

IGNITE & AMPLIFY: HOW VISIONARY LEADERSHIP FUELS SERVICE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PASSIONATE OWNERSHIP, SUPERCHARGED BY DIGITAL AGILITY

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Abstract

Background: In the current development scenario among various sectors the most important task is to keep the employees engaged and this requires more than the traditional management. There is a need for strong leadership, emotional investment and the ability to adapt to various digital changes.

Objectives: The current study has tried to look into how the strong leadership, passionate investment and the digital flexibility has connected to the employee engagement in various service sectors namely the banking, healthcare and the hospitality.

Methodology: For this purpose the study has obtained data from 462 respondents and also the study has used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for testing the framework that uses both the mediation and moderation effect.

Findings: The results show that strong leadership positively affects employee engagement, both directly and through passionate investment. Additionally, digital flexibility strengthens the relationship between strong leadership and engagement, increasing its effect when digital adaptability is high. The model showed excellent reliability and fit indices (CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000), confirming the reliability of the findings.

Conclusion: This study adds to the literature on leadership and organizational behavior by combining emotional and technological factors in engagement research.

Implication: Study also provides practical insights for service organizations looking to connect their workforce with digital changes for ongoing success and employee well-being.

Keywords: Amplify, Ignite, Visionary leadership, service sector, engagement, passionate ownership, digital agility.

Introduction

In today's rapidly growing world there is evolving service sector landscape where the organizations are increasingly challenged to maintain employee engagement along with the technological disruption, customer-centric demands, and shifting workplace expectations (Braha, 2024 Thakadipuram et.al, 2024 and Friedman, 2025). With the traditional leadership approaches which is currently proving inadequacy to address the complex relationship between various factors namely the workforce motivation, emotional ownership, and digital transformation (Schiuma et.al, 2022 and Schiuma et.al, 2024). With this context, the visionary leadership is found to be characterized with the clarity of purpose, strategic foresight, and the ability to inspire as it is found to be emerging as a crucial driver of employee alignment and engagement (April,2019 and Trenerry et.al,2021). Nevertheless the way from leadership vision to actual employee behavior is not easy scenario (Palmucci et.al, 2024 and Chakraborty et.al, 2025). It generally needs an intermediate state of passionate ownership in which the employees are found to be internalizing the organizational goals and taking up the personal responsibility for outcomes (Schuh et.al, 2024 and Bacha et.al, 2024). At the same time with the advent of digital agility the capability to adapt, integrate, and innovate with digital tools are adding a new dimension to solve the issue related to the how the leadership is received and translated into action (Razzack et.al,2025 and Albannai

et.al,2024). In spite of the growing interest in all these individual constructs, limited empirical research has found to be examined on the visionary leadership interacts with passionate ownership and digital agility to build the employee engagement in service-driven environments (George, 2024, Soomro, 2024 and Markarian,2025). This study addresses this gap by proposing and testing an integrated model that captures the direct, mediated, and moderated relationships among these variables, offering valuable insight into how organizations can ignite and amplify employee engagement through purpose-driven leadership and technological readiness.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant theoretical and practical relevance in the fields of organizational behavior, human resource management, and service management. Theoretically, it contributes to the leadership literature by empirically validating a multidimensional framework in which visionary leadership not only directly affects employee engagement but also does so indirectly through passionate ownership, offering new insights into motivational mechanisms. It also gives the needed introduction into the digital agility which is an moderating variable along with the acknowledging the moving influence of technology on leadership effectiveness and employee experience. The study offers service sector organizations practical guidance on building engaged, resilient, and future-ready workforces. It highlights passionate ownership as a key factor. The findings of the study suggest that with the leadership development programs there should be focus on strategic visioning and on fostering emotional connection and accountability among employees. Additionally, the role of digital agility shows the need for digital transformation efforts that go beyond just infrastructure. These efforts should aim to improve digital skills at all levels of the organization. The research is timely for industries like healthcare, banking, and hospitality, where employee engagement and adaptability directly impact service quality and human interaction. Therefore, this study serves as a roadmap for organizations looking to connect human potential with technological ability to achieve lasting service excellence.

Objectives of the study

- To analyze the impact of visionary leadership on employee engagement in the service sector
- To examine the mediating role of the passionate ownership and the moderating role of the digital agility with the relationship between the visionary leadership and employee engagement.

Review of Literature

Lakshmana et.al, (2020) studied the impact of transformational leadership on intrinsic motivation and performance. Their study showed that visionary leaders, who express a clear and inspiring future vision, motivate employees in the service sector to exceed routine tasks. This increases job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Visionary leadership, a part of transformational leadership, creates a sense of purpose, which is vital in people-centered service environments.

Yuan et.al, (2023) made a study to understand the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. Investigators argued that strong interactions between leaders and their team members lead to higher employee engagement. In service sectors, where emotional labor is significant, LMX theory highlights how visionary leadership characterized by empathy, sharing a vision, and building trust can improve relationships and help employees connect with the organization's goals.

Hermawan et.al,(2024) discovered that visionary leadership greatly influences the organizational climate. Their research showed that in service organizations, leaders who communicate a strong, shared vision create a more engaged, motivated, and customer-

focused workforce. A positive climate based on shared vision encourages collective ownership of results, which helps reduce turnover and improves service quality.

Methodology

For the current study the researcher has used quantitative and cross sectional research design for investigating the visionary leadership impact on the employee engagement in the service sector where the passionate ownership was the mediating variable and the digital agility was the moderating factor. For the study the data was obtained using a structured interview schedule with 462 responses from the employees across various sectors of the industries. The questions included standardization and measures on the 5-point Likert scale on the basis where for the visionary leadership the Visionary Leadership Scale (VLS) was used which was constructed by Zaccaro and Banks(2004), whereas for studying on the passionate ownership the Psychological Ownership Questionnaire was adopted which was developed by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004), in case of the digital agility the Digital Dexterity Index (DDI) was assessed which was incorporated from Bughin et.al, (2018) and for the employee engagement the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) was used which was introduced by Schaufeli et.al, (2008).All the data for the study was examined using the SPSS and AMOS software to perform their reliability and other analysis. Ethical research procedures were followed, with participant anonymity, informed consent, and confidentiality maintained throughout the study.

Conceptual Framework of the study

Self-Determination Theory: Passionate Ownership and Intrinsic Motivation Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985; 2000) is one of the important theories as it focuses on self-determination, passionate ownership, and intrinsic motivation. This theory posits that people are more motivated and engaged when their fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. In service sector settings, leaders who create a sense of ownership and connect roles to personal purpose can ignite intrinsic motivation. Passionate ownership develops when employees see their work as self-driven and meaningful. This type of engagement often leads to greater creativity, responsibility, and service quality, even in challenging jobs.

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model: Digital Agility as a Resource Bakker and Demerouti's Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (2007) provides the most important framework for bringing out the clarity of the term engagement. The main aspect of the theory is that it suggests that job resources, including leadership, digital tools, and support systems provides help and also manage demands and boost engagement. In case of the service sector's where it is found to be evolving digital landscape, strong leadership makes the digital agility through providing employees with skills, guidance, and confidence to adapt. Leaders who promote learning, resilience, and openness to technology act as crucial resources, maintaining employee energy and involvement despite increasing service demands. **Transformational/Visionary Leadership Theory:** Leading with Purpose and Inspiration Bass and Avolio (1994), along with Berson et al. (2001), laid the groundwork for transformational and visionary leadership. Visionary leaders excel at creating and sharing a compelling vision that inspires and aligns employee efforts. In service organizations, where emotional labor is high and customer interaction occurs frequently, this kind of leadership fosters purpose, builds trust, and motivates extra effort. These leaders enhance engagement by connecting daily roles to a larger mission, encouraging loyalty and enthusiasm within teams.

Findings of the study

The current study has tried to identify the socio-demographic background of the respondents as it provides the detailed information on the service workforce and it also provides the

information needed for understanding about the visionary leadership practice which coupled with the digital agility and also it translate into passionate of the employee ownership with the roles and industries.

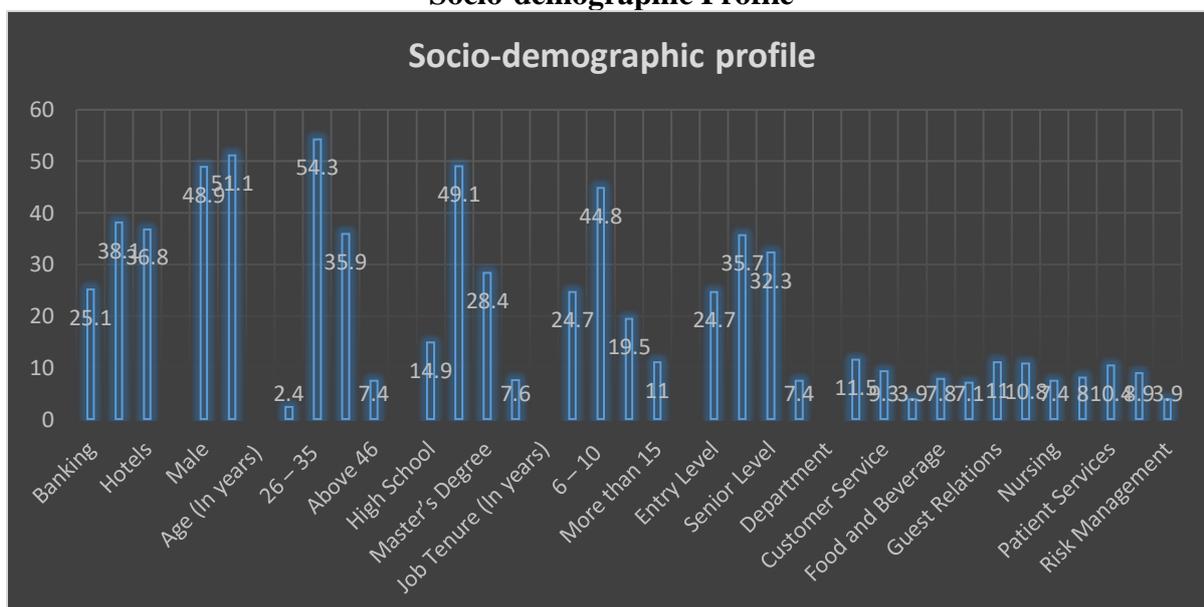
Table 1
Socio-demographic profile of the respondent

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Industry		
Banking	116	25.1
Healthcare	176	38.1
Hotels	170	36.8
Gender		
Male	226	48.9
Female	236	51.1
Age (In years)		
Below 25	11	2.4
26 – 35	251	54.3
36 – 45	166	35.9
Above 46	34	7.4
Educational Level		
High School	69	14.9
Bachelor’s Degree	227	49.1
Master’s Degree	131	28.4
Doctorate	35	7.6
Job Tenure (In years)		
Less than 5	114	24.7
6 – 10	207	44.8
11 – 15	90	19.5
More than 15	51	11.0
Job Level		
Entry Level	114	24.7
Mid-Level	165	35.7
Senior Level	149	32.3
Executive	34	7.4
Department		
Admiration	53	11.5
Customer Service	43	9.3
Finance	18	3.9
Food and Beverage	36	7.8
Front Desk	33	7.1
Guest Relations	51	11.0
House Keeping	50	10.8
Nursing	34	7.4
Operations	37	8.0
Patient Services	48	10.4
Pharmacy	41	8.9
Risk Management	18	3.9

For the study about 462 respondents were selected from various service sectors namely banking, health and hospitality was considered. It was identified that about 38.1 per cent are from health care sector closely followed by 36.8 per cent belonging to hospitality and 25.1

per cent from banking sector. This group shows that there is cross sectoral belonging among the visionary leadership influence and employee engagement across the selected sectors. The gender wise classification showed that about 51.1 percent were female and 48.9 percent were male. In case of the age wise distribution showed that about 54.3 percent were between the age category of 26 to 35 years and remaining 35.9 percent were between the age of 36 years to 45 years which showcased that large group of the respondents are in their mid-career professionals. About three fourth of the sample were found to be having bachelor`s degree reported by 49.1 percent and 28.4 percent were highly educated workforce. The job tenure and experience showed that about 44.8 percent were having 6 to 10 years of experience which showed that they have well integrated with the organizational culture and 24.7 percent has less than 5 years of experience. The job experience among the respondents reported that about 35.7 percent were in their mid-level and 32.3 percent were in their senior level showing that leadership styles and the digital systems are shaping the real time engagement and productivity. The sample represented that there is broad functional spread which includes both the customers facing their roles like being in front desk, nursing, guest relations and being into the customer service and there some were in the back-end operations like maintaining finance, risk management and pharmacy. Even a notable population were in nursing (7.4 percent), patient service (10.4 percent) and housekeeping (10.8 percent) which has showed a strength in providing both emotional and physical demanding roles which is considered to be very crucial in case of bringing engagement depth and ownership behavior.

Figure – 1
Socio-demographic Profile



Reliability Statistics

The study has tried to assess the internal consistency of the scales taken for the measurement in the study Cronbach`s alpha for various constructed aspects which are visionary leadership, passionate ownership, digital agility and employee engagement.

Table – 2
Reliability Statistics

Visionary Leadership	Passionate Ownership	Digital Agility	Employee Engagement
.865	.822	.923	.949

The values indicated that there is high degree of internal consistency for all the variables and even the alpha coefficients were found to be in the acceptable category of 0.70. in case of visionary leadership ($\alpha = 0.865$), digital agility ($\alpha = 0.923$) and employee engagement ($\alpha = 0.949$) were found to be having excellent reliability and passionate ownership ($\alpha = 0.822$) showed good internal consistency.

Correlation

In order to understand the relationship between the variables taken for the study namely visionary leadership, passionate ownership, digital agility and employee engagement pearson correlation was used in the study.

Table – 3
Correlation

		Visionary Leadership	Passionate Ownership	Digital Agility	Employee Engagement
Visionary Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.872**	.589**	.860**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	462	462	462	462
Passionate Ownership	Pearson Correlation	.872**	1	.255**	.955**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	462	462	462	462
Digital Agility	Pearson Correlation	.589**	.255**	1	.295**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	462	462	462	462
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.860**	.955**	.295**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	462	462	462	462

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the correlation analysis showed that there is significant and positive relationship between all the variables at 0.1 percent level of significance which showed that there is a strong inter connection among the visionary leadership, passionate ownership, digital agility and employee engagement withing the selected service sector. In case of the visionary leadership there is a strong correlation among the passionate ownership ($r=.872$) and the employee engagement ($r=.860$). Whereas the passionate ownership had showed high correlation with the employee engagement ($r=.955$) this showed that there is powerful connection of workforce motivation and dedication. A moderate correlation can be seen with visionary leadership and digital agility ($r=.589$) which suggested that there is a forward

thinking with the leaders which can result in fostering the environment which can be more adaptable and technological responsive. But, the digital agility has showed only one weak to moderate correlation with the passionate ownership and the employee engagement which showed that the digital tools are enhancing the work experience and they are not being the primary motivator in the isolation. The result has showed that the visionary leadership been a passionate ownership and together it provides employee engagement with the digital agility and enables dynamic relationship. The strong positive correlation between visionary leadership and employee engagement in this study is supported by Khan et.al, (2024), through the research work the study emphasized that the transformational leaders, through their compelling vision and the style of inspirational which significantly has enhanced the employee motivation, ownership, and engagement within organizations. Further, the study has tried to examine the independent sample t-test between the selected variables with gender and employment engagement.

Table - 4
Independent Sample t-test (between Variables) between gender and Employment Engagement

Variables		Mean	SD	SE	t-value	Sig
Employment Engagement	Male	34.52	4.63	.308	3.371	.001**
	Female	36.08	5.28	.343		

****= Significant at 1% level**

The independent sample t-test was used to understand if there is any significant variation in the employee engagement along with the gender-based diversification of the sample. The result showed that there is statistically significant difference at 1 percent level of significance ($p=.001$) which indicated that the gender is being important aspect in the perceived level of engagement with the service sector. Among the respondents female respondents were found to be having a higher mean score for engagement as $M=36.08$ while compared to male as their mean value was $m=34.52$ showing that women in the study are having strong emotional and behavior role in their work.

An one way ANOVA was used to determine if the employee level of engagement differs across their industries.

Table – 5
One-Way ANOVA between gender and Employment Engagement

Variables		Mean	SD	SE	t-value	Sig
Employment Engagement	Banking	35.09	3.93	.37	258.161	.000**
	Health Care	39.53	3.48	.26		
	Hotels	31.10	3.06	.24		

****= Significant at 1% level**

The result of the study showed that there is high significant difference at 1 percent level of interval ($F=258.161$, $p=.000$) which indicated that the type of industry has an impact on the engagement level of the employees. In consideration with all the selected sectors high mean score $m=39.53$ was found to be there for the health care sector which gets followed by

banking sector where $m=35.09$ and the hospitality sector has the lowest engagement level as $m=31.10$. The findings showed that there is need for sector specific engagement strategies for overall development.

Visionary leadership, passionate ownership, digital agility, and employee engagement in the service sector Model

The current study has been made to identify the relationship between various variables in the service sector.

H1: Visionary leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement among service sector employees.

H2a: Visionary leadership positively influences passionate ownership among service sector employees.

H2b: Passionate ownership positively influences employee engagement.

H2c: Passionate ownership mediates the relationship between visionary leadership and employee engagement.

H3: Digital agility moderates the relationship between visionary leadership and employee engagement such that the relationship is stronger when digital agility is high.

Given that the variables were based on the Likert scale, an attempt was made to compute the reliability using Cronbach's alpha, with the estimated values presented in the table.

Table – 6
Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha			
Visionary Leadership	Passionate Ownership	Digital Agility	Employee Engagement
.865	.822	.923	.949

Source: Estimation based on field survey.

Cronbach's alpha for visionary leadership, passionate ownership, digital agility, and employee engagement among respondents exceeded 0.7, demonstrating internal consistency in the scale employed to measure various forms of employee engagement.

The variable was calculated using a test comprised of multiple-choice questions and various factors.

The relationship among frequencies was analyzed using Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis. A default model was initially developed for this purpose. The model illustrated was conceptual and did not represent a specific structural equation model intended for testing. The study was grounded in preliminary research conducted by the investigator to account for the available variables.

**Figure - 2
 Default Model**

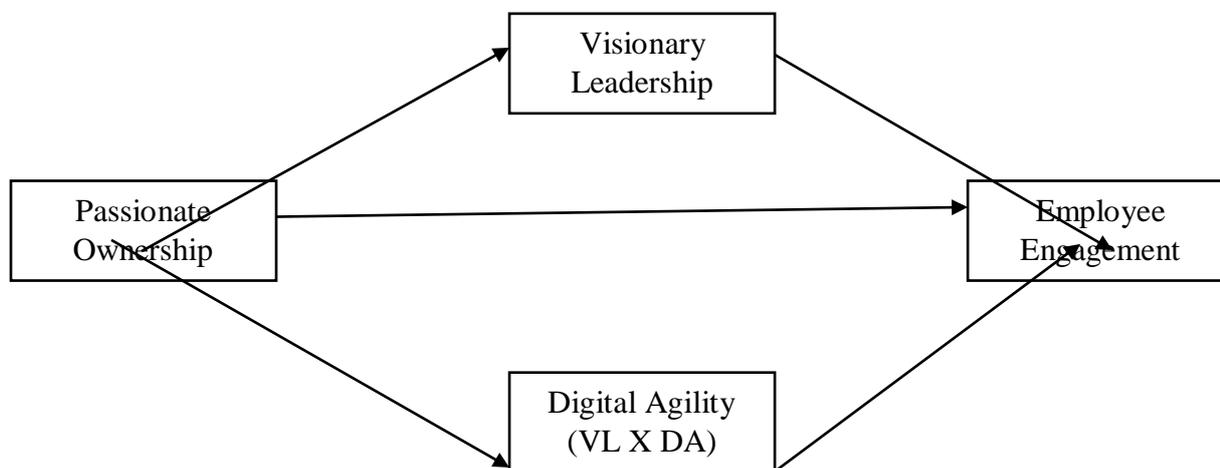


Table 7 enlists the summary value of various measures used in evaluating the model fitness.

**Table – 7
 Model Fit Summary of Structural Equation Model**

Fit Indices	Results	Suggested values
Chi square in AMOS(CMIN)	0.939 (0.333)	≤ 5.00 (Hair et al., 1998)
Comparative Fit index (CFI)	1.000	>0.90 (Hu and Bentler, 1999)
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	.999	>0.90 (Hair et al. 2006)
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	.994	> 0.90 (Daire et al., 2008)
Normated Fit Index (NFI)	.998	≥ 0.90 (Hu and Bentler, 1999)
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	1.000	Approaches 1
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.000	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)

*Computed through Amos output

The model results computed through Amos indicated that CMIN was achieved with a probability level of 0.939, exceeding the threshold of 0.05, thereby signifying an excellent fit of the model. The model's ideal fit was elucidated. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) value of 0.999 and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) value of 0.994 exceed 0.9, indicating a good fit. The Normated Fit Index (NFI) value of .998 and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value of 1.000 suggest an optimal fit. The Root Mean Square Residuals (RMR) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) values were determined to be 0.000, which is below the threshold of 0.08, signifying an optimal fit. The goodness of fit indices affirm the model fit and demonstrate the acceptability of the structural model.

Figure 4.15 presents the standardized solution for the variables within the model. Structural equation modeling was conducted from the respondents' perspective.

Figure – 3
Standardised Solution of the Model

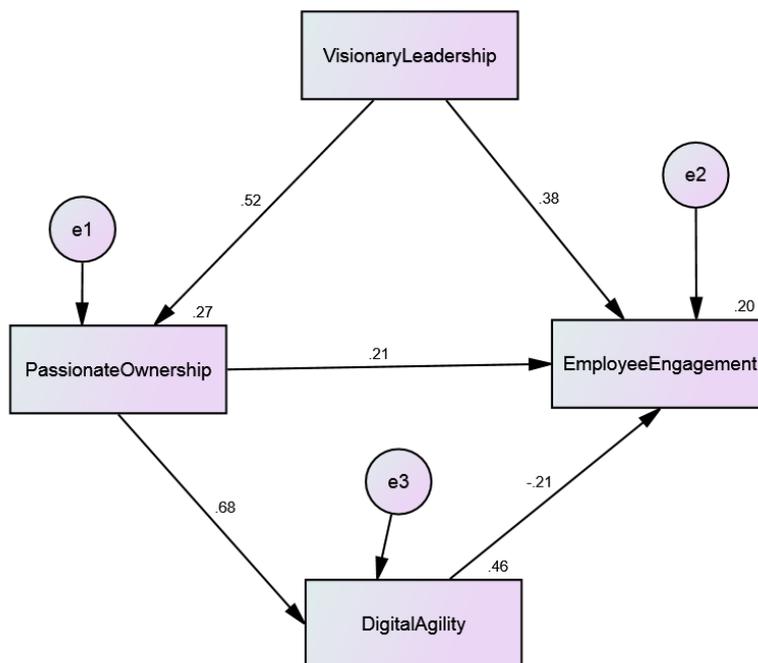


Table 8 presents the path coefficients derived from the extracted model. The table outlines the correlation between variables, presenting standardized coefficients along with 'p' values to determine the acceptance or rejection of the relevant hypotheses.

Table – 8
Path coefficients in extracted model

Path Coefficients			Estimate	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
Passionate Ownership	←	Visionary Leadership	.098	.515	.008	12.907	***	Accepted
Digital Agility (VL X DA)	←	Passionate Ownership	.454	.675	.023	19.661	***	Accepted
Employee Engagement	←	Visionary Leadership	.054	.380	.007	7.805	***	Accepted
Employee Engagement	←	Digital Agility (VL X DA)	.233	.210	.063	3.722	***	Accepted
Employee Engagement	←	Passionate Ownership	.154	.208	.046	3.363	***	Accepted

Source: Estimated from field survey

The path analysis result through the SEM was further validated based on the hypothesized relationship among the selected variables namely visionary leadership, passionate ownership, digital agility and the employee engagement. Firstly the path from the visionary leadership

towards the passionate ownership showed strong and significant standardization of 0.515 which confirmed that the visionary leaders had inspired high emotional ownership towards the employees so here the hypothesis is accepted. Next, for the passionate ownership there was a significant and positive impact on the employee engagement as their was standardization of the coefficient .208 (CR = 3.363, $p < .001$). for the mediation path it was observed that there is direct relationship between the visionary leadership and employee engagement. For the digital agility there is significant moderate among the influence of visionary leadership on the passionate ownership and direct relationship with the visionary leadership and employee engagement. The result showed that the visionary leadership has both direct and indirect effect on the employee engagement and even the passionate ownership serves as a psychological conduit and digital agility acting as contextual amplifies especially towards strengthening the leadership impact in the digital environment. This result is also supported by Hermawan et.al, (2024), who argued that transformational (or visionary) leadership positively influences employee attitudes and behaviors by instilling a sense of purpose and ownership. Their research provides empirical backing for the observed direct and mediated effects of visionary leadership on employee engagement, as well as the enhancing role of digital agility in modern organizational settings.

Conclusion

Through this study there is a clear understanding of how visionary leadership affects employee engagement in the service sector. It highlights the important roles of passionate ownership and digital agility in this relationship. The findings confirm that visionary leadership directly impacts employee engagement and strongly influences it through passionate ownership. Employees who connect with their leaders' vision and take emotional ownership of their roles tend to show higher levels of engagement, commitment, and performance. Additionally, the role of digital agility emphasizes the need for a workforce that can adapt to digital changes to improve leadership effectiveness. When employees have digital skills and are backed by flexible systems, the positive effects of visionary leadership on engagement are much stronger. The structural model used in this study showed great reliability and a good fit, supporting the proposed relationships. Overall, the research highlights the need for organizations to create a culture where leadership vision is clearly communicated, emotionally embraced by employees, and supported by ongoing innovation and adaptability. These insights are especially important for service-based industries, where human interaction and responsiveness are vital for customer satisfaction and organizational success.

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