

THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT AND TALENT MANAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE WITH EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT AS A MEDIATOR

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Abstract: Optimal performance is essential for achieving company targets. This study examines the influence of employee competency development and talent management on employee performance, with employee engagement as a mediating variable at PG Kebon Agung. In an era of dynamic business competition, organizations must strategically optimize human resources to gain a competitive edge. Employing a quantitative approach with a survey method, data were collected via questionnaires from 125 employees and analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that both employee competency development and talent management have a positive and significant effect on employee engagement and performance. Furthermore, employee engagement significantly mediates the relationship between competency development, talent management, and performance. These findings highlight the strategic role of engagement as a bridge connecting HR development initiatives with optimal performance outcomes. Practically, the study recommends organizations to systematically invest in structured competency development and integrated talent management programs to enhance engagement and sustain high performance. Theoretically, this research strengthens the HR management literature by confirming employee engagement as a critical mediating factor, providing empirical evidence of its role in linking HR strategies to improved organizational performance.

Keywords: Employee Competence, Talent Management, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance

1. Introduction

Increasingly fierce business competition in Indonesia demands that companies optimize the potential of their human resources (HR) as a strategic step in achieving the organization's core values and long-term direction. Employee performance is a key indicator of a company's success because it influences the achievement of established targets (Harmen, 2018). This performance encompasses the quality and quantity of individual work aligned with organizational responsibilities and goals (Arfandi & Muryati, 2024). Therefore, measuring performance through aspects of quality, quantity, timeliness, and teamwork is crucial for identifying areas for development (Setiawan, 2021). Detailed HR reporting will help companies provide constructive feedback and design competency development programs that can increase productivity and work efficiency (Bing-Jonsson et al., 2023).

Inaccurate performance management has the potential to degrade employee performance. Effective performance management is a continuous process encompassing goal setting, progress assessment, and providing guidance and feedback (Suci et al., 2022). In this regard, employee competency development is a strategic step that not only impacts technical skills but also creative and adaptive thinking abilities (Ateke & Nwulu, 2018); (Khan et al., 2023). Superior competency has been shown to contribute to increased employee engagement and maximized performance results (Salsabila & Lo, 2023); (Boli et al., 2023).

Previous research shows that employee engagement has a significant positive relationship with performance (Abdullahi et al., 2022); (Santoso et al., 2022); (Hakro et al., 2022); (Magdalena et al., 2022). High engagement encourages active participation in work, thereby increasing productivity and loyalty. However, (Tewfik et al., 2023) found a different finding, indicating a negative impact of engagement on performance. This discrepancy in results indicates the need for contextual research, particularly in the sugar industry, such as at PG Kebon Agung, where the mediating factor of employee engagement can influence the relationship between competency development and talent management on performance.

Talent management is a corporate strategy to retain high-performing employees by creating an ecosystem that supports individual growth and performance improvement (Parmenas, 2021). This strategy includes leadership regeneration planning, capability development, and optimization of individual strengths (Purba et al., 2023). Research by (Ismail et al., 2021) and (Sabbatho et al., 2020), demonstrates that talent management significantly impacts employee emotional engagement and commitment. Research by (Divya Malika & Aminuddin Irfani, 2022) and Abdullahi et al. (2022) confirms that talent management is a catalyst for increasing productivity and work effectiveness. However, at PG Kebon Agung, the talent selection, development, and retention processes have not been implemented consistently, thus decreasing employee motivation and loyalty.

Table 1 Employee Performance at the Kebon Agung Sugar Factory

Aspect	Problems Faced	Impact on Employee Performance	Survey Data/Employee Percentage	Influence Level (%)
Employee competency development	Suboptimal, not strategically designed, irrelevant training	Not evolving with the ever-changing demands of the job	60% of employees feel training is irrelevant	60
Talent management	Talent selection, development and retention processes are not consistent and structured.	Employees feel underappreciated, lose motivation to develop	45% of employees feel talent development is unfair	45
Employee engagement	Low levels of employee engagement, minimal recognition and career development support	Decreased productivity, innovation, and loyalty, and increased turnover	35% of employees feel involved in company decisions	35
Employee Performance (Productivity, Innovation, Loyalty)	Decreased productivity, limited innovation, low employee loyalty	Decreased productivity (25%), decreased innovation (20%), decreased loyalty (15%)	Productivity decreased by 25%, innovation decreased by 20%, loyalty decreased by 15%	25

Source: PG Kebon Agung Sugar Factory (2025)

Internal data from PG Kebon Agung shows a performance gap between management targets and actual achievements across divisions. About 60% of employees believe training programs are irrelevant to job needs, 45% feel that talent development is unfair, and only 35% feel

involved in decision-making. These conditions have resulted in decreased productivity (25%), innovation (20%), and loyalty (15%). This indicates that both competency development and talent management have not been effectively optimized to increase employee engagement, which plays a critical role in driving superior performance. This forms the basis for the present study entitled “The Effect of Employee Competency Development and Talent Management on Employee Performance Mediated by Employee Engagement at PG Kebon Agung, Malang Regency.”

2. Literature Review

Employee Competency Development (X1)

Employee competency development is the process of improving knowledge, skills, and work attitudes to support the achievement of organizational goals. Competencies encompass technical and psychological aspects such as self-confidence and motivation (McClelland, 1988), as well as interpersonal skills that support teamwork and effective communication (Boyatzis, 2008).

Talent Management (X2)

Talent management is a strategic approach that is very important in achieving organizational goals by attracting and retaining talented individuals. The process of talent management encompasses talent planning, recruitment, and development, all of which synergistically work to improve organizational performance (Alexandrovna et al., 2020).

Employee Performance (Y)

Employee performance refers to the extent to which an employee can fulfill their assigned tasks and responsibilities effectively and efficiently. According to (Mathis & Jackson, 2011), performance is the result of observable behavior reflected in the achievement of organizational goals.

Employee Engagement (Z)

Employee engagement refers to the level of involvement, commitment, and passion employees have for their work and the organization they work for. According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement is the extent to which an individual immerses themselves in their work, encompassing physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement in the tasks they perform. Engaged employees feel valued and connected to the company's goals, so they tend to be more productive and exhibit higher retention rates.

3. Method

This research is grounded in a positivistic paradigm that focuses on objectively testing causal relationships between variables through an established theoretical framework (Cresswell, 2019). Using a quantitative approach, this study standardized variable measurements using a questionnaire instrument, allowing data to be systematically statistically analyzed to develop and test hypotheses.

The research used explanatory research, aiming to uncover causal relationships between variables in the context of permanent employees at the Kebon Agung Sugar Factory in Malang. The entire population, totaling 125, was sampled using a total sampling method, ensuring full representativeness of the respondents. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire specifically designed to elicit information related to the research variables, in accordance with the guidelines of (Cresswell, 2019).

Data analysis used the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with SmartPLS 3, which allows for simultaneous testing of structural and measurement models. The results of the analysis provide

an empirical picture of the significance and direction of the relationships between variables, thus answering the research question of how the independent variables influence the dependent variable. Interpretation of the findings shows that the relationships tested are consistent with the theory used, while providing practical contributions to human resource management in the sugar industry environment.

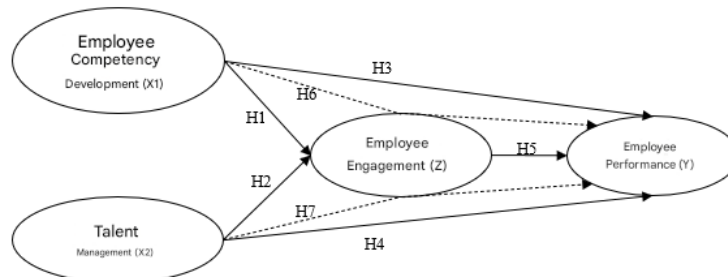


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Research (2025)

Information:

- Direct relationship
 - - - -> Indirect relationship (mediation)

Hypothesis:

- H1 : Employee competency development has a significant positive effect on employee engagement.
 H2 : Talent management has a significant positive effect on employee engagement.
 H3 : Employee competency development has a significant positive effect on employee performance.
 H4 : Talent management has a significant positive effect on employee performance.
 H5 : Employee engagement has a significant positive effect on employee performance.
 H6 : Employee competency development has a significant positive effect on employee performance mediated by employee involvement.
 H7 : Talent management has a significant positive effect on employee performance mediated by employee involvement

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

Information in this study regarding respondent characteristics includes: 1) Gender, 2) Age, 3) Last Education, and 4) Length of Service.

Table 1. Characteristics Based on Gender

No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Man	89	71%
2	Woman	36	29%
Total		125	100%

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

According to the table above, of the 125 respondents registered as employees at the Kebon Agung Sugar Factory, it can be concluded that the majority of employees are male, representing 71%, or 89 employees, of the total respondents recorded. The remaining 29%, or 36 employees, are female. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of employees at the Kebon Agung Sugar Factory are male, representing 71%.

Table 2. Characteristics Based on Age

No	Age	Amount	Percentage
1	25 - 30 years	36	29%
2	31 - 35 years old	33	26%
3	36 - 40 years old	16	13%
4	41 - 45 years old	14	11%
5	46 - 50 years	13	10%
6	51 - 55 years old	13	10%
Total		125	100%

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

The majority of Kebon Agung Sugar Factory employees are of young, productive age, with the largest group being 36 (29%) aged 25–30, followed by 33 (26%) aged 31–35. Overall, 55% of employees are under 35. 16 (13%) are aged 36–40, 14 (11%) are aged 41–45, and 13 (10%) are aged 46–50 and 51–55. This composition demonstrates the dominance of the younger generation and early adults, who are at the peak of their productivity and have significant potential to be developed to improve the company's performance.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics Based on Last Education

No.	Last education	Frequency	Percentage
1	Junior High School	13	10%
2	High School/Vocational School	17	14%
3	Diploma	36	29%
4	Bachelor's Degree	43	34%
5	Master's Degree	16	13%
Total		Total	125

Source: Processed data (2025)

The majority of Kebon Agung Sugar Factory employees have higher education, with the largest number of undergraduate graduates (43 people/34%), followed by diploma graduates (36 people/29%), making up 63% of employees with at least a diploma. Sixteen (13%) have master's degree degrees, 17 (14%) have high school/vocational school degrees, and 13 (10%) have junior high school degrees. This data demonstrates the company's human resources possess high educational quality, supporting operational efficiency, innovation, and professionalism.

Table 4. Respondent Characteristics Based on Length of Service

No.	Years of service	Frequency	Percentage
1	15 years	41	33%
2	6 - 10 years	28	22%
3	11 - 15 years	19	15%
4	16 - 20 years	18	14%
5	> 20 years	19	15%
Total		125	100%

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

The majority of Kebon Agung Sugar Factory employees have relatively new work experience, with 41 people (33%) having 1–5 years of experience and 28 people (22%) having 6–10 years,

so that 55% of employees have work experience under 10 years. The remaining consists of 19 people (15%) with 11–15 years of work experience, 18 people (14%) with 16–20 years, and 19 people (15%) with more than 20 years. This composition shows a balance between new and senior employees, which has the potential to encourage regeneration as well as knowledge transfer.

A set of metrics known as Cronbach's Alpha is used to gauge a variable's degree of composite performance if its alpha coefficient value is more than 0.60. According to (Cresswell, 2019), a variable is deemed to have strong composite performance if its composite score is higher than 0.70. Additionally, a calculated average variance of greater than 0.50 indicates the true range variable or potential variation of a latent idea. This table displays the findings from the Cronbach's alpha test, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Obtained:

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (ρ_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Employee Competency Development	0.853	0.911	0.772
Employee Engagement	0.760	0.863	0.678
Employee performance	0.831	0.899	0.747
Talent Management	0.768	0.851	0.589

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

Based on the results in the table, all research variables have an AVE value above 0.5, namely employee competency development (X1) of 0.772, talent management (X2) of 0.589, employee engagement (Z) of 0.678, and employee performance (Y) of 0.747. This indicates that all variables meet the criteria for discriminant validity. The composite reliability value of all variables is also >0.7 , with details of employee competency development (X1) = 0.911, talent management (X2) = 0.851, employee engagement (Z) = 0.863, and employee performance (Y) = 0.899, which indicates high reliability. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha value of all variables is >0.7 , so it can be concluded that all variables have a very good level of reliability.

The degree to which an exogenous construct can explain an endogenous construct is measured by the coefficient of determination.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

	<i>R Square</i>	<i>R Square Adjusted</i>
Employee Engagement	0.520	0.513
Employee performance	0.635	0.626

Source: Processed data (2025)

According to the data measurements in the table above, it is shown that the R-square (R^2) value for the employee engagement variable is 0.520, which indicates that employee competency development and talent management can explain 52% of the variation in employee engagement variables. Meanwhile, the R-square (R^2) value for the employee performance variable is 0.635, which indicates that employee competency development, talent management and employee engagement tested in this study can explain 63.5% of the variation in employee performance.

Table 7. Summary of Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Path (Track)	T statistics	P values	Conclusion
H1	Employee Competency Development → Employee Engagement	6,995	0,000	Acceptable
H2	Talent Management → Employee Engagement	3,279	0.001	Acceptable
H3	Employee Competency Development → Employee Performance	4,428	0,000	Acceptable
H4	Talent Management → Employee Performance	2,980	0.003	Acceptable
H5	Employee Engagement → Employee Performance	2,786	0.006	Acceptable
H6	Employee Competency Development → Employee Engagement → Employee Performance	2,489	0.013	Acceptable
H7	Talent Management → Employee Engagement → Employee Performance	1,976	0.049	Acceptable

Source: Processed primary data (2025)

4.2 Discussion:

4.2.1 Employee Competency Development Impact on Employee Engagement

The results of the study indicate that employee competency development significantly impacts work engagement at the Kebon Agung Sugar Factory. The competency development program, which encompasses professional, personal, and social aspects, is able to increase employee enthusiasm, appreciation, motivation, and loyalty, in accordance with Human Capital theory. The majority of respondents were permanent employees with more than five years of experience, thus directly experiencing the program's positive impact. This finding aligns with previous research (Shokhibul Lutfi et al., 2024); (Salsabila & Lo, 2023), which confirms that competency improvement significantly boosts employee engagement and performance.

4.2.2 Talent Management Impact on Employee Engagement

The results of the study indicate that talent management has a significant impact on employee engagement. Practices such as transparent recruitment, systematic training, and career development programs can improve the emotional and psychological harmony of employees within the organization, in line with the Resource-Based View (RBV) approach, which views talent as a unique company resource. At PG Kebon Agung, attention to talent development and retention makes employees feel valued, especially since most respondents are of productive age and adequately educated, making them responsive to talent management policies. This finding is consistent with research by (Hermawati et al., 2019), (Hakro et al., 2022), and (Ekhsan et al., 2023) which also found a positive relationship between talent management and employee engagement, where engagement increases with trust in a fair career development system and open promotion opportunities.

4.2.3 Employee Competency Development Affects Employee Performance

Based on the research results, employee competency development has a significant impact on employee performance. Employees with high competence tend to be more able to carry out their tasks efficiently, complete work on time, and demonstrate high initiative, all of which have a positive impact on performance. This is in accordance with the characteristics of respondents who have an appropriate educational background and long work experience that

allows them to apply the results of training and competency development to their work, thereby contributing significantly to improved performance. Conceptually, this influence can be explained through competency theory, which states that competence is a combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to achieve high work performance. Employee competency development at PG Kebon Agung includes strengthening in both technical and social aspects, thereby encouraging overall performance improvement. This research also supports the findings of (Hermawati et al., 2022), (Hasib et al., 2020), and (Salsabila & Lo, 2023), which concluded that employee competence directly influences performance. At PG Kebon Agung, employees who participate in relevant training and receive good coaching tend to have more optimal work results.

4.2.4 Talent Management Influence on Employee Performance

The analysis shows that talent management significantly impacts employee performance. Practices such as regular performance evaluations, merit-based promotions, and development training have been shown to improve employees' ability to achieve work targets. Within the framework of strategic HR management theory, effective talent management aligns individual and organizational goals, thereby motivating employees and increasing job responsibilities. This finding aligns with the characteristics of respondents, many of whom are permanent employees with long tenure, directly experiencing the benefits of a talent management system. These results support previous research (Ekhsan et al., 2023); (Manuaba et al., 2025) and demonstrate that at PG Kebon Agung, strengthening a fair and structured HR development system significantly improves employee productivity and effectiveness.

4.2.5 Employee Engagement Affects Employee Performance

The results of the study indicate that employee engagement significantly influences employee performance. Employees who are emotionally attached to their work and organization tend to demonstrate dedication, responsibility, and resilience in facing challenges. The majority of respondents have high levels of loyalty, reflected in their long tenure and permanent employee status, enabling them to provide deep engagement that impacts performance improvement. Based on Work Engagement Theory, work engagement fosters enthusiasm, passion, and high concentration. At PG Kebon Agung, high employee engagement contributes to optimal work quality and quantity. This finding aligns with research by (Abdullahi et al., 2022) and (Salsabila & Lo, 2023), which emphasizes that employee engagement is a key predictor of performance improvement and therefore requires strategic management by companies.

4.2.6 Employee Engagement Mediates Employee Competency Development and Influences Employee Performance

The research results show that employee engagement acts as a mediator in the relationship between employee competency development and employee performance. This means that increased competency not only directly impacts performance but also indirectly through increased employee engagement in work. Respondents, the majority of whom have worked for a long time and participated in various competency development programs, have consistent perceptions regarding increased engagement and performance, thus strengthening the mediating function of employee engagement. This finding aligns with human capital theory, which asserts that organizational investment in improving individual capabilities can strengthen value and competitiveness both directly and indirectly (Khan et al., 2023). Increased competency makes employees more effective, confident, and motivated in completing tasks (Thi Nhung, 2023). Employees who feel competent tend to be more actively engaged because they feel they have control over their work outcomes and are making a tangible contribution to organizational goals (Ishak et al., 2024). Previous research also confirmed that employee

engagement can mediate the influence of competency development on performance (Salsabila & Lo, 2023), including at PG Kebon Agung, where training and skills development have been shown to increase engagement and performance sustainably.

4.2.7 Employee Engagement Mediates Talent Management's Impact on Employee Performance

This research shows that employee engagement mediates the effect of talent management on employee performance. This means that good talent management first increases employee engagement, which subsequently positively impacts performance. This mediation process occurs because the company's focus on individual development, fair promotions, and transparent performance appraisals build employee trust and engagement. This engagement fosters enthusiasm and dedication to work, resulting in better performance. The majority of respondents are of productive age and hold stable positions, making them the primary targets of talent management policies and directly experiencing its benefits.

Theoretically, in human resource management, talent management is a strategic approach to identifying and developing high-potential employees while creating work systems that encourage long-term retention and engagement (Khalil, 2024). Based on the Resource-Based View (RBV), talent is a rare and strategic asset whose utilization is crucial, so effective management can create a competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate (Marhuri & Karneli, 2023). Meanwhile, work engagement theory explains that employees who feel valued, involved in decision-making, and receive development opportunities tend to demonstrate dedication and work behaviors that exceed expectations (Wahdiniawati et al., 2024).

These results are consistent with the findings of (Ekhsan et al., 2023), (Hakro et al., 2022), and (Lestari & Waskito, 2025), which demonstrated that employee engagement is a significant mediating variable between talent management and performance. In the context of Kebon Agung Sugar Factory, an effective talent management strategy has a significant impact through increased work engagement, which in turn increases employee productivity and loyalty.

5. Conclusions

The research has conclusions regarding the influence employee competency development and talent management on employee performance with employee engagement as mediation, as follows:

1. Employee competency development has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. At PG Kebon Agung, employees who receive adequate training and development tend to be more active and enthusiastic in carrying out their duties.
2. Talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. When employees' potential is recognized and properly managed, they feel more valued and become more engaged in their work.
3. Employee competency development has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Employees equipped with the appropriate skills are able to work more effectively and productively in the field.
4. Talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Assigning employees based on their potential and capabilities has been proven to enhance their work outcomes at PG Kebon Agung.
5. Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Employees who feel emotionally connected to their work demonstrate higher levels of performance and loyalty.

6. Employee engagement positively and significantly mediates the effect of employee competency development on employee performance. Competency development will yield optimal performance results when employees also feel engaged in their work processes.
7. Employee engagement positively and significantly mediates the effect of talent management on employee performance. Well-managed talent, combined with high engagement, can effectively drive optimal employee performance

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