0.374	0.326	0.390	0.352
BP4	0.790	0.406	0.445	0.496	0.400
BP5	0.816	0.417	0.464	0.538	0.432
CI1	0.394	0.811	0.567	0.511	0.425
CI2	0.425	0.833	0.611	0.497	0.415
CI3	0.419	0.832	0.557	0.493	0.451
CI4	0.412	0.782	0.642	0.578	0.460
CI5	0.355	0.748	0.605	0.542	0.410
EE1	0.475	0.643	0.797	0.577	0.506
EE2	0.387	0.629	0.845	0.569	0.446
EE3	0.398	0.585	0.830	0.545	0.460
EE4	0.454	0.673	0.864	0.620	0.495
EE5	0.361	0.566	0.806	0.645	0.417
EL1	0.520	0.558	0.603	0.823	0.488
EL2	0.505	0.593	0.649	0.890	0.485
EL3	0.474	0.572	0.639	0.874	0.515
EL4	0.405	0.471	0.496	0.757	0.394
OC1	0.319	0.368	0.368	0.370	0.728
OC2	0.420	0.397	0.473	0.467	0.715
OC3	0.329	0.395	0.399	0.386	0.770
OC4	0.340	0.436	0.406	0.434	0.750

Note: BP=Business Performance, EL=Employee Loyalty, CI=Corporate Image
EE=Employee Engagement, OC=Organizational Culture

Table 5

Hetrotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

	BP	CI	EE	EL
CI	0.581(0.474, 0.681)			
EE	0.566 (0.456, 0.669)	0.853 (0.792, 0.904)		
EL	0.697 (0.614, 0.782)	0.804 (0.715, 0.875)	0.842 (0.776, 0.903)	
OC	0.598 (0.456, 0.711)	0.678 (0.569, 0.786)	0.692 (0.562, 0.813)	0.705 (0.626, 0.848)

Note: BP=Business Performance, EL=Employee Loyalty, CI=Corporate Image, EE=Employee Engagement, OC=Organizational Culture

Structural Model

The assessment of the structural model was conducted by evaluating the path coefficient (β) together with the coefficient of determination (R^2) value (Hair et al., 2012). PLS technique was used to bootstrap 5000 sub-samples to determine the significance level of the path coefficient. The statistical result of the hypotheses testing of path coefficients (Beta), t-statistics, p-value, and confidence interval was shown in Table 5. For *hypothesis 1*, the statistical result shows corporate image has a positive and significant influence on employee

loyalty ($\beta = 0.222$, $t = 3.588$, $p=0.000$), hence H_1 is supported. For *hypothesis 2*, the result reveals that employee engagement has a positive and significant influence on employee loyalty ($\beta = 0.439$, $t = 7.518$, $p=0.000$), thus, H_2 is well supported. For *hypothesis 3*, the statistical result confirms that organizational culture has positively and significantly affected employee loyalty ($\beta = 0.199$, $t = 4.076$, $p=0.000$), hence, H_3 is supported. For *hypothesis 4*, it is found that employee loyalty has a strong positive and significant direct effect on performance ($\beta = 0.571$, $t = 15.321$, $p=0.000$), therefore, H_4 is supported. The summary of the hypotheses testing results is presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Hypotheses Testing Results

	Beta	T-Values	P-Values	LLCI 2.50%	ULCI 97.50%	Decisions
H_1 :CI -> EL	0.222	3.588	0.000	0.098	0.341	<i>Supported</i>
H_2 :EE -> EL	0.439	7.518	0.000	0.334	0.555	<i>Supported</i>
H_3 :OC -> EL	0.199	4.076	0.000	0.090	0.284	<i>Supported</i>
H_4 :EL -> BP	0.571	15.321	0.000	0.490	0.639	<i>Supported</i>

Discussion and Conclusion

The ability of private organizations to maintain their business performance will determine whether private organizations can sustain their business over time. The focus of this study is to evaluate the direct relationships between corporate image, employee engagement, organizational culture, and employee loyalty and the direct relationship between employee loyalty and business performance. From the above statistical result, it has clearly shown that employee engagement has the strongest influence on employee loyalty ($\beta=0.439$). Hence, private organization needs to emphasize their employee engagement in their organizations. The employees must be encouraged to do engagement in their work. With active engagement by the employees, it will strengthen their loyalty to their organizations. On the organization's part, top management must come out with the right planning and strategy on how to make their employees more engaged in their work, and eventually, their employees will become loyal to the organization. Corporate image has the second strongest influence on employee loyalty ($\beta=0.222$). Private organizations with a strong corporate image will be much preferred by internal and external stakeholders. Employees in private organizations with a strong corporate image will carry the pride of their organizations and will have a strong attachment to their organizations. Employees feel highly motivated in performing their duty in the organization and feel that they are in the right organization. This will lead the employees to become increasingly loyal to their organizations and will make the employees less likely to move to other organizations. Private organizations must continuously develop a plan and formulate a strategy on how to strengthen their corporate image so that the organization would be able to retain their employees for a long period, especially their skilled employees. The third strongest construct influences employee loyalty is organizational culture ($\beta=0.222$). Even though organizational culture's influence on employee loyalty is not as strong as employee engagement, the influence is still significant. Employees stay within the organization if their organizations have a good working culture in the organization. This will make them feel comfortable doing their work. Positive organizational culture will create a conducive environment for the employees to perform their work which eventually will make them want to stay longer in their organizations. From the above statistical results, there is

clear evidence that employee engagement, corporate image, and organizational culture will enhance employee loyalty in private business organizations. With strong employee loyalty, the statistical result shows that employee loyalty will strongly and positively affect the business performance of private organizations ($\beta = 0.571$). Loyal employees tend to perform better in their work which will lead to high productivity and eventually the business performance of the private organization will be strengthened. Therefore, private organizations must make sure to implement the strategies to enhance their employees' loyalty by focusing on employee engagement, corporate image, and organizational culture, so that the impact on the business performance of the organization will be greater.

The sustainability of private organizations very much depends on their business performance. Therefore, the employees of the organization play a very important role and make a significant contribution to the organization's business performance. An organization is made up of a group of people and they are the assets of the organization. Their loyalty toward the organization definitely will give a positive impact on the organization's business performance. Hence, it is the duty of the top management in the organization to ensure their employees remain loyal by focusing on the factors of corporate image, employee engagement, and organizational culture. These three factors can have a positive impact on employee loyalty which is one of the strong antecedents to private organization business performance. For future studies, it is recommended other variables such as leadership style, organizational commitment, and brand image should be considered in developing the research framework.

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