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The Effect Of Career Development On Employee Performance With Employee Engagement As A Mediation Variables In The Tourism Department Palembang City

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Abstract

Employee performance is a crucial factor in achieving organizational goals. However, several issues related to career development and Employee Engagement may affect the performance of employees at the Palembang City Tourism Office. This study aims to examine the effect of career development on employee performance, with Employee Engagement serving as a mediating variable at the Palembang City Tourism Office. This research employed a quantitative approach with a causal associative research design. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 51 Civil Servants (ASN) selected using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4 software. The findings indicate that career development has a positive and significant effect on both employee performance and Employee Engagement. Furthermore, Employee Engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and partially mediates the relationship between career development and employee performance. These findings suggest that improving career development, supported by higher levels of employee engagement, can serve as an effective strategy for enhancing employee performance at the Palembang City Tourism Office.

Keywords: *Career Development, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, SEM-PLS, Palembang City Tourism Office*

INTRODUCTION

Human resources (HR) hold a central and strategic position as the primary driver in determining the success and survival of an organization, including government agencies. HR is the driving force behind all organizational activities because they possess the cognitive ability to think, innovate, and make crucial decisions that influence the achievement of agency goals. Without the support of qualified HR, an organization will never be able to operate optimally, even with adequate work facilities and infrastructure (Agung et al., 2023). Therefore, the implementation of human resource management plays a highly strategic role in effectively managing the workforce through comprehensive planning, development, and performance evaluation functions (Ainiyah et al., nd).

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Employee performance reflects the level of work achievement that can be objectively observed through aspects of efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and competitiveness in completing all job responsibilities (Wardaningtri et al., 2024). High-performing employees are not only able to complete tasks well, but also quickly adapt to change, provide creative solutions, and contribute significantly to creating a productive work climate (Dwiningtyas et al., 2025). Therefore, improving employee performance is always a top priority in organizations, especially in the public sector, which is directly oriented towards serving the wider community. Employee performance is certainly influenced by various supporting factors, one of the most essential of which is the implementation of a well-structured career development program (Wardaningtri et al., 2024).

Career development is a systematic effort to improve skills, broaden experience, and elevate employees within the organization's established career path. Well-managed career development provides ample opportunities for employees to develop professionally, thereby boosting work motivation and individual performance (Riyanti & Ira, 2025). Various targeted programs such as regular training, continuing education, and transparent job promotions have been empirically proven to encourage employees to improve their competencies while making optimal contributions to the institutions where they work (Firmansyah et al., 2024; Tarman et al., 2025).

To more objectively assess the state of discipline and *employee engagement* within an agency, one commonly used measurement tool is employee attendance summary data. Based on employee attendance summary data from the Palembang City Tourism Office in 2026, employee attendance and punctuality empirically have not yet achieved the optimal targets, as detailed in the summary table below.

Table 1. Summary of Employee Absence Indicators for the Palembang City Tourism Office in 2026

No	Indicator	January 2026		February 2026		March 2026	
		Target	Realization	Target	Realization	Target	Realization
1	Attendance Rate	100%	95%	100%	92%	100%	90%
2	Punctuality Level	95%	85%	95%	80%	95%	82%
3	Attendance Compliance Level	85%	90%	85%	88%	85%	89%

Source: Palembang City Tourism Office, 2026

Based on the empirical data presented in Table 1 above, it is clear that employee attendance at the Palembang City Tourism Office tends to decline from month to month, while punctuality has never reached the agency's target. This finding clearly indicates a gap in problems closely related to work discipline and suboptimal *employee engagement* in the field. This low emotional engagement has the potential to reduce work focus, loyalty, and the quality of civil servant task completion (Trisninawati et al., 2025).

Initial observations conducted at the Palembang City Tourism Office also reinforced the finding that job promotion mechanisms tend to be rigidly based solely on formal education and administrative requirements. While this aligns with applicable personnel regulations, this often creates a perception among employees that career development opportunities are very limited for some. This limited perception directly impacts employee psychology, lowering motivation and eroding *employee engagement* in carrying out organizational tasks (Alfira Nuril Badriana Ningrum Mujianto, Maryadi, n.d.; Lina Dimayanti, Askiah, 2025). However, employees with high *employee engagement* have been shown to demonstrate significantly greater dedication, work ethic, loyalty, and

responsibility in completing each task (Ahmad Fairuz Abadi, 2020; Muhamad Rifal Firdaus, 2025).

Career development has a very close correlation with the formation of positive *Employee Engagement* within government agencies. Opportunities for development through promotions, training, and fair competency development can foster a sense of appreciation, thereby strengthening employees' psychological attachment to the organization where they serve (Tiong et al., 2023). Employees who receive full support for their career development tend to have high organizational commitment, which in turn boosts their overall engagement. This is confirmed by previous research findings that stated that well-designed career development can significantly increase *employee Engagement because employees feel their aspirations and contributions are recognized by the agency (Afridhamita & Suryono Efendi, 2020).*

In practice, career development at the Palembang City Tourism Office still relies heavily on the availability of rigid formations and programs from regional personnel agencies, resulting in these opportunities not being enjoyed equally by all employees without exception. This situation negatively impacts the suboptimal active participation, independent initiative, and involvement of employees in supporting the major targets of regional tourism programs. This empirical finding aligns with research findings demonstrating that career development has a positive and significant impact on employee performance, both directly and through the placement of *Employee Engagement as an intervening or mediating* variable that bridges the relationship between the two (Kosali et al., 2023; Majene et al., 2025).

The Palembang City Tourism Office plays a crucial and strategic role in supporting regional development through the promotion of leading destinations, development of the creative economy sector, preservation of local cultural traditions, organizing tourism events, and improving the quality of services to the wider community. This agency bears a significant responsibility in strengthening the regional tourism *brand through the Wonderful Palembang concept* , which is rooted in the rich history and unique local cuisine. Carrying out this complex and highly innovative task absolutely requires the support of professional staff with strong *employee engagement* to ensure the successful achievement of all strategic organizational goals. A clear and transparent career path is key to maintaining employee motivation.

Previous scientific literature consistently confirms that career development has a significant positive impact on improving employee performance by strengthening competencies and boosting intrinsic work motivation (Darajatun et al., 2022; Putra & Sukono, 2023; Riyanti & Ira, 2025; Tarman et al., 2025; Yolinza, 2023). Further research also shows that career development and *employee engagement* simultaneously have a strong, simultaneous impact on boosting the work productivity of public sector employees (Astuti et al., 2023). Furthermore, high levels of work engagement have been shown to increase a sense of responsibility and sustained operational commitment (Deky et al., 2025; Muhamad Rifal Firdaus, 2025; Putu Aditya Parodya & Nengah Landra, 2022; Teting & Karhab, 2025), with employees with strong *engagement* consistently displaying enthusiasm, creativity, and a deep focus on accomplishing the organization's mission (Trisninawati et al., 2025). However, a review of previous research findings still reveals inconsistent findings (*research gaps*), with some studies reporting an insignificant effect of career development on performance in certain public sector organizations. This discrepancy in empirical findings opens up a broad academic space to reexamine the important role of *Employee Engagement* as a mediating variable believed to significantly strengthen the influence of career development on employee performance (Trisninawati et al., 2025).

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METHOD

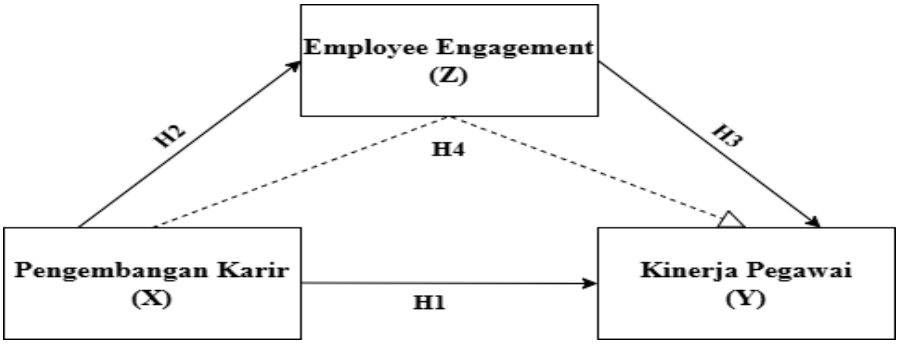


Figure 1. Framework of Thought

This research uses a causal associative quantitative approach and was conducted at the Palembang City Tourism Office from April to June involving 51 samples of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) selected through *purposive sampling techniques* , where primary data were collected directly using observation and Likert-scale questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from documents and supporting literature. The variables studied include career development as an independent variable, employee performance as a dependent variable, and *employee engagement* as a mediating or *intervening variable* . All research instruments were tested for quality through validity and reliability tests, before being analyzed comprehensively using the *Partial Least Square* -based *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM-PLS) method with SmartPLS 4 software. The data analysis stages include evaluating *the outer model* to ensure the fulfillment of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability, followed by evaluating *the inner model* through observing the R2 , f2 , and Q2 values . Hypothesis testing was carried out through a *bootstrapping procedure* based on a t-statistic value of 1.96 and an alpha significance level of 5% ($p < 0.05$) to accurately explain the direct and indirect influences between latent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at the Palembang City Tourism Office, involving 51 respondents with Civil Servant (ASN) status selected using a saturated sampling technique. Based on demographic characteristics, the majority of respondents were in the productive age range of 26 to 35 years (27%), with a relatively balanced gender composition between men (51%) and women (49%), and dominated by employees with a work period of 1 to 3 years (39%). These characteristics indicate that most of the apparatus are in an active career development stage, have adequate work experience, and are ready to support increased agency productivity.

The results of descriptive analysis of respondents' answers show that the career development variable obtained an overall average value of 3.35 in the fairly good category, where the periodic training aspect recorded the highest score while the effectiveness of training on improving skills still requires strengthening. The *employee engagement variable* recorded an overall average of 3.65 in the good

category, with the indicator of strong attachment to work occupying the highest score. Meanwhile, the employee performance variable obtained an average value of 3.39 which is classified as quite good, where the ability to manage workload effectively is the highest point, while the aspect of timeliness of task completion still requires further attention.

The instrument testing stage continued with the evaluation of the measurement model (*outer model*) using SmartPLS 4 software to ensure that all research indicators met the validity and reliability criteria. This evaluation included convergent validity testing through *factor loading values* and *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE), discriminant validity through *cross loading* and the Fornell-Larcker criteria, and construct reliability measured based on *Cronbach's Alpha* and *Composite Reliability values* . Meeting the applicable rule of thumb standards, all indicators were proven valid and reliable to represent latent variables, so that the measurement model was declared feasible and could proceed to the structural model testing stage (*inner model*) and research hypothesis testing.

Results of Measurement Model Analysis (*Outer Model*)

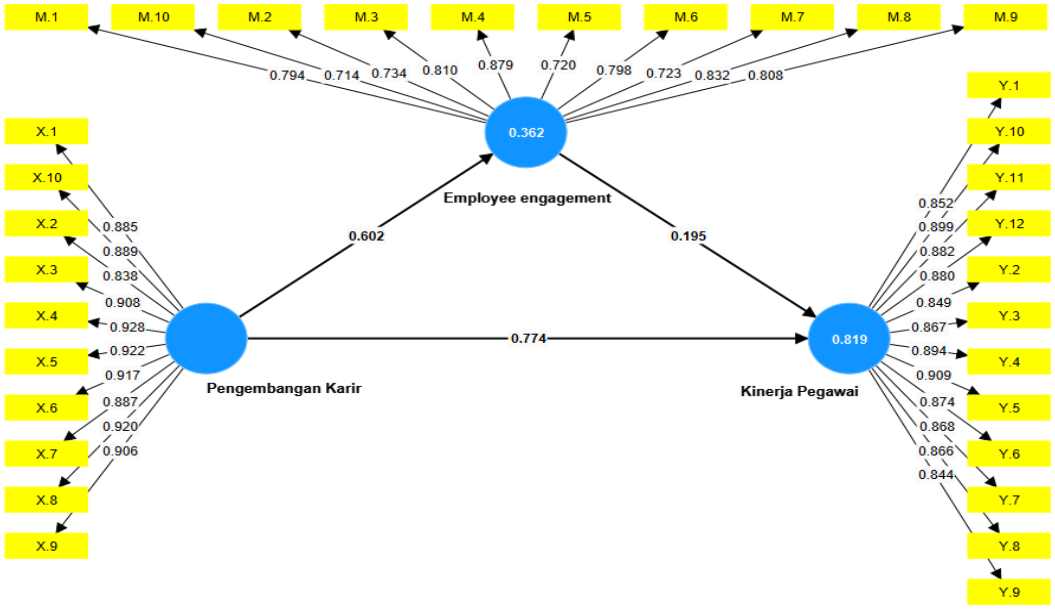


Figure 2. Outer Model

Outer model testing through *outer loading* shows that all indicators in the Career Development, *Employee Engagement* , and Employee Performance variables have values above 0.70 so they are declared valid and suitable for use. Based on the evaluation of *construct reliability and validity* , *the Cronbach's Alpha* , *rho_A* , and *Composite Reliability values* for all constructs are above 0.70, with *the Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) value exceeding the minimum limit of 0.50 (ranging from 0.613 to 0.810). These results confirm that the research instrument has a very good level of reliability and is able to optimally explain the indicator variance to proceed to the structural testing stage.

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Discriminant validity testing evaluated through *cross loading* shows that all indicators have the highest loading value on the construct they measure compared to other constructs. Although testing with the *Fornell-Larcker criteria* shows a square root value of AVE Employee Performance (0.874) which is slightly smaller than its correlation with Career Development (0.892) indicating conceptual closeness, additional analysis using *the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio* (HTMT) shows a value of 0.914 for the relationship between the two variables and is below the reasonable limit for other relationships. This condition indicates a high construct closeness between Career Development and Employee Performance, so that interpretation of the relationship between the two needs to be done carefully as part of the study's limitations.

Structural Model Evaluation (*Inner Model*)

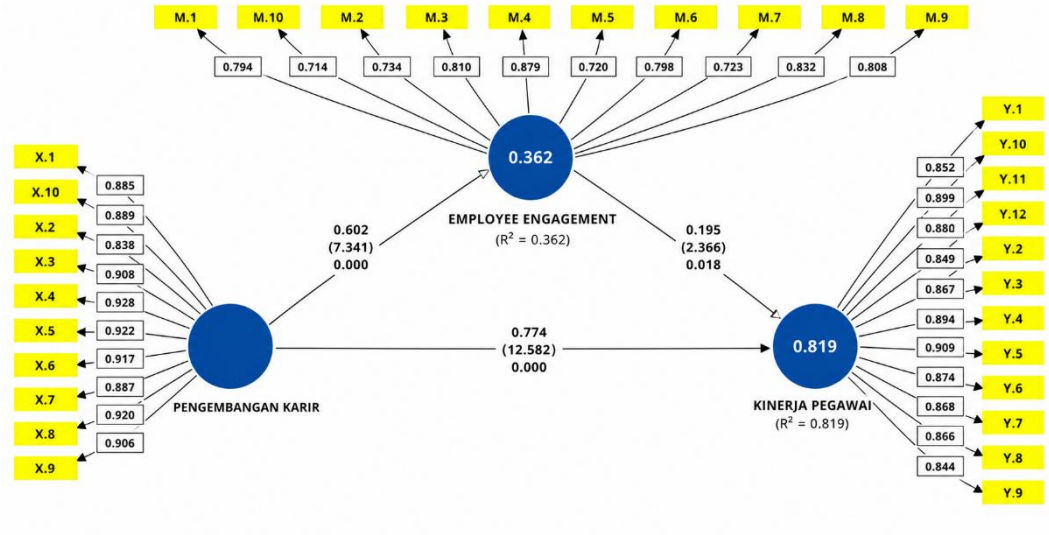


Figure 2. Inner Model

The evaluation of the structural model (*inner model*) aims to measure the direction, strength of influence, and the ability of exogenous variables to explain variations in endogenous variables. Based on the results of the analysis using SmartPLS 4, the first stage of testing was carried out using the *R-Square* (R2) value to determine the magnitude of the determination of the independent variables on the dependent and intervening variables. Based on the criteria of Hair et al. (2022), an *R-Square value* of 0.75 is categorized as strong, 0.50 as moderate, and 0.25 as weak. The *Employee Engagement variable obtained an R-Square* value of 0.362 (Adjusted 0.349) which is in the moderate category, indicating that Career Development is able to explain variations in *Employee Engagement* by 36.2%, while the remaining 63.8% is explained by other variables outside the model. The Employee Performance variable recorded an *R-Square value* of 0.819 (Adjusted 0.812) in the strong category, which means that the variation in Employee Performance can be explained by 81.9% by Career Development and *Employee Engagement* , while 18.1% is influenced by other factors.

Table 2. *R-Square0* Results

Endogenous Variables	R-Square (R2)	R-Square Adjusted	Category
Employee Engagement	0.362	0.349	Moderate
Employee Performance	0.819	0.812	Strong

Effect Size (f^2) analysis to determine the magnitude of the substantive influence of an exogenous variable on the endogenous variable, with criteria of 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large). The Career Development variable has a large influence on *Employee Engagement* ($ f 2 = 0.568 $) and a very large influence on Employee Performance ($f^2 = 2.115$), dominating the model contribution. On the other hand, *Employee Engagement* has a small influence on Employee Performance ($f^2 = 0.134$). Furthermore, the *Predictive Relevance* (Q^2) test shows a $Q^{2\ value}$ for *Employee Engagement* of 0.209 and Employee Performance of 0.618. Because all *Q 2 values* are above 0, the model is proven to have good *predictive relevance* to the observed data.

Table 3. Analysis of *Effect Size* (f^2) and *Predictive Relevance* (Q^2)

Relationship of Variables / Endogenous Variables	Effect Size (f2)	Category	Predictive Relevance (Q2)
Career Development →Employee Engagement	0.568	Big	0.209
Employee Performance Career Development→	2,115	Very large	0.618
Employee Engagement →Employee Performance	0.134	Small	-

Hypothesis testing was conducted using *bootstrapping techniques* with the criteria of *t-statistics* > 1.96 and *p-value* < 0.05 to indicate a significant effect. Based on path *coefficient analysis* , all direct effect tests showed significant results. Career Development had a positive and significant effect on *Employee Engagement* (β= 0.602; t = 7.341; p = 0.000) and Employee Performance (β= 0.774; t = 12.582; p = 0.000). Similarly, *Employee Engagement* had a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (β= 0.195; t = 2.366; p = 0.018). Meanwhile, the *Specific Indirect Effect analysis* proved that Career Development had a significant indirect effect on Employee Performance through *Employee Engagement.* (β = 0.117; t = 2.336; p = 0.020), which indicates a partial mediation *role.*

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Table 4. Testing the Hypothesis of Direct and Indirect Effects

Path of Influence / Relationship of Variables	**Original Sample (β)**	**T Statistics**	**P Values**	**Information**
Career Development →Employee Engagement	0.602	7,341	0,000	Significant
Employee Performance Career Development→	0.774	12,582	0,000	Significant
Employee Engagement →Employee Performance	0.195	2,366	0.018	Significant
Career Development -> *Employee Engagement* -> Employee Performance	0.117	2,336	0.020	Partial Mediation

Based on the entire series of statistical tests on the structural model, all hypotheses proposed in this study were declared accepted. This is confirmed by the *t-statistic value* exceeding the critical limit of 1.96 and the *p-value* below 0.05 in each relationship path between variables. These findings confirm that the implementation of an optimal career development program is not only able to directly increase employee engagement , but also becomes a key instrument in boosting employee performance levels, where work engagement serves to effectively strengthen these structural relationships within the organization.

Table 5. Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	**Description**	**Results**
H_1	Career development has a positive and significant impact on employee performance	Accepted
H_2	Career development has a positive and significant impact on *employee engagement*	Accepted
H_3	*Employee Engagement* has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.	Accepted
H_4	*Employee Engagement* mediates the influence of career development on employee performance in a positive and significant way.	Accepted (Persian Mediation)

1. The Impact of Career Development on Employee Performance

Based on the results of hypothesis testing using SmartPLS, it is known that Career Development has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at the Palembang City Tourism Office with an original sample value of 0.774, t-statistics of 12.582, and p-value of 0.000, so that H1 is accepted. This finding is in line with the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) which explains that reciprocity

is realized when an organization provides support in the form of career development opportunities, so that employees respond by improving the quality and productivity of work. This condition is also reflected empirically in the Palembang City Tourism Office, where the existence of promotion opportunities, increased compensation, career planning, and job satisfaction encourage employees to demonstrate higher achievements, effectiveness, and responsibility in completing organizational tasks.

The results of this study align with the findings of Darajatun et al. (2022) and Putra and Sukono (2023) who stated that career development has a positive effect on employee performance. This finding is also supported by Kosali et al. (2023) who proved that career development has a positive and significant impact on employee performance both directly and through the mediation of employee engagement, and is supported by Yolinza (2023). Although there are differences with the research of Tarman et al. (2025) who recorded insignificant results due to variations in the characteristics of the object and the agency system, the consistency of the various literatures strengthens the conclusion that career development is a fundamental factor capable of driving improved employee performance at the Palembang City Tourism Office.

2. The Impact of Career Development on Employee Engagement

Based on the results of the SmartPLS test, it is known that Career Development has a positive and significant effect on Employee Engagement at the Palembang City Tourism Office with an original sample value of 0.602, t-statistics of 7.341, and p-value of 0.000, so that H2 is accepted. This shows that the better and fairer the career development system implemented by the agency, the higher the level of work engagement felt by employees. This relationship is strengthened by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), where attention and self-development facilities from the organization are perceived by employees as a form of appreciation, which is then developed through a sense of belonging, work enthusiasm, and deep commitment to the tasks carried out in the agency.

The findings of this study align with studies conducted by Kosali et al. (2023) and Tiong et al. (2023), which confirmed that adequate career development opportunities consistently foster strong emotional and psychological engagement in employees. When organizations provide clear career paths and opportunities for competency development, employees feel valued and encouraged to fully engage in their work activities. Therefore, career development has proven to be a crucial determinant in building and maintaining strong employee engagement within the Palembang City Tourism Office.

3. The Influence of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance

Based on the results of hypothesis testing using SmartPLS, it is known that Employee Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at the Palembang City Tourism Office with an original sample value of 0.195, t-statistics of 2.366, and p-value of 0.018, so that H3 is accepted. This shows that the higher the level of employee engagement, the higher the resulting performance, which can be described through three main dimensions, namely vigor (high enthusiasm and energy), dedication (pride and commitment), and absorption (full concentration in work) (Deky et al., 2025). Through the principle of reciprocity

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in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), employees who have strong engagement will dedicate their best efforts to achieve organizational targets as a form of positive contribution to a conducive work environment.

The results of this study align with the findings of Astuti et al. (2023), who demonstrated that high employee engagement consistently boosts employee morale, loyalty, and productivity. These findings are also supported by Afridhamita and Suryono Efendi (2020) and Deky et al. (2025), who demonstrated that employee engagement significantly contributes to achieving optimal performance. Furthermore, the findings of Kosali et al. (2023) and Tiong et al. (2023) further strengthen the empirical evidence that employees who are actively and deeply engaged consistently demonstrate better work quality, punctuality, and responsibility in carrying out agency duties.

4. The Effect of Employee Engagement on Career Development and Employee Performance

Based on the results of the Specific Indirect Effect analysis using SmartPLS, it is known that Employee Engagement is able to mediate the influence of Career Development on Employee Performance at the Palembang City Tourism Office with an original sample value of 0.117, t-statistics of 2.336, and p-value of 0.020, so that H4 is accepted. This mediation role is categorized as partial mediation because the direct influence of career development on performance remains significant, where the existence of employee engagement functions as a psychological mechanism that strengthens the relationship. Based on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), promotional opportunities, career planning, and fair compensation foster emotional bonds between employees, which in turn encourages improvements in the quality and effectiveness of overall performance (Tiong et al., 2023).

The findings of this study are consistent with the results of a study by Kosali et al. (2023), which showed that employee engagement effectively mediates the influence of career development on improving employee performance. This is reinforced by research by Tiong et al. (2023), which states that work engagement is a crucial bridge for organizational support in the form of career development to optimally transform into employee productivity. Therefore, it can be concluded that career development not only directly impacts employee achievement at the Palembang City Tourism Office but also successfully boosts performance by creating a stronger level of employee engagement.

CONCLUSION

1. The career development implemented at the Palembang City Tourism Office has been proven to improve employee performance. The better the career development opportunities provided by the organization, the more optimal the employee's performance. This career development can be achieved through fair and transparent promotion opportunities, training tailored to job requirements, opportunities to develop competencies, clear career planning, and guidance from superiors regarding employee career development.

2. Career development can also increase employee engagement. Opportunities for growth, promotions, training, and competency development make employees feel more engaged and have a stronger commitment to the organization.
3. Employee engagement is one of the factors that drives improved employee performance. Employees who are passionate, dedicated, and engaged in their work tend to perform better in carrying out their duties.
4. Employee engagement acts as a bridge that strengthens the relationship between career development and employee performance. Thus, improved employee performance is influenced not only by direct career development but also by increased employee engagement with the organization.

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