

Examining Employee Engagement as a Mediator Variable between Talent Management and Service Quality: An Applied Case on Egyptian Commercial Banks

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between talent management and service quality within the Egyptian commercial banking sector, exploring the role of employee engagement as a potential mediating mechanism. Utilizing a quantitative survey methodology, data was collected from a sample of 200 bank employees across 15 Egyptian commercial banks. Using multiple regressions and path analysis the findings reveal significant positive relationships between talent management dimensions (recruitment, performance management, compensation, employee empowerment, and succession planning) and both service quality and employee engagement. Furthermore, path analysis confirms that employee engagement significantly mediates the relationship between talent management practices and service quality. Theoretical implications and practical recommendations for bank executives are discussed alongside study limitations and avenues for future research.

Keywords: Talent Management, Service Quality, Employee Engagement, Egypt, Commercial Banks

1. Introduction

In an era characterized by rapid globalization, intense market competition, and accelerating digital transformation, talent management has emerged as one of the cornerstones of strategic organizational success (Hatum, 2010). This is particularly evident in high-pressure, service-oriented industries such as banking, where human capital serves as a primary source of sustainable competitive advantage. Financial institutions must continuously navigate stringent regulatory compliance frameworks, shifting customer expectations and macroeconomic volatility. Consequently, the development, engagement, and retention of high-potential employees are critical to boosting operational efficiency and fostering an innovative corporate culture.

While previous literature established the direct impact of robust talent management on overall firm performance, empirical focus regarding its indirect mechanisms, specifically within emerging economies, remains limited. Developing markets, like Egypt, present unique workforce dynamics, structural constraints, and institutional variations that warrant context-specific investigations. In Egypt's highly competitive banking sector, understanding how internal human resource architectures translate into superior customer-facing outcomes is essential. Talent management is viewed as a deliberate, strategic suite of activities designed to recruit, develop, and retain high-human-capital individuals in alignment with the firm's long-term competitive objectives (Erfan, 2024). This study addresses existing literature gaps by evaluating employee engagement as a mediator bridging the gap between strategic talent initiatives and objective service quality outcomes within Egyptian commercial banks.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Talent Management and Employee Engagement

Proactive talent management systems function as predictors of employee value propositions, successfully aligning personal employee aspirations with broader corporate goals (Almohtaseb, et al., 2020). In knowledge-intensive and service-driven sectors, robust talent management interventions directly stimulate psychological presence and

dedication among staff (Nafei, 2015). When institutions prioritize clear career trajectories, objective performance appraisals, and robust retention strategies, employees exhibit heightened levels of vigour and engagement (Järvi & Khoreva, 2020; Malik & Singh, 2020). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Talent management practices (recruitment, performance management, compensation, employee empowerment, and succession planning) positively influence employee engagement in Egyptian commercial banks.

2.2 Talent Management and Service Quality

The link between internal human resource management and external service delivery metrics is firmly rooted in strategic human resource management frameworks (Almaaitah et al., 2020). Empirical evidence within the banking literature confirms a strong correlation between talent development infrastructures and performance metrics (Dobal, et al., 2018). Structured talent interventions directly enhance performance outcomes such as reliability and responsiveness, which are foundational components of customer satisfaction (Heymann, 2015). Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H2: Talent management practices (recruitment, performance management, compensation, employee empowerment, and succession planning) positively influence service quality in Egyptian commercial banks.

2.3 Employee Engagement and Service Quality

The relationship between employee engagement and organizational outcomes is deeply rooted in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Schaufeli et al., 2006). According to this framework, organizational resources, such as the talent management practices investigated in this study, fulfill basic psychological needs, fostering high levels of energy, connection, and focus at work. Engaged organizational members possess the psychological resources necessary to navigate high-stress client interactions, which facilitates superior service delivery outcomes (Aboramadan et al., 2020). Dedicated and motivated bank personnel are significantly more likely to deliver prompt and empathetic customer service, which directly translates into enhanced consumer loyalty and long-term organizational health (Radha & Aithal, 2023). Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H3: Employee engagement positively influences service quality in Egyptian commercial banks.

2.4 The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

While independent direct links between talent systems, psychological engagement, and customer outcomes are documented, contemporary research emphasizes the importance of evaluating integrated path mechanisms (Gupta & Sharma, 2018). Talent management practices act as an essential organizational antecedent that fosters an optimal work environment. This environment produces high employee engagement which in turn translates into superior service quality (Dobal, et al., 2018). Thus, employee engagement serves as a vital psychological bridge linking corporate talent architecture to client facing excellence (Bailey, et al., 2017). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H4: Employee engagement significantly mediates the relationship between talent management practices and service quality in Egyptian commercial banks

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The study utilizes a cross-sectional, quantitative survey design. The target population comprises full-time personnel working across the 15 registered commercial banks operating under the regulatory purview of the Central Bank of Egypt, collectively representing a total workforce of 62,471 individuals at the time of the assessment.

To ensure strict institutional representation and eliminate potential selection bias, a probability-based proportional stratified random sampling technique was employed. In this design, each of the 15 commercial banks was treated as a distinct stratum. The baseline sample size was determined using Daniel's (1999) sampling formula, assuming a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and an expected population proportion of 50% to ensure maximum variability. This mathematical calculation established an initial baseline requirement of 264 distributed surveys across the sector. To prevent sample skewness, these 264 surveys were distributed proportionally based on each bank's respective workforce size.

Ultimately, a total of 200 fully completed questionnaires were retrieved from bank employees. This represents a net response rate of 75.8% relative to the 264 distributed questionnaires. It also represents an 81.3% sampling target achievement rate, which we define as the proportion of successfully achieved responses ($N=200$) against our original statistical sampling target ($N=264$).

Table 1. Industry Employment in Egyptian Commercial Banks

Period	Number of Employees
December 2022	60,208
December 2023	62,471

3.2 Measurement Instruments

All scale items were originally compiled from validated English-language psychometric instruments and adapted for the target context using a standardized back-translation procedure to ensure linguistic equivalence (Brislin, 1970). All items were evaluated utilizing a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Talent Management (Independent Variable): Measured using a 22-item adapted scale based on Heinen and O'Neil's (2004) framework. It evaluates five distinct operational domains: Recruitment (5 items), Performance Management (4 items), Rewards and Compensation (5 items), Employee Empowerment (4 items), and Succession Planning (4 items).

Employee Engagement (Mediating Variable): Employee Engagement (Mediating Variable): Operationalized utilizing the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006), capturing three primary constructs: Vigor (3 items), Dedication (3 items), and Absorption (3 items).

Service Quality (Dependent Variable): Assessed via a 10-item modified instrument adapted from Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1988) SERVQUAL model. It focuses on five dimensions from the employee's operational perspective: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. (See APPENDIX A)

3.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample (N = 200) consists of 121 male professionals (60.5%) and 79 female professionals (39.5%). In terms of age distribution, 57.0% of the respondents are between 25 and 34 years old, 30.0% are between 35 and 44, 11.5% are between 45 and 54, and 1.5% are between 55 and 60. Educationally, the sample is highly qualified: 82.0% hold a Bachelor's degree, 6.0% have post-graduate diplomas, 11.0% hold Master's degrees, and 1.0% hold a PhD. In terms of tenure, 41.0% report 0 to 5 years of service, 36.5% have 6 to 10 years, 15.5% have 11 to 15 years, 4.5% have 16 to 20 years, and 2.5% have more than 20 years of professional experience.

Table 2. Sample Demographic Data

Category	Variable	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	121	60.5
	Female	79	39.5
	<i>Total</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Age	25 to less than 35 years	114	57.0
	35 to less than 45 years	60	30.0
	45 to less than 55 years	23	11.5
	55 to 60 years	3	1.5
	<i>Total</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Educational Level	Bachelor's degree	164	82.0
	Diploma	12	6.0
	Master's degree	22	11.0
	Doctorate degree	2	1.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Years of Experience		
0 - 5 years	82	41.0
6 - 10 years	73	36.5
11 - 15 years	31	15.5
16 - 20 years	9	4.5
More than 20 years	5	2.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>100.0</i>

3.4 Ethical Considerations

To ensure strict adherence to established research ethics, several protective protocols were implemented throughout the study. First, an informed consent briefing was added to the cover page of each questionnaire. Participants were explicitly informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty, and the strictly voluntary nature of their involvement. Second, to guarantee complete anonymization, no personally identifiable information (such as names, employee IDs, or specific branch locations) was collected.

4. Results

4.1 Talent Management and Employee Engagement (H1)

To test Hypothesis 1, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, treating employee engagement as the criterion variable and the five sub-dimensions of talent management as simultaneous predictors. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 13.307$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$). The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.505$) indicates a moderate positive relationship, while the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.255$) demonstrates that the five talent management dimensions collectively account for 25.5% of the total variance in employee engagement.

At the individual dimension level, Empowerment ($\beta = 0.210$, $t = 2.582$, $p\text{-value} = 0.011$), Succession Planning ($\beta = 0.194$, $t = 2.342$, $p\text{-value} = 0.020$), and Recruitment ($\beta = 0.170$, $t = 2.095$, $p\text{-value} = 0.037$) were significantly positive predictors of employee engagement. Performance Management and Compensation are not statistically significant independent drivers in this model. Because several key dimensions significantly predicted the outcome variable, H1 is partially supported.

Table 3. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for H1

Independent variable	B	β	T-Test	
			t	Significance (p)
Recruitment	0.138	0.170	2.095	0.037
Performance Management	0.076	0.088	1.067	0.287
Compensation	-0.012	-0.014	-1.177	0.240
Empowerment	0.186	0.210	2.582	0.011
Succession Planning	0.147	0.194	2.342	0.020

4.2 Talent Management and Service Quality (H2)

Multiple regression analysis was applied to evaluate the direct effects of the five talent management dimensions on service quality. The results indicate that the talent management framework holds significant predictive capacity. Specifically, Employee Empowerment emerged as a highly significant independent predictor of service quality ($\beta = 0.335$, $t = 3.921$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$). Recruitment ($\beta = 0.160$, $t = 1.871$, $p\text{-value} = 0.063$) and Compensation ($\beta = -0.144$, $t = -1.718$, $p\text{-value} = 0.087$) trended toward significance but fell outside the standard 95% confidence threshold. Performance Management and Succession Planning showed no significant direct relationship with service quality. Because the effects are driven primarily by specific dimensions rather than the uniform framework, H2 is partially supported.

Table 4. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for H2

Independent variable	<i>B</i>	β	T-Test	
			<i>t</i>	Significance (<i>p</i>)
Recruitment	0.122	0.160	1.871	0.063
Performance Management	0.054	0.067	0.774	0.440
Compensation	-0.116	-0.144	-1.718	0.087
Empowerment	0.279	0.335	3.921	0.000
Succession Planning	0.028	0.039	0.451	0.653

4.3 Employee Engagement and Service Quality (H3)

Hypothesis 3 examined the relationship between the three primary dimensions of employee engagement (Vigor, Dedication, Absorption) and service quality. Regression outcomes reveal a robust model where all three engagement constructs function as significant predictors of service quality: Absorption (beta = 0.328, *t* = 4.937, *p*-value = 0.000), Dedication (beta = 0.215, *t* = 2.852, *p*-value = 0.005), and Vigor (beta = 0.149, *t* = 2.036, *p*-value = 0.043). Given these findings, H3 is fully supported, confirming a strong relationship between employee engagement and service quality.

Table 5. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for H3

Independent variable	<i>B</i>	β	T-Test	
			<i>t</i>	Significance (<i>p</i>)
Vigor	0.114	0.149	2.036	0.043
Dedication	0.154	0.215	2.852	0.005
Absorption	0.254	0.328	4.937	0.000

4.4 Structural Path Analysis and Mediation (H4)

To test the structural mediating role of employee engagement between talent management and service quality, path analysis was performed via SPSS AMOS. The structural path coefficients and model fit statistics are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of AMOS Path Analysis for H4

Path	Path Coefficient		T-Test	
	(β)	S. E.	<i>t</i>	Significance (<i>p</i>)
Talent Management → Employee Engagement	0.529	0.068	7.788	0.000
Talent Management → Service Quality	0.092	0.070	1.325	0.185
Employee Engagement → Service Quality	0.471	0.064	7.391	0.000

The path analysis reveals a strong, highly significant path from Talent Management to Employee Engagement (beta = 0.529, *t* = 7.788, *p*-value = 0.000). Additionally, the direct path from Employee Engagement to Service Quality is highly significant (beta = 0.471, *t* = 7.391, *p*-value = 0.000). Crucially, when controlling for employee engagement the direct path from Talent Management to Service Quality becomes statistically non-significant (beta = 0.092, *t* = 1.325, *p*-value = 0.185). This reduction in significance meets the statistical criteria for full mediation within the sample, indicating that the influence of talent management practices on service quality is entirely transmitted through the development of employee engagement. Therefore, H4 is fully supported.

5. Conclusion

The empirical findings confirm that talent management practices significantly predict employee engagement and service quality in the Egyptian commercial banking sector. Specifically, path analysis demonstrates that talent management systems do not simply influence service quality directly. Instead, their impact is primarily transmitted by fostering a highly engaged workforce. This underscores the value of looking beyond purely technical human resource frameworks to prioritize employee engagement metrics like vigor, dedication, and absorption.

This study provides empirical support for the strategic value of talent management within emerging-market banking systems. It highlights that employee engagement serves as a vital mediating mechanism linking internal human resource frameworks to external service quality. Ultimately, designing robust talent management architectures that foster empowerment and structured succession planning provides banks with a reliable buffer against burnout and turnover, while ensuring high service quality in competitive financial markets.

5.1 Limitations

The study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The study's empirical scope is restricted to commercial banking institutions within Egypt which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other service sectors or regional markets. The study's independent, mediator and the dependent variables were evaluated based on self-reported questionnaires from bank employees; the study should have included a statistical test (for example, Harman's single-factor test) to test whether common-method bias is inflating the path correlations. Direct customer evaluations should have been integrated to provide a more balanced view of service quality. The study relies on historical institutional data from the Central Bank of Egypt that was collected using a cross-sectional approach, capturing all variables at a certain point in time. This limits the study's ability to establish causal relationships between talent management, employee engagement and service quality. The study did not control for institutional factors such as bank size and ownership structure (for example, public vs private banks). The study does not test for multicollinearity between the talent management dimensions (recruitment, performance management, compensation, employee empowerment, and succession planning) to ensure that it is not destabilizing the regression coefficients.

5.2 Future Research

The model used in the study focused exclusively on employee engagement as a mediator. Future research should explore additional mediating or moderating variables, such as organizational culture and leadership styles. Longitudinal designs would be highly beneficial to track how digital transformation and evolving market conditions impact the relationship between talent management practices and employee engagement over time. Future research can also examine the difference between talent management implementation in Egyptian public and private banks. Specifically examining whether the operational agility, risk tolerance, and innovative capacity typical of private institutions lead to significant operational variations between public and private banks when it comes to talent management, employee engagement and service quality.

5.3 Implications

One of the implications of our research is that it helps highlight the unique role of structural and institutional characteristics in shaping human resource effectiveness. Another implication is that it encourages banking executives to consider implementing performance-based compensation structures and investing in advanced technological systems for talent development. It also encourages banking executives to combat bureaucratic hurdles and complex regulatory frameworks which can slow down the adoption of progressive talent acquisition strategies tailored to recruitment and human capital development.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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APPENDIX A. Questionnaire

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire is to provide information regarding the application of talent management within Egyptian commercial banks. This focuses on various dimensions of talent management such as recruitment, compensation, succession planning, employee empowerment, and performance management.

Confidentiality: Your response to this questionnaire is completely confidential.

Section A: Biographical Information

Position in the Bank (Place 'X' in the appropriate block):

Position	Mark X
General Manager	☐
Deputy General Manager	☐
Agent General Manager	☐
Deputy Manager	☐
Manager	☐
Department Head	☐

Years of Employment at the Bank:

Years of Employment	Mark X
0-5 years	☐
6-10 years	☐
11-15 years	☐
16-20 years	☐
More than 20 years	☐

Section B: Personal Details

Age Group (Place 'X' in the appropriate block):

Age Range	Mark X
25-34	☐
35-44	☐
45-54	☐
55-60	☐

Gender (Place 'X' in the appropriate block):

Gender	Mark X
Male	☐
Female	☐

Current Employment Status (Place 'X' in the appropriate block):

Employment Mode	Mark X
Full time	☐
Part time	☐

Marital Status (Place 'X' in the appropriate block):

Marital Status	Mark X
Single	☐
Married	☐
Widowed	☐
Divorced	☐

Educational Level (Place 'X' in the appropriate block):

Education	Mark X
Doctorate degree	☐
Master's degree	☐
Bachelor's degree	☐
Diploma	☐

Section C: Talent Management

Instructions: For the following list of statements, please indicate your response by checking off one of the options provided.

Recruitment:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Before the vacancy is advertised, effort is made to hire from the internal talent pool.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. There is a sufficient pool of managerial talent available at the bank to fill vacancies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The bank has programs in place to build a pool of managerial talent from which to appoint new managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. A skill audit is conducted to assess skill gaps.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The recruitment process succeeds in promoting the best talent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Performance Management:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
6. Targets and due dates are very clear to staff members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. My bank conducts performance reviews regularly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. My personal objectives are aligned with the bank's goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. The weaknesses detected in the performance appraisals lead to training as a staff development initiative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Compensation:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
10. The remuneration package contributes greatly towards my retention at the bank.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. There are incentives for good performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. There are different types of rewards offered.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. My remuneration matches my effort in my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Promotion is not based on seniority but on performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Empowerment:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
15. My job assignment requires me to take initiative and responsibility.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. My manager allows me to be innovative and take risks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. My manager allows me to make decisions pertaining to my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. My manager provides clear guidance on how they want assignments to be done.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Succession Planning

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
19. The bank compiles data on employees and job positions for the purpose of talent management and development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. The bank determines what performance is needed in the future by establishing future competency models for all job categories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. The bank created means by which to document competence to ensure that individuals are successful performers and find organizational talent quickly when needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. The bank established means by which to evaluate the results of talent management initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section D: Employee Engagement (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale - UWES-9)

Instructions: The following 9 statements are about whether you feel engaged or not at work. Please read them carefully and decide if you feel this way about your job.

Vigour:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. At my work, I feel I have lots of energy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Dedication:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
4. My job inspires me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I am enthusiastic about my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I am proud of the work that I do at my organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Absorption:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
7. I feel happy when I am working intensely.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I am immersed in my work during work hours.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I get carried away when I am working.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section E: Service Quality**Tangibles:**

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. We have up to date equipment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The working environment is comfortable and attractive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reliability:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
3. When I promise a customer I will do something by a certain time, I do so.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I perform the service right the first time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Responsiveness:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
5. When problems occur, I give them all my attention.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I give prompt service to my customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Assurance:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
7. I have the knowledge and ability to answer customers' questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. My behavior instills confidence in my customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Empathy:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
9. I can understand the specific needs of my customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. When a customer has a problem, I provide them with individual attention.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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