

The Mediating Effect of Work Engagement on the Influence of Career Development on Organizational Citizenship Behavior at the Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency of Western Seram Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between career development and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) at the Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency of West Seram Regency. Using a quantitative, explanatory research design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using multiple regression and Sobel mediation tests. The results show that career development significantly improves OCB, and this effect becomes stronger when work engagement acts as a mediator. Employees who experience clear career pathways, competency-based development, and fair promotion systems tend to exhibit higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption, which in turn encourage voluntary behaviors beyond formal job roles. The findings also indicate that work engagement plays a substantial role in shaping positive employee behavior, serving as a psychological link between career development policies and OCB. The study highlights the importance of aligning career development initiatives with engagement strategies to enhance organizational performance in the public sector.

Keywords

career development,
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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has increasingly been recognized as a crucial factor in enhancing organizational effectiveness, particularly in public institutions where formal job descriptions often fail to capture the full scope of performance needed. OCB includes voluntary actions such as helping colleagues, showing initiative, and supporting organizational goals. These behaviors support organizational functioning in ways that exceed formal expectations, making them especially important in government agencies facing complex administrative demands (Organ, 1997).

Career development is frequently identified as one of the strongest predictors of positive discretionary behaviors within organizations. When employees perceive that their workplace offers structured opportunities for advancement, skill-building, and long-term growth, they are more motivated to contribute beyond required tasks. Empirical evidence demonstrates that career development significantly enhances employees' willingness to engage in OCB (Alif, 2015). This relationship suggests that investment in human resource growth can cultivate positive behavioral outcomes.

However, the link between career development and OCB may be better understood through psychological mechanisms, particularly work engagement. Work engagement is defined as a positive and fulfilling state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engaged employees demonstrate higher energy, stronger emotional connection to their work, and deeper involvement with organizational goals, which may foster OCB.

Studies increasingly highlight that engagement mediates various employee behavior relationships, including those related to performance and extra-role behavior. Research has shown that engaged employees tend to exert more discretionary effort, such as helping colleagues and supporting organizational initiatives (Jufrizen et al., 2022). This suggests that engagement might serve as a bridge between developmental support and citizenship behavior.

Although Indryani & Ardana (2019) demonstrated that work engagement mediates the effect of career development on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in the hospitality industry, their findings may not fully generalize to the public sector context. Similarly, Farida (2020) reported consistent results in private organizational settings. However, studies examining these relationships within local government agencies, such as the Regional Civil Service and Human Resource Development Agency (BKPSDM) of South Buru Regency, remain limited. The operational environment, bureaucratic structures, and cultural context in public service institutions differ substantially from those in private or hospitality sectors, potentially affecting employees' engagement and OCB patterns.

This study is therefore necessary to address this research gap by investigating whether the mechanisms observed in prior studies hold true in a public sector setting, where hierarchical procedures, civil service regulations, and resource constraints may modify the relationships between career development, work engagement, and OCB. Additionally, the study can uncover context-specific nuances, such as challenges in motivating civil servants or implementing career development programs, that have not been captured in previous research, thereby strengthening the practical relevance of the findings for local government HR management.

A similar conclusion was reached by Farida (2021), who found that engagement partially mediates the relationship between career development and OCB in public service organizations. The study revealed that although career development directly impacts OCB, the effect becomes stronger when employees are engaged. This partial mediation suggests the presence of both direct and indirect influence mechanisms.

The theoretical foundation for these relationships can be rooted in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which proposes that employees reciprocate organizational support with positive attitudes and behaviors. Career development can be viewed as a form of

organizational investment, and employees tend to reciprocate by demonstrating behaviors beneficial to the organization, including OCB, particularly when they are highly engaged.

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory also explains how career development functions as a job resource capable of fostering engagement and improving behavioral outcomes. Job resources such as professional development opportunities enhance motivation and promote engagement, which in turn stimulates proactive and cooperative behaviors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Thus, the mediating role of engagement is theoretically justified.

In public sector environments such as the Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency of Western Seram Regency, career development initiatives may serve as a crucial strategy for motivating employees. Since public agencies often face bureaucratic constraints and limited incentives, promoting career development could help encourage voluntary behaviors that improve service quality.

Despite existing research, there is still a lack of studies investigating the mediating role of engagement in Indonesian local government contexts. Many prior studies focus on private organizations or different cultural settings, leaving a gap in understanding how these dynamics operate in regional public administration. This study attempts to address that gap.

The Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency of Western Seram Regency play a central role in managing human capital for government operations. Therefore, understanding factors that foster OCB among its employees is essential, especially as government performance increasingly demands adaptability, cooperation, and proactive behavior. The agency requires employees who are willing to contribute beyond their formal duties.

Identifying the mechanisms through which career development influences OCB has practical implications for organizational policy, especially in designing training, career pathing, and competency development strategies. If engagement mediates this relationship, then strengthening engagement could amplify the positive effects of career development programs.

Thus, the core purpose of this study is to examine whether work engagement mediates the relationship between career development and organizational citizenship behavior among employees at the Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency of Western Seram Regency. The findings are expected to enrich both theoretical understanding and practical efforts to enhance public sector performance through more strategic human resource development.

2. METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design aimed at analyzing causal relationships between variables. Quantitative methods are appropriate for hypothesis testing because they allow researchers to measure variables numerically and analyze statistical patterns objectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The explanatory design is used to determine whether career development influences organizational citizenship behavior directly or indirectly through work engagement as a mediating variable.

The study was conducted at the Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency of West Seram Regency, which manages civil service development and organizational performance. The population consisted of all 50 employees in the agency. Because the population size is relatively small, total sampling (census) was implemented, ensuring that every individual in the population was included in the study. Using total sampling increases the accuracy of parameter estimation and reduces sampling error (Sugiyono, 2019). This method is commonly applied in organizational studies with a limited number of respondents, allowing full representation of the population and enhancing the reliability of the findings.

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire consisting of four main components: career development, work engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and demographic information. All measurement items were adapted from established instruments and modified to fit the context of the public sector. Likert-scale items were used to assess respondents' perceptions because they are effective for capturing attitudes and behavioral tendencies (Taherdoost, 2019). Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test was conducted to ensure clarity and reliability of the items.

The data obtained were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with the partial least squares (PLS) technique. SEM-PLS is suitable for studies involving mediating variables and complex predictive models with relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2020). This analytical approach allows examination of both direct and indirect effects, making it ideal for testing the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between career development and OCB.

As part of the preliminary analysis, descriptive statistics were computed, and validity and reliability assessments were explicitly conducted according to PLS-SEM standards. Convergent validity was evaluated using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), ensuring that each construct adequately represents its indicators. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio to confirm that constructs are empirically distinct. Reliability was examined using both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to verify internal consistency of the constructs. These rigorous assessments strengthen the credibility and clarity of the PLS-SEM methodology applied in this study.

To ensure research quality, this study followed ethical principles in data collection and analysis. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to minimize response bias and encourage honest answers, consistent with ethical standards recommended in social science research (Babbie, 2021). The methodological approach adopted in this study is expected to yield reliable findings that contribute to understanding employee behavior in the public sector.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research findings

The analysis of the study began with an examination of the general patterns of the respondents' perceptions toward the three core variables measured. Early observations from the dataset revealed that employees tended to give relatively high assessments

regarding the availability of career development pathways. This tendency suggested that structured development opportunities were fairly visible across organizational units. Moreover, employees showed a consistent level of enthusiasm in completing the survey, indicating that the topic of career growth and engagement held substantial relevance to their daily work experiences. These initial insights were then strengthened through descriptive statistical analysis.

To provide a clearer overview of the data distribution, descriptive statistics were calculated for career development, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior. These descriptive indicators served as a foundation for further structural model examination by outlining central tendencies and variability in responses. The descriptive values are presented in the following table to illustrate the average conditions of each construct within the agency setting.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Career Development (X)	4.12	0.53	2.90	5.00
Work Engagement (M)	4.08	0.49	3.00	5.00
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Y)	4.21	0.51	3.10	5.00

The results in Table 1 indicate that the employees generally perceived positive conditions across all variables. The high mean values of the three constructs demonstrate that the internal environment supports psychological readiness for performance beyond formal requirements. Following this descriptive stage, the study proceeded to validate the measurement constructs. Reliability testing showed Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values above 0.90 for all variables, suggesting strong internal consistency. Additionally, validity testing indicated that all loading factors surpassed the recommended threshold.

After ensuring the suitability of the measurement model, the analysis continued with evaluating the structural relationships among variables. The first relationship examined was between career development and work engagement. The results demonstrated a coefficient of 0.612 with a t-value of 9.884, indicating a significant and substantial influence. This finding highlights that accessible career pathways strongly stimulate psychological enthusiasm, dedication, and involvement among employees within the agency.

Following this, another critical pathway (work engagement toward organizational citizenship behavior) was analyzed. A coefficient of 0.541 and a t-value of 8.112 confirmed a significant positive effect. This suggests that employees who are more engaged tend to voluntarily take on additional responsibilities, assist colleagues more frequently, and contribute positively to achieving team and agency goals. The influence of engagement is thus shown to be both behavioral and motivational.

Table 2. Path coefficients (SEM-PLS)

Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
X → M	0.612	9.884	0.000
M → Y	0.541	8.112	0.000
X → Y	0.237	2.914	0.004
X → M → Y (Indirect)	0.331	6.402	0.000

The results shown in Table 2 provide strong evidence that work engagement serves as an important mediator in the relationship between career development and OCB. Career development directly influences OCB with a coefficient of 0.237, while its indirect effect through engagement is higher at 0.331. Both effects are statistically significant, indicating that work engagement partially mediates the relationship between career development and OCB. This partial mediation suggests that, although career development has a direct impact on OCB, its effect is further strengthened when employees are actively engaged in their work. These findings align with Farida (2021), who also reported partial mediation in similar organizational contexts, highlighting the role of engagement as a mechanism that amplifies behavioral outcomes resulting from career development initiatives.

Further analysis revealed that the structural model produced R^2 values of 0.375 for work engagement and 0.624 for OCB. These statistics suggest that career development alone explains about one-third of the variation in engagement levels, whereas OCB is more strongly influenced by the combined effect of both career development and engagement. This indicates that the behavioral dimension of employees' motivation is strongly shaped by psychological energy, dedication, and absorption in work tasks.

In addition to determination coefficients, effect size analysis provided deeper insight into the magnitude of influence among the variables. Career development demonstrated a large effect size ($f^2 = 0.60$) on work engagement, reinforcing its role as a foundational driver of employee motivation. Work engagement also had a considerable impact on OCB with $f^2 = 0.45$, while the direct effect of career development on OCB, though statistically significant, was much smaller ($f^2 = 0.10$). This supports the conclusion that psychological factors dominate in shaping voluntary employee behavior.

Predictive relevance tests using the blindfolding method generated Q^2 values of 0.281 for engagement and 0.355 for OCB. In PLS-SEM, a Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance, meaning it can accurately predict the endogenous constructs for observations not included in the model estimation. Because both Q^2 values are positive, this demonstrates that the model possesses meaningful predictive power. Therefore, the variables not only show statistically significant relationships but also have the ability to predict outcomes in similar organizational contexts, strengthening the applicability of the model for public-sector HR development.

The bootstrapping procedure further reinforced the robustness of the mediation effect. All indirect pathways were statistically significant at the 0.001 level. This means career development produces a dual mechanism of influence—directly shaping employee behavior and indirectly enhancing OCB by stimulating emotional and cognitive connection to work roles. These combined pathways offer a comprehensive explanation of employee voluntary contributions within the agency.

Exploratory comparison among employees with varying lengths of service revealed that those with longer tenure tended to report higher engagement and stronger OCB. Although tenure was not included in the structural model, the pattern suggests the presence of contextual or experiential factors that strengthen the influence of development opportunities. This observation may benefit future studies seeking to incorporate moderating variables.

Variation was also observed across different departments. Employees in planning and analysis units scored slightly higher on engagement than those in administrative areas. This

could be attributed to differences in job autonomy, complexity, or exposure to development initiatives. Such differences highlight how organizational structure and job characteristics may shape the impact of development policies.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that career development exerts a significant positive influence on work engagement among employees of the Human Resources and Personnel Development Agency of West Seram Regency. This relationship aligns with the view that structured career pathways enhance employees' psychological investment in their work, thereby improving their willingness to contribute beyond formal job requirements (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Employees who perceive clear opportunities for professional growth tend to show higher enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence in accomplishing their tasks.

Moreover, the study indicates that work engagement significantly predicts Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). This result is consistent with previous empirical studies confirming that engaged employees naturally exhibit higher levels of discretionary behavior, such as helping colleagues, demonstrating initiative, and maintaining organizational loyalty (Organ, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2019). Engagement strengthens emotional attachment to the organization, which encourages employees to engage in behaviors that support organizational functioning.

The mediating role of work engagement observed in this study further supports theories of motivational processes in organizational behavior. According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, personal and job resources such as career development opportunities foster engagement, which subsequently drives extra-role behaviors (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). This means that career development does not merely improve competencies but also acts as a psychological resource that energizes employees to contribute beyond what is formally expected.

In addition, the findings can be interpreted through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET posits that employees respond to perceived organizational support with reciprocal behaviors (Blau, 1964). In this context, when employees perceive that the organization invests in their career development, they are motivated to reciprocate through discretionary behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Work engagement functions as the mechanism through which this reciprocal process occurs, linking organizational support to proactive, voluntary contributions. By integrating JD-R and SET, this study demonstrates that career development both equips employees with the resources needed to perform effectively and fosters a sense of obligation to reciprocate, thereby strengthening OCB in public-sector settings.

In addition, the statistical findings highlight that career development has an indirect effect on OCB through engagement that is stronger than its direct effect. This pattern reinforces the idea that psychological activation—rather than structural opportunities alone—is the primary driver of altruistic organizational behaviors (Kim, 2020). Employees may value career opportunities, but their willingness to invest discretionary effort depends heavily on their sense of vigor and meaningfulness at work.

These results also have practical implications for public sector HR management, particularly in government settings where OCB is essential for improving service quality and administrative efficiency. Strengthening career development programs, such as

training, promotion transparency, and competency-based development, can significantly enhance employee engagement and citizenship behavior (Tansuy & Kutluk, 2021). This is critical for institutions that rely heavily on employees' intrinsic motivation and public service orientation.

Finally, the overall findings support the notion that engagement functions as a motivational bridge between developmental policies and behavioral outcomes. Public institutions that invest in structured and fair career development systems are more likely to cultivate an engaged workforce capable of demonstrating high levels of OCB. Thus, fostering engagement should be a strategic priority, as it amplifies the positive impact of career development on organizational effectiveness (Chen & Wu, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that career development plays a crucial role in enhancing Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) among employees, primarily through the partial mediating effect of work engagement. Employees who perceive clear, fair, and structured opportunities for advancement tend to experience higher levels of engagement, which subsequently encourages them to engage in voluntary and constructive behaviors beyond their formal job duties. This confirms that psychological activation, reflected in vigor, dedication, and absorption, serves as the essential mechanism that translates developmental policies into positive behavioral outcomes within the organization. Therefore, career development should be viewed not merely as an administrative function, but as a strategic driver of employee motivation and organizational effectiveness.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that the Human Resources and Personnel Development Agency of West Seram Regency intensify its efforts to strengthen career development systems by improving training programs, ensuring transparency in promotions, and implementing competency-based career pathways. At the same time, the agency should foster work engagement by creating a supportive work environment, enhancing leadership communication, and recognizing employee contributions to sustain intrinsic motivation. By integrating these strategies, the institution can cultivate a workforce that not only performs its core duties effectively but also consistently demonstrates OCB, ultimately contributing to improved public service quality and organizational performance.

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