

THE INFLUENCE OF WORK RECOGNITION, WORK MOTIVATION, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG INDONESIAN DISTRICT COURT JUDGES

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Abstract

Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Friedman's Legal System Theory, this study examines the effects of work recognition (WR), work motivation (WM), and career development (CD) on employee performance (EP) with employee engagement (EE) as a mediating variable among judges in Indonesian District Courts. A quantitative approach was employed using questionnaires distributed to 151 judges across Indonesia, and the data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings revealed that work motivation and career development positively and significantly affect employee performance, whereas work recognition does not directly influence employee performance. However, work recognition, work motivation, and career development significantly influence employee engagement, while employee engagement positively affects employee performance. Furthermore, employee engagement significantly mediates the relationships between work recognition, work motivation, career development, and employee performance. These findings indicate that organizational support, motivation, and professional development are essential in strengthening judges' engagement, professionalism, and performance within judicial institutions.

Keywords: *career development; employee engagement; employee performance; work motivation; work recognition*

INTRODUCTION

District Courts in Indonesia play an important role in maintaining justice, law enforcement, and public trust within the judicial system. Judges are expected to demonstrate professionalism, integrity, independence, and accountability in carrying out judicial duties. As part of the judicial institution under the Supreme Court of Indonesia, judges are required to deliver high-quality performance in resolving legal disputes and providing legal certainty for society. Therefore, improving employee performance among judges has become an essential issue in strengthening the effectiveness and credibility of judicial institutions in Indonesia.

Employee performance in judicial institutions is closely related to organizational and psychological factors that influence judges in performing their duties. Previous studies emphasized that organizational support, recognition, work motivation, career development, and employee engagement are important determinants of employee performance in public and private organizations (Ahakwa et al., 2021; Ruparel et al., 2023). In the judicial context, judges not only work under formal regulations and ethical standards but also require organizational support that can strengthen their commitment and professional involvement within the institution.

Work recognition is considered one of the important organizational factors influencing employee attitudes and behavior. Recognition reflects appreciation and acknowledgment from the organization regarding employees' contributions and achievements. According to Rasool et al. (2022), employees who feel valued by their organizations tend to demonstrate stronger commitment and better work outcomes. Similarly, Monje Amor and Calvo (2023) explained that recognition programs can increase morale, motivation, and organizational loyalty. In judicial institutions, recognition may strengthen judges' sense of value and professional appreciation, which can influence their involvement and performance.

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Work motivation also plays a crucial role in determining employee performance. Motivation refers to the internal and external forces that encourage individuals to perform their tasks effectively and responsibly. Ahakwa et al. (2021) explained that motivated employees are more productive, committed, and dedicated to organizational goals. In addition, Trépanier et al. (2023) found that motivation positively affects work engagement and employee productivity. In the judicial environment, judges with strong motivation are expected to demonstrate higher responsibility, professionalism, and dedication in delivering judicial services.

Another important factor influencing employee performance is career development. Career development refers to organizational efforts in providing promotion opportunities, professional training, competency improvement, and long-term career growth for employees (Ruparel et al., 2023). Career development not only improves employees' competencies but also increases organizational commitment and professional engagement. Karaca-Atik et al. (2023) emphasized that training and career advancement opportunities positively affect employee motivation and work performance. Within judicial institutions, career development is essential in strengthening judges' competencies, professionalism, and institutional commitment.

In addition to organizational factors, employee engagement has been widely recognized as a critical determinant of employee performance. Employee engagement refers to employees' emotional attachment, involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment toward their work and organization (London, 1993). Engaged employees tend to demonstrate higher dedication, stronger organizational loyalty, and better work performance (Riyanto et al., 2021). Turner and Turner (2020) further explained that organizational support, constructive communication, and career opportunities can strengthen employee engagement and improve organizational outcomes.

This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Deci and Ryan, which explains that individuals will demonstrate optimal performance when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Work recognition, work motivation, and career development are considered organizational mechanisms that may satisfy these psychological needs and enhance employee engagement and performance. In addition, this study adopts Friedman's Legal System Theory, which emphasizes the interaction between legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture in influencing institutional behavior and professionalism within judicial organizations.

Although previous studies have extensively examined the relationships among work recognition, work motivation, career development, employee engagement, and employee performance, limited studies have specifically investigated these variables within judicial institutions in Indonesia. Most prior studies focused on private organizations, public administration, or business sectors, while research involving judges and court institutions remains limited. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the research gap by examining the direct and indirect effects of work recognition, work motivation, and career development on employee performance through employee engagement among judges at District Courts in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee performance is an important factor in determining organizational effectiveness, particularly within judicial institutions that emphasize professionalism, accountability, and public trust. Previous studies indicate that employee performance is influenced by organizational and psychological factors such as work recognition, work motivation, career development, and employee engagement (Bakker, 2022; Rameshkumar, 2020). This study is primarily grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which explains that individuals achieve better performance when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this context, work motivation reflects autonomy, career development strengthens competence, and work recognition fulfills relatedness through appreciation and organizational support. These factors encourage stronger employee engagement, which is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002), ultimately improving employee performance.

This study is also supported by Friedman's Legal System Theory, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of legal institutions is shaped by legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture (Friedman, 1975). Within judicial organizations, judges' performance is influenced not only by formal regulations but also by organizational culture, professional values, motivation, recognition, and career development practices that strengthen institutional commitment and professionalism. Although previous studies have examined the relationships among work recognition, work motivation, career development, employee engagement, and employee performance, research within judicial institutions remains limited, particularly in developing countries. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of work recognition, work motivation, and career development on employee performance with employee engagement as a mediating variable among judges in Indonesian district courts.

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MATERIAL AND METHOD

Research Approach

This study applied a quantitative research approach using a questionnaire survey method to examine the relationships between work recognition, work motivation, career development, employee engagement, and employee performance among judges in Indonesian District Courts. The survey approach was selected because it enables researchers to collect data from a large number of respondents efficiently and systematically. In addition, questionnaire surveys are considered effective in measuring perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies related to organizational variables. The use of an online questionnaire through Google Forms also facilitated broader distribution across various regions in Indonesia, including Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, and Papua. Furthermore, anonymity in the questionnaire encouraged respondents to provide honest and objective answers regarding their professional experiences and organizational conditions.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire in this study employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The instrument was divided into two sections. The first section contained demographic information of respondents, including gender, age, educational background, and work experience. The second section consisted of measurement items related to work recognition, work motivation, career development, employee engagement, and employee performance. The questionnaire was developed based on previous studies and adapted to the context of Indonesian judicial institutions. Before distributing the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted involving several judges and academic experts to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and validity of the items. Based on their suggestions, minor revisions were made to improve the wording and comprehensibility of the instrument.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles. All respondents were informed about the objectives and purposes of the study before participating in the survey. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were strictly maintained to ensure that personal information and responses could not be identified individually. In addition, the data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the data collection process.

Variables Measurement

Work Recognition measurement items for work recognition were adapted from previous studies related to organizational appreciation and recognition systems. This variable measured the extent to which judges perceived acknowledgment, appreciation, and recognition from their institutions regarding their professional contributions and performance. Work motivation was measured using several indicators related to enthusiasm, commitment, organizational support, and willingness to perform judicial responsibilities effectively. The measurement items were adapted from established motivational studies in organizational behavior literature. Career development was measured through indicators related to promotion opportunities, professional training, competency development, and career advancement within judicial institutions. The items assessed respondents' perceptions regarding organizational support for long-term professional growth. Employee engagement was measured using indicators reflecting emotional attachment, organizational commitment, dedication, and involvement in institutional activities. The variable evaluated the degree to which judges felt connected and engaged with their organizations. Employee performance was measured using indicators associated with work quality, responsibility, productivity, effectiveness, and professional achievement in carrying out judicial duties. The items were adapted from previous employee performance studies relevant to public sector institutions.

Hypothesis Development

- H1.** Work recognition has a positive effect on employee performance.
- H2.** Work motivation has a positive effect on employee performance.
- H3.** Career development has a positive effect on employee performance.
- H4.** Work recognition has a positive effect on employee engagement.
- H5.** Work motivation has a positive effect on employee engagement.
- H6.** Career development has a positive effect on employee engagement.
- H7.** Employee engagement has a positive effect on employee performance.

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- H8.** Employee engagement mediates the relationship between work recognition and employee performance.
- H9.** Employee engagement mediates the relationship between work motivation and employee performance.
- H10.** Employee engagement mediates the relationship between career development and employee performance.

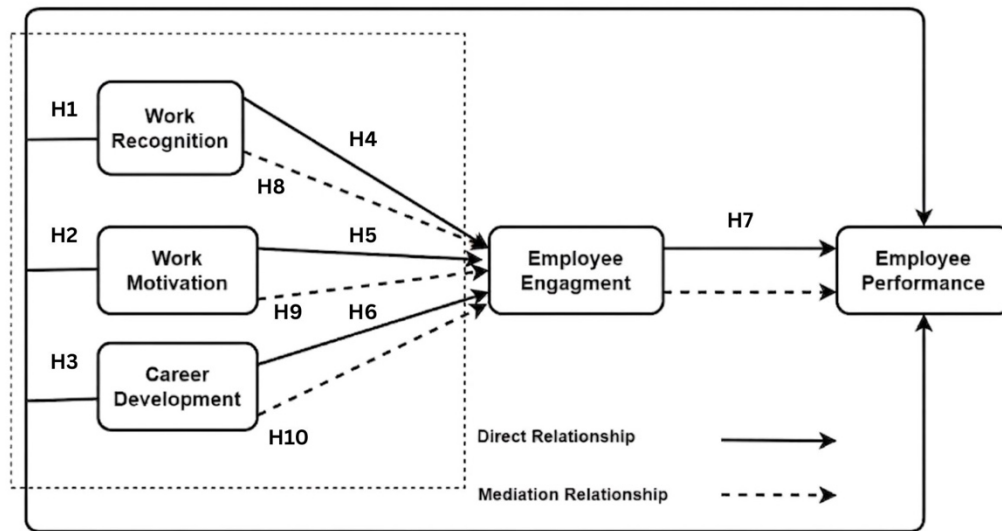


Figure 1.1
Research Conceptual Framework
Adapted from Rasool et al. (2025)

Sampling and Data Collection

The population of this study consisted of judges working in District Courts across Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents who met the criteria of actively serving as judges within the judicial system. Data collection was conducted through online questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. A total of 364 questionnaires were distributed to District Court judges from different regions in Indonesia. Of these, 153 questionnaires were returned. After the data screening process, 151 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis, while two questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete responses. The final sample size of 151 respondents was considered adequate for Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1. The majority of respondents were male judges (69.3%), while female respondents accounted for 30.7%. Most respondents were between 25–35 years old (90.8%), indicating that the sample was dominated by judges in productive and early career stages.

Regarding educational background, 52.9% of respondents held undergraduate degrees, while 45.1% possessed postgraduate qualifications. In terms of work experience, most respondents had between 1–10 years of professional experience (87.6%), demonstrating that the respondents had sufficient practical exposure within judicial institutions.

Table 1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographics	Classifications	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	105	69.3
	Female	46	30.7
	Total	151	100.0
Age	25–35 years	137	90.8
	Above 35 years	14	9.2
	Total	151	100.0
Education	Undergraduate	80	52.9

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	Postgraduate	68	45.1
	Others	3	2.0
	Total	151	100.0
Work Experience	1–10 years	132	87.6
	Above 10 years	19	12.4
	Total	151	100.0

Source: Primary data processed (2026).

RESULTS

This study applied the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the research data. Prior to hypothesis testing, the dataset was examined for missing values, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity. The results indicated that no serious statistical issues were identified, indicating that the data were suitable for further analysis. Descriptive statistics were also conducted to examine the characteristics of respondents and research variables. Furthermore, SmartPLS 4.0 was utilized to evaluate the measurement model and structural model because PLS-SEM is appropriate for complex models, mediation analysis, and predictive research with relatively moderate sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, PLS-SEM was considered suitable for examining the relationships between work recognition, work motivation, career development, employee engagement, and employee performance among judges in Indonesian District Courts.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis was conducted to evaluate respondents’ perceptions regarding the research variables. The findings demonstrated that all variables were categorized at a moderate level. Employee performance obtained a mean score of 3.391, indicating that judges perceived their professional performance and institutional effectiveness as moderately satisfactory. Work recognition recorded a mean score of 3.403, suggesting that judges moderately perceived appreciation and acknowledgment from their institutions. Work motivation showed the highest mean score of 3.481, indicating that motivational aspects such as organizational support, authority, and task responsibility positively contributed to judges’ professional motivation. Career development achieved a mean score of 3.281, while employee engagement obtained a mean score of 3.342, indicating moderate levels of organizational attachment and involvement among judges.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Work Recognition	3.403	0.621	Moderate
Work Motivation	3.481	0.587	Moderate
Career Development	3.281	0.645	Moderate
Employee Engagement	3.342	0.603	Moderate
Employee Performance	3.391	0.598	Moderate

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026).

Measurement Model

In PLS-SEM analysis, the first stage involves evaluating the measurement model to confirm the validity and reliability of the constructs (Ringle et al., 2015). The measurement model assessment consisted of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability testing. Convergent validity was examined through factor loading values, Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results demonstrated that all factor loading values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory indicator reliability. Similarly, Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs were above 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency reliability. Furthermore, all AVE values ranged from 0.764 to 0.853, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

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Table 3. Factor Loading, Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Work Recognition	0.912	0.928	0.764
Work Motivation	0.934	0.945	0.812
Career Development	0.903	0.921	0.746
Employee Engagement	0.918	0.936	0.785
Employee Performance	0.941	0.952	0.853

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026).

In the second stage, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The results showed that the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded the inter-construct correlations, confirming adequate discriminant validity. In addition, all HTMT values were below the threshold value of 0.90, indicating that each construct was empirically distinct from the others. These findings confirmed that the measurement model fulfilled the validity and reliability requirements and was appropriate for further structural model analysis.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity and HTMT

Variables	WR	WM	CD	EE	EP
WR	0.874				
WM	0.641	0.901			
CD	0.587	0.693	0.864		
EE	0.612	0.704	0.681	0.886	
EP	0.544	0.691	0.672	0.781	0.923

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026).

Note: WR = Work Recognition; WM = Work Motivation; CD = Career Development; EE = Employee Engagement; EP = Employee Performance.

Structural Model

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesized relationships between constructs. The evaluation included R-Square (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), model fit, and hypothesis testing. The R^2 value for employee engagement was 0.628, indicating that work recognition, work motivation, and career development explained 62.8% of the variance in employee engagement. Meanwhile, employee performance achieved an R^2 value of 0.776, suggesting that work recognition, work motivation, career development, and employee engagement jointly explained 77.6% of the variance in employee performance. According to Hair et al. (2019), these values indicate substantial explanatory power.

The predictive relevance of the model was evaluated using Q^2 values obtained through the blindfolding procedure. The Q^2 values for employee engagement (0.493) and employee performance (0.568) were greater than zero, confirming that the model possessed strong predictive relevance. Furthermore, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value was 0.069, which was below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a satisfactory model fit.

Table 5. Structural Model Evaluation

Variables	R^2	Q^2	SRMR
Employee Engagement	0.628	0.493	0.069
Employee Performance	0.776	0.568	0.069

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026).

The hypothesis testing results revealed that work motivation had a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.239$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher work motivation improved judges’ professional performance. Similarly, career development positively and significantly affected employee performance ($\beta = 0.264$; $p < 0.05$). However, work recognition did not significantly influence employee performance ($\beta = 0.089$; $p > 0.05$). Furthermore, work recognition significantly influenced employee engagement ($\beta = 0.240$; $p < 0.05$). Work motivation also had a positive and significant effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.331$; $p < 0.05$), while career development significantly influenced employee engagement ($\beta = 0.314$; $p < 0.05$). Employee engagement itself

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significantly affected employee performance ($\beta = 0.396$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that judges with stronger emotional attachment and organizational involvement demonstrated better work performance.

Table 6. Direct Relationship (Hypothesis Testing)

Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Value	p-Value	Results
WR → EP	0.089	1.289	0.197	Not Supported
WM → EP	0.239	2.311	0.021	Supported
CD → EP	0.264	2.462	0.014	Supported
WR → EE	0.240	2.356	0.019	Supported
WM → EE	0.331	2.897	0.004	Supported
CD → EE	0.314	2.714	0.007	Supported
EE → EP	0.396	3.281	0.001	Supported

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026).

The mediation analysis further examined the indirect effects of employee engagement on the relationship between work recognition, work motivation, career development, and employee performance. The findings demonstrated that employee engagement significantly mediated the relationship between work recognition and employee performance ($\beta = 0.095$; $p = 0.050$). Likewise, employee engagement significantly mediated the relationship between work motivation and employee performance ($\beta = 0.131$; $p = 0.031$) and the relationship between career development and employee performance ($\beta = 0.124$; $p = 0.041$). These findings confirmed the important role of employee engagement in strengthening judges' performance within Indonesian District Courts.

Table 7. Indirect Relationship (Mediation Testing)

Relationship	Indirect Effect (β)	t-Value	p-Value	Results
WR → EE → EP	0.095	1.962	0.050	Supported
WM → EE → EP	0.131	2.154	0.031	Supported
CD → EE → EP	0.124	2.041	0.041	Supported

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026).

To further illustrate the mediation relationships among the variables, Figure 2 presents the structural model showing the direct and indirect effects between work recognition, work motivation, career development, employee engagement, and employee performance.

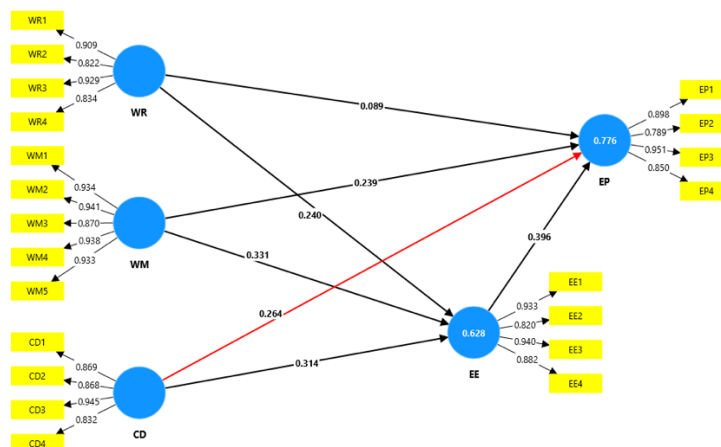


Figure 2. Measures Model

Source: Primary data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026).

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effects of Work Recognition, Work Motivation, and Career Development on Employee Performance among District Court judges in Indonesia, with Employee Engagement serving as a mediating variable (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schaufeli et al., 2002). The findings revealed that most proposed hypotheses were supported, indicating that organizational and psychological factors play an important role in improving judges'

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performance and institutional effectiveness within the judiciary system (Bakker, 2022; Rameshkumar, 2020). These findings can be further explained through the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the importance of fulfilling individuals' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in shaping motivation, engagement, and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The results showed that Work Recognition did not have a significant direct effect on Employee Performance. Although judges generally perceived that they received high levels of appreciation and recognition from the organization, such recognition was not sufficient to directly improve performance (Popoola & Fagbola, 2023). From the perspective of SDT, external recognition alone may not automatically enhance performance when professional behavior is primarily driven by intrinsic values such as integrity, justice, ethical responsibility, and judicial independence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Judges tend to perform their duties based on internalized professional commitment rather than external rewards or acknowledgment (Friedman, 1975). Therefore, recognition may not directly influence performance outcomes because judges' professional standards are strongly regulated by moral and institutional obligations (Friedman, 1975).

However, Work Recognition was found to significantly influence Employee Engagement (Katili et al., 2021). This finding is consistent with SDT, particularly the need for relatedness, where individuals feel valued, respected, and connected to their organization (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Judges who perceived appreciation and acknowledgment from their institutions demonstrated stronger emotional attachment, organizational involvement, and loyalty (Andini & Ekhsan, 2024). Recognition strengthened their sense of belonging and psychological connection with the judiciary institution, which subsequently increased their engagement in carrying out judicial responsibilities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work Motivation had a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Rameshkumar, 2020). This finding supports SDT, which explains that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can encourage individuals to achieve better performance when psychological needs are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Judges who experienced greater motivation demonstrated stronger discipline, responsibility, and professional commitment in handling legal cases (Bakker, 2022). Intrinsic motivation, such as the desire to uphold justice and maintain professional integrity, combined with extrinsic factors including incentives, institutional support, and authority, contributed positively to performance improvement (Noe et al., 2017). This indicates that motivated judges tend to perform their duties more effectively and responsibly (Popoola & Fagbola, 2023).

In addition, Work Motivation significantly influenced Employee Engagement (Katili et al., 2021). According to SDT, motivated individuals are more likely to experience higher levels of energy, enthusiasm, and dedication toward their work (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Judges with stronger motivation demonstrated greater psychological attachment and active participation within the organization (Andini & Ekhsan, 2024). Motivation fulfilled judges' needs for autonomy and competence, encouraging them to become more engaged in organizational activities and institutional objectives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Career Development also had a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Noe et al., 2017). This result aligns with SDT, particularly the fulfillment of competence needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Opportunities for promotion, professional training, mentoring, and continuous learning enhanced judges' knowledge, confidence, and professional capability in performing judicial duties (Popoola & Fagbola, 2023). Judges who perceived clear career pathways and organizational support for development were more motivated to maintain high standards of professionalism and performance (Bakker, 2022). Career development therefore served as an important mechanism for strengthening judges' competence and work effectiveness (Noe et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Career Development significantly affected Employee Engagement (Katili et al., 2021). From the SDT perspective, professional development opportunities increase individuals' feelings of competence and organizational support, which strengthen emotional attachment and commitment to the institution (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Judges who perceived fair promotion systems and opportunities for self-development demonstrated higher loyalty, dedication, and involvement within the judiciary institution (Andini & Ekhsan, 2024). Continuous learning opportunities encouraged judges to become more enthusiastic and committed to organizational goals (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Employee Engagement was found to have a strong positive effect on Employee Performance (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This finding strongly supports SDT, which argues that employees who experience fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness tend to demonstrate higher psychological well-being, commitment, and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Judges with higher engagement levels were more dedicated, enthusiastic, and responsible in carrying out judicial duties (Katili et al., 2021). Organizational support, meaningful participation, and opportunities for professional growth strengthened judges' emotional connection with the institution and contributed positively to performance outcomes (Bakker, 2022).

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The mediating analysis revealed that Employee Engagement significantly mediated the relationship between Work Recognition and Employee Performance (Andini & Ekhsan, 2024). This finding indicates that recognition became effective in improving performance only when it strengthened judges' emotional attachment and organizational involvement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In the context of SDT, recognition fulfilled judges' need for relatedness, which subsequently enhanced engagement and indirectly improved performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, recognition alone may not directly increase performance, but it can create psychological conditions that encourage stronger organizational engagement (Katili et al., 2021).

Employee Engagement also partially mediated the relationships between Work Motivation and Employee Performance, as well as between Career Development and Employee Performance (Rameshkumar, 2020). Consistent with SDT, motivation and career development fulfilled judges' psychological needs for autonomy and competence, thereby strengthening engagement and improving performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivated judges and those receiving strong developmental support demonstrated greater emotional involvement and commitment to organizational goals, which ultimately contributed to better work performance (Bakker, 2022).

Overall, this study supports Self-Determination Theory and Friedman's Legal System Theory by demonstrating that psychological fulfillment, organizational support, and professional culture are essential in strengthening judges' engagement and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Friedman, 1975). SDT explains that judges' performance is not solely influenced by external rewards, but also by the fulfillment of intrinsic psychological needs that encourage motivation, engagement, and professional commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Meanwhile, Friedman's Legal System Theory emphasizes the importance of institutional culture and legal structures in supporting professional behavior within the judiciary system (Friedman, 1975). The findings also contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 4 (Quality Education) (United Nations, 2015). Despite its contributions, this study was limited by the relatively small sample size and the use of a cross-sectional quantitative design (Hair et al., 2021). Future research is recommended to involve larger samples, mixed-method approaches, and additional variables to provide more comprehensive findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Work Motivation, Career Development, and Employee Engagement significantly improve Employee Performance among District Court judges in Indonesia, while Work Recognition does not directly affect performance but contributes indirectly through Employee Engagement. The findings support Self-Determination Theory (SDT), indicating that the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness strengthens judges' motivation, engagement, and performance. Work Motivation enhances autonomy, Career Development strengthens competence, and Work Recognition supports relatedness by fostering appreciation and organizational attachment. Employee Engagement also plays an important mediating role in linking organizational factors with performance outcomes. In addition, the findings reinforce Friedman's Legal System Theory by emphasizing the importance of organizational support, professional culture, and institutional effectiveness within the judiciary system. Furthermore, this study contributes to the achievement of SDG 16, SDG 8, and SDG 4 through the promotion of strong institutions, decent work, and continuous professional development in the judiciary sector.

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